

## Last Political Success of Prime Minister Imre Nagy: Establishment of the Popular Front – in Propaganda of the Radio Hungary 1954

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The last political success of Prime Minister Imre Nagy was the establishment of the Popular Front in 1954. The new organization, similar to the former Popular Front for Independence that existed during WW2 in Hungary, would provide support the new reform Government and have a say in shaping the country's affairs. During the establishment of the new Government's Program developed a conflict between the group of Imre Nagy and that of party General Secretary Mátyás Rákosi. The conflict was also noted with interest in Moscow. The uncertainty derived from the hostility between Rákosi and Imre Nagy can be detected from the Radio propaganda programs. After a successful Popular Front Congress on the November 28, 1954, the national Local Council Elections were held. But the Councils did not become autonomous, they were supervised by the Office of the Council of Ministers. The promise, however, was still lingering on. Not for a long time. Following the elections, the very next day the process aimed at expelling. To remove Imre Nagy entirely from politics had soon began. Mátyás Rákosi did not hesitate to use any single means against him, trusting the support of Moscow.

[Imre Nagy; Prime Minister of Hungarian Revolution; Radio Hungary; pre-history of Hungarian Revolution 1956; 20<sup>th</sup> century]

During the establishment of the new Government's Program of 1953 a conflict developed between the group of Imre Nagy and that of party General Secretary Mátyás Rákosi. The conflict was also noted with interest in Moscow.<sup>1</sup> In his speech at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the MDP (Hungarian Workers' Party) – 24–30 May 1954 – Imre Nagy dealt emphatically with

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<sup>1</sup> At the meeting in Moscow of 5 May both Rákosi and Imre Nagy were criticized. Khrushchev stressed the "lack of mutual understanding" between the two politicians. "Comrade Rákosi explained the sudden increase of failures with provocation of Beria, and believes

the problems of state administration and councils and didn't dealt with the party leadership. He believed that it was the principal task to create a new organization, similar to the former Popular Front for Independence that existed during WW2.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the Popular Front would represent the "active layers" to support the new Government's Program. The Popular Front – as proposed by Imre Nagy – would provide support the Government and have a say in shaping the country's affairs. The propaganda of the Radio Hungary had to deal with this controversial situation. The importance of the task could be discerned from the fact that the issue of Local Council Elections was on the agenda of the radio's "information meeting" on July 13, 1954. The minutes were taken by Sandor Szendrő who was the chief of the Short Wave Department of the Radio Hungary. The uncertainty derived from the hostility between Rákosi and Imre Nagy can be detected from the text of the document itself: *"Even though Local Council Elections will be held this year, the information is not to be made public, not generally disseminated. However, it is necessary that reporters of the Campaign and Propaganda Department be informed about it. The party's Political Committee had addressed the issue of the Local Council Elections on two occasions, declaring that the most important principle is the self-governance of Councils. That is what was proposed by Comrade Imre Nagy at the congress, to insure that the village administration be under the control of such councils. They should be the principal authority of village administration, and that such councils should enjoy the unanimous confidence of the working people.*

*The parliament will discuss the whole question of Local Councils. There were serious mistakes in the practice of the subordination, management and compilation of councils that will be reacted to. Presumably, the number of council members that is 200 thousand at the moment will be reduced by 50 %. The only exception to the rule is Budapest, where a rise will be taking place."* The meeting also talked about the nomination that *"will be in the framework of the popular front. There will be committees for nomination and everybody will have the right to nominate someone. The elections will be based on the list of candi-*

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*that after we had been executed Beria, criticism should be, too. On the other side Comrade Nagy fell to the extremity. He rightly criticized, but it was not correct just to see the deficiencies and to merely draw the party's attention to this, but must properly evaluate the results achieved."* Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (State Archives of Hungarian National Archives, hereinafter referred to only as MNL-OL) – M-KS-276, f. 53/173. *A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja határozatai 1948–1956*, Budapest 1998, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

dacy similar to procedure at party conferences. This also presents/justifies that the election will be of democratic nature”.

The document assumed that “before and during the elections grave struggle will be taking shape in the village, thus the necessary step must be taken to ensure that the enemy should not be able to penetrate this area”. The guarantee for this was perceived in the regulation that “proposals must be endorsed by the Popular Front Committees, but always at the subsequent notch”. The prevention of electoral fraud and abuse will be guaranteed by the territorial election committees by the precautionary preparation and selection of the members of the Ballot Collecting Committees. It was stressed in connection with the right to vote that “every citizen above 18 years of age could vote and be nominated. The formerly legislated grounds for exclusion remained valid<sup>3</sup> with an addition extension to the displaced persons and the internees”. The most important information in the matters of the procedure was that participants receive “three ballot sheets” in the county, and “two ballot sheets” in cities. “In the villages, local, district and county councils, while in the cities local and urban councils will be elected simultaneously. At the nomination those who reach 50 % in the voting will be elected. Where 30 % of the voters appeal for the recall or dismissal of the new representative, there a by-election must be held within six weeks. It means [in] practice – as it was uttered at the meeting – that almost every day a by-election is taking place in the country.” Given the history of elections “never before was such a procedure taking place either in the Soviet Union or in other democratic countries, we are the first to realize it for the first time”.

According to the information bulletin the draft on the election “will appear in the press in two weeks [...] and a national debate can start on this issue. Not only in the party-journals, but in the radio as well, in the broadcast debates and proposals must be aired. At present, the most important task is the selection of the 900 thousand people followed by the preparatory work on the

<sup>3</sup> 1953 (II) by law, all Hungarian citizens, who phased the year 18 before the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of the year of the election, have the right to vote. This does not apply to those who are interdicted from the participation in public life under the scope of sentence by the court, are subject to confinement or pre-trial detention, are under arrest or under police supervision, insane-regardless of whether it is under guardianship, or not. <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=8390> [2015–10–20]. The amendment to the electoral law was in Hungary, because the beginning of 1950 increased the political prisoners and interned in labor camps. *Törvények, jogszabályok a CompLex Kiadótól*. Ibidem. The significance of the modification of the Electoral Law is explained by the fact that from the beginning of 1950 the number of political prisoners and internees drastically increased.

*nominations and meetings. This work stands for a huge political activity. It is a general principle that the proportion of the working class and the professional people/intelligentsia should be increased”.*

At the meeting it was also stressed that *“it definitely must be taken into consideration that the enemy, if it is trying to achieve something in this field, will propose its own men to be elected to the posts of the president or the secretary of the local councils. Local party organizations will give an important performance here”.*

The radio’s assignment is – as it was declared – *“that we prepare for the debate. It has still got to be arranged the way this task [...] is prepared. It is likely that the radio achieved a widespread confidence in the village; hence people will turn to the radio in many issues, and with many proposals. The Correspondence Department must bear a serious burden in this field”.*<sup>4</sup> A remarkable initiative was broadcast in the radio news program on August 13, 1954: *“the prominent representatives of the Hungarian political, social, cultural, scientific, and religious life held a meeting in the Parliament, at which it was agreed that for the great objective of the people’s democracy a new Popular Front on a broader basis than ever before based is required”.* They also concluded that the new nomination of the new popular front be Patriotic Popular Front. A Preparatory Committee has been set up and the inaugural Congress was to have been held in October 1954.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the propaganda of the popular front elections was indicated by the fact that radio had made an election plan, which was being discussed at convention of the Board of the National Radio on the September 9, 1954. The document is one of the evidences that the directorate of the radio generally supported the implementation of the program of the administration of Imre Nagy, while they envisaged that the results of the popular front elections would strengthen the position of the Prime Minister. The most important tasks of the campaigning work were enumerated in points. These included the first point in which appeared that *“it must make people aware the local council election equals popular front election. To achieve this, we must generate – through the communication to all layers to say the least – the political mobilization of the whole society, in the spirit of resolutions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the MDP. Special attention – they wrote –*

<sup>4</sup> Verbatim recorded at the briefing of July 13, 1954. Verbatims and resolutions of briefings July – September, 1954. Central Archives of the Mediaservice Support and Asset Management Fund (hereafter as MTVA KI). TD-280/23. 87<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>5</sup> News. August 13, 1954. MTVA KI. Aired: August 13, 1954. 4:30 PM.

needs to be devoted to the essence of the popular front, and its presentation and explication. People must understand that the Popular Front is not a casual electoral organization, but as the expression of the national unity, an organ of social policy that enables our further economic, political and cultural works that encompass the widest masses”.

The second point reflected on that campaign and propaganda “should provide assistance to strengthening of local councils’ and repairing their relations with the masses”. The radio shows “must promote the achievements of the four-year-work of the councils and their members who have been doing their jobs well”. Steps must be taken “against such attitudes and views that are directed against the election of the otherwise capable council or Executive Commission members who are calling to account the duties to the state”. But it is also important to point at the Councils’ failings and faults.

The third point decided on what needs to be done for the sake of the campaign preceding the council elections. The relevant programs must be edited – as it was written – that they be “closely linked to the daily tasks and increase the production activity. This work is not to be carried out displeasingly or mechanically, but after a careful preparation of the relevant materials, preferably with the featuring of workers and peasants”.

In the fourth point of the program: the broadcasts must reflect “the democratic nature of the elections and that how fundamental a task is regarded by the radio the assignment of strengthening the popular – national unity”. It must not be allowed that various sectarian phenomena emerge (“individual anti-peasant tendencies, anti-intellectualism, antipathy towards the petty bourgeois”).

The fifth point focused on the correspondence between the fight for peace and the elections. The sixth point’s propaganda mission is the assistance of local initiatives, which are feasible with their numerous repetitions. The seventh task is that radio broadcasts must strongly point to the fact that council members “are elected personally”. Candidates “from all layers of the society” must be promoted, “the old, well established and highly decisive council members, and the new candidates as well”.

Finally, it was prescribed that in the election period, the radio campaign “be as wide as possible addressed to all layers, to people with all sorts of interests”. The broadcasts “feature more workers, working peasants, professionals, women and young people the better”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The Electoral Plan of the Radio. Board Meeting September 9, 1954. MTVA KI TD-313/9.

On the briefing adjourned on September 11, 1954, the subject was the broadcasts in connection with the preparation of Popular Front Congress. Vice President Laszlo Hartai recounted that before the Congress is convening, a "Manifesto" will appear which will include the tasks of the Popular Front Congress. At the same time "will appear a communique that draw the attention to the formation of the Popular Front Preparatory Committees and suggests that the popular front Congress open on October 23". According to the preliminary information the Congress will be "held on the Sports Hall of 2,200 participants".<sup>7</sup> The Vice President of the Radio also drew attention to the requirement that the editorials of *Szabad Nép* (*Free People*) must be elaborated in the week after the release in the broadcasts.

On the Popular Front Elections he remarked that "the purpose of the Popular Front is, with the assistance of the working class and under the leadership of the party, to incorporate the wide range of patriotic but non-partisan masses into the solution of the great challenges encountered by our people. [...] The Patriotic Independence Front had been founded in the spring of 1949, but it did not turn into a movement. When the other democratic parties had ceased to exist, the Hungarian Popular Front of Independence also gradually evaporated". Hartai reminded that "the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Congress pointed out that the current stage of the people's democracy gives a new content and opportunity to the Popular Front. [...] The implementation of Party and Government resolutions could only be fulfilled with the participation of only the broadest masses; hence, was the new Popular Front created on a wider basis. The predominant and leading force of the new popular front is our Party, led by the working class. It is struggling against the indifference and the lack of opinion. It enables the popular discussion of political questions in the masses. The Popular Front must be broadened to a mass movement where the working people's initiatives assert freely. The Popular Front is a workers-peasants alliance on social and political basis". Its responsibility – he continued – is the "increased activity" practiced "mainly in the village by generating the political participation among the working peasantry, in addition to the middle classes, the urban petty bourgeoisie and civil servants". The popular front can become consummate, if its significance is going to be clear to everyone.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>9</sup>th Box.

<sup>7</sup> The Popular Front's Congress was held at the Erkel Theatre.

<sup>8</sup> Verbatim on the Briefing of September 11, 1954. September 11, 1954. MTVA KI TD-280/23. 87<sup>th</sup> Box.

The summary of the “News” broadcast on September 24, 1954 cited from the article of *Szabad Nép* titled “For the Implementation of the New Act on Local Councils”. “Three Key laws were adopted by the National Assembly [...] session. The Act on the Amendment of the Constitution unambiguously stresses the nature the state power characteristics of our councils; the new act on the local councils determines the construction and the order of operating procedures of our councils; while the act on the election of council members largely expand the democratic flavor of our electoral system.” The purpose of the ratified acts is “the consolidation of our councils and by this, the strengthening of the power of our state on the basis of the instructions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the MDP”.<sup>9</sup>

The establishment of the new popular front became a priority topic of the radio. They tried to support the credibility of the news by scientific analysis. This was the case on September 24, when academic Imre Szabo was giving a presentation: “Popular Fronts in the people’s democracies.” The lecture was about the popular front movement established in the 1930’s against fascism, highlighting on the example of Bulgaria’s patriotic front; and then the author analyzed the tendencies of the popular fronts in people’s democracies after the deliberation that aimed at integrating honest people. And when the people’s democracies have launched the building of socialism, popular fronts brought the workers in the broadest sense together. The best in the nations led by the Communists assembled in the vanguard line. Today, written by the author, the Popular Front appeared to have a basic task during the local council elections. For example, “the popular front nominates the candidates, who are the candidates of all the working people”.<sup>10</sup>

“The Country Is Preparing for the Congress of the Popular Front” was the title of the summary based on the domestic reports of the MTI on the afternoon issue on October 21. “In the last few weeks, a sparkling and vivid political life has unfolded across the country. The operation of the popular front committee induced tens of thousands of working people to participate in the arrangement of public affairs, while new ideas, new initiatives were launched.” The agendas of the popular front committees of the settlements have demonstrated that “the widest sections of our working people will be pleased to take part in the implementation of the objectives of the popular front and de-

<sup>9</sup> News September 24, 1954. MTVA KI. Aired: September 24, 1954. 12:00 AM.

<sup>10</sup> I. SZABÓ, “Popular Fronts in People’s Democracies”. September 24, 1954. MTVA Archives-Program Envelope. Aired: September 24, 1954. 5:40–6:00 PM.

mand their parts from the country's construction work". The deputies of the Congress are also actively preparing for the new tasks, and "the same can be said of the anonymous masses that day by day complement the programs of the local popular front committees with more and more realistic, workable ideas and proposals". The summary of the MTI made a detailed report on the work of the popular front committee in the district of Pécsvárad. In ten settlements of the district, "local citizens, mainly by social cooperation build access roads, while schools and community centers are being renovated by the initiative of popular front committees". So far, for the construction of the District Cultural Centre "about 400,000 forints worth of social work was offered by the working peasants".

In Mogyoród, a village with three nationalities, residents also think that "the idea and purpose of the Patriotic Popular Front brought fresh air". The settlement – as it was written – used to be one among the villages of the district. Young people from the local popular front Committee decided that "they would involve in the political life and in the arrangements of public matters the reluctant older inhabitants of the village, too". Their initiative had a remarkable result. In the local library they organized the new readers' circle for the winter, while on based on the idea of the leader of Community Center a new amateur theatre troop was established. They revived the local football team, and the establishment of a male and female volleyball team was on their agenda. Young people have offered to build an access road in social cooperation, which by the next summer will link the small settlement to the "world".

The alteration of the political climate is justified by the situation where representatives of the Church could also have a voice. Thus, Dénes Farkas, episcopal emissary to the village of Ják in Vas County, who was also the deputy of the settlement, could recount what he expected from the popular front. "It is honorable to me that Ják commune of which I am the abbot, elected me into the county popular front committee, and delegated me at the national level, too. I will try with all my strength, he said, to acquit the advanced confidence that I feel as the trust in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Szombathely, and the whole Hungarian Catholic Church as well." He said that he had "great expectations" in connection with the Congress, regarding the program that determines, promotes and makes the work in the country purposive especially important. His main goal is that the implementation of the tasks the country is facing "will be supported by Catholic clergy strongly and willingly in Vas County".



The popular front delegate from Vas County was Lajos István, ward chief doctor of the blood reserve service. He promised: *"I want to deal with the health problems in detail, and of course, with the possible solutions of the questions rose at the Congress."* He will also tell the delegates that he *"supports the popular front movement, because it relies on the initiative of the workers, because it wants to, what we wanted for a long time, we are longing for a long time. I wish that there will be consistency in the implementation of the well-designed local programs, and we do not want to achieve fast, flash in the pan pseudo success, but solve the tasks continuously"*.

From Csongrád County the MTI reported that the county organizations of the communist Hungarian Women's Democratic Association, founded in 1945, also revived for the popular front's congress. Women in Szentes made proposals at their meeting for the elaboration of a local program. The plans included the renovation of the ruined building in grove of Hódmezővásárhely, which could function as a pioneer's home for children. Pledges have already been made to restore the edifice: brick factory of Csomorkány offered the production of three hundred bricks. Teachers and pupils would contribute to the restoration of the house by their physical work.<sup>11</sup>

### **The PPF's Inaugural Congress on the Radio**

The PPF's inaugural Congress was held on October 23–24, 1954. József Darvas, Minister for Public Education, the first speaker started with a question: *"What is new is the Patriotic Popular Front?"* The main idea of his speech built on the response. The PPF will embrace the entire nation it is not just a conglomerate of parties. The PPF intends to involve in public life the formerly passive layers, too. It will be the tutor, organizer and mobilizer of *"our nation's political, economic, social and cultural activity"*. It deals surpassingly with *"the implementation of the new section in politics and the main duties of the government program"*. The resolutions of July 1953 must be transformed into reality. How does it occur? By the rising of people's welfare, the rapid development of the agriculture, the reorganization of the industry focusing on the production of consumer goods, taking into consideration the endowments and natural resources of the country. Darvas was speaking against the *"overdriven industrialization"* in details. He reminded the audience that mass production must

<sup>11</sup> MTI Domestic News. October 21, 1954. 5:40 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b.

be followed by the quality production. After delivering the principal message, he even made some remarks on the culture, namely that *"we must foster the traditions of our national culture"*, knowing the works of our great writers and poets. Among other things, he mentioned that *"while a theatre was named after Madách, 'The tragedy of man' has not been on stage for years"*. He also pointed at the role of the youth and the professionals, and finally the upcoming Local Council Elections.<sup>12</sup>

After the formation of the PPF the attention in the radio broadcasts turned to the propaganda of the Local Council Elections due to be held on November 28, 1954. The news summaries of the radio were enumerating the conventions organized by the popular front, highlighting some of the orators' speech. The evening edition of the MTI of November 16, 1954, the PPF 8<sup>th</sup> District Committee held a craftsmen's assembly in the saloon of the Vasas (Iron Workers') Trade Union. Lajos Gömöri, secretary of the KIOSZ (National Association of Craftsmen) Secretary stressed that *"we have every reason"* to vote for the popular front's candidates. Because, he said, *"the grievances they had suffered in the recent years were being healed since June last year, so they can safely perform their work respected by throughout the country"*. At the electoral rally more craftsmen also spoke out, they declared, that the craftsmen working in the district will give their votes for the candidates of the PPF.

On the electoral rally organized for the residents of 1<sup>st</sup> District, Sándor Barcs, member of the Presidential Council and of Parliament, held a speech that, first and foremost, presented the results achieved since the Local Council Elections. Later, he spoke about the development happened in the 1<sup>st</sup> District and the plans for the subsequent years. Among these featured was the reconstruction of block of flats of the district, for which they wished to spend 12 million forints in the next year. The district has developed the education network, has increased the number of daily boarding homes, and improved traffic conditions in the district. *"Our country, our father calls us,"* he said finally. *"Not for bloody battle, for exterminating, murdering, but construction of the country, making our and our children's lives more beautiful, happier. Put our faith in the people's candidates on 28<sup>th</sup> November, and then on the hard-working weekdays everyone tend to do what his or her duty from the program of the government."*

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<sup>12</sup> The Speech of Josef Darvas. October 23, 1954. 5:00 PM. MTI Special Program. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 262<sup>th</sup> Box.

The residents of the 13<sup>th</sup> District could participate in the rally in the edifice of the District Council, which was opened by grammar school teacher László Mészáros on behalf of the Committee of the Popular Front in the district.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> District, the convention was held in the Community House of Sasad, where participants were greeted by József Mázi, chairman of the PPF – Committee. At the meeting, Árpád Kiss, member of the MDP Central Leadership, Minister for Energy and Chemical Industry held a speech. He said that he had experienced in the country how people were preparing for the Local Council Elections. “[I]t has electrified the political life, participation in public affairs. The working people with various initiatives are providing evidence that they regard the elections their own business. Preparations for this year’s Local Council Elections are showing a much greater political lividity than ever before. The reason is that the preparations are coinciding with two major domestic policy events: this year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of our liberation and this is the period of our party [...] take the key decisions of October.” József Mázi who tangibly advocated the program of Imre Nagy emphatically declared: in the implementation of the government program of 1953 a great task was incumbent on the Local Councils to be elected on the November 28. Those, who are the “the strong weapons of the working class, working people in construction of socialism. The Council to be elected can only fulfill its mission, if the district’s population supports and accounts it for these solutions, if it works closely with the local Committee of the popular front”.<sup>13</sup>

In the capital, after the events of the election rallies the MTI reported on the convention in Sztálinváros on the broadcast in the evening of November 18, 1954. The city was holding a special place in the industrialization program declared in the early 1950s as a stronghold of heavy industry and thus became the symbol of the Rákosi era. It’s also instructive to follow changes in the life of the city, because the formation of the PPF and the upcoming local council election significantly transformed the general mood in the city.

The working people of the city could hear the speech of Ferenc Herzeg, President of the Central Planning Board and member of the Central Leadership of the MDP out in the theatre hall of the Béla Bartók Community Center. After the anthem, Jenő Tapolczai Vice-Chairman of the

<sup>13</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 16, 1954. 8:45 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 264<sup>th</sup> Box.

Committee of the Popular Front of the city welcomed those at present and passed the word to Ferenc Herczeg. *“The construction of the Stalin’s Iron Works and Sztálinváros itself – he said – was an example of the political and economic unity of the Peace Camp. The Soviet Union helped the construction of our new plants and new city by plans, equipments and experts. It is also the Soviet Union, from whom the plant receives the ore, the coke and molding material for the operation. But other countries of people’s democracy have provided a considerable scientific and technical support, too.”* Hereinafter he presented the position of the city in details, and stressed that the “factory and the city is a great result and pride of our people’s democracy. *We have not worked by consensus and united effort in the land of Sztálinváros that we now consider our success failure and regard the work void”* (highlighted by I. S.).

And due to the political situation that has changed, *“he emphasized that, in accordance with the new policy, now all our efforts must focus on the atonement of our mistakes. In Sztálinváros transfer in the priority of investment has already started and continue”*. He continued: *“If we are creating by the implementation of the policy of the new section the prerequisites for a faster development of Sztálinváros and if our economic situation allows a larger development, then we will carry out the construction of one of the largest and most modern factories of our country, as well as of the first Socialist city.”*

At the end of his address Ferenc Herczeg called up the inhabitants of the city to *“form into line under the banner of PPF for our country’s recovery”*.<sup>14</sup>

The other center of heavy industry was in Diósgyőr. In the compilation of news on November 19, 1954, the MTI reported on a convention in Miskolc. The participants of the event were welcomed by Mihály Urbancsek, Chairman of the Popular Front in the city of Miskolc. On the electoral rally Lieutenant-General Sándor Nógrádi, member of the MDP Central Leadership and first Deputy Minister of defense held a speech. He explained the importance of Local Council Elections, and stressed that *“now the main task is to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties with a unified, firm will and vigor to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties that stand in the way of the new policy”*. Sándor Nógrádi also spoke about the topical assignments. The most important thing is that *“as soon as possible the industry of Miskolc-Diósgyőr can be transferred to the production of consumer*

<sup>14</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 18, 1954. 8:55 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 264<sup>th</sup> Box.

goods and agricultural machinery in a proportion that is required by the State's plans. In this position there is no place for procrastination".<sup>15</sup>

The afternoon broadcast in connection with the Local Council Elections on November 24, 1954, the MTI presented the ideas of a council member candidate, too. Ferenc Vass dressmaker was taking the nomination with pleasure. He mentioned among his notions that sometimes craftsmen had still been wary against the new policy. *"I, as a council member, should I be honored, I intend to work to dispel the erroneous views, giving even greater, impetus to the work of the craftsmen."*<sup>16</sup>

However, such reports did not represent the majority of the summaries of domestic news of the MTI. Most of them repeatedly featured the work competitions and the results of the Stakhanovites. *"Kossuth Prize Winner Stakhanovite Collier András Tajkovr, who undertake with his brigade in the work competition to honor the elections has agreed to produce 120 quintals of coal for the new nursery of the city with 44 places."*<sup>17</sup>

The Korbely – brigade of the rollers of the sheet rolling mill of Diósgyőr rolled hexagonal steel, and due to their good and concerted effort came up with an overproduction of 127 percent by noon.<sup>18</sup>

*"The workers of the Hungarian Chemical Works had undertaken that an additional 10 tons of Agritox and 800 kilograms of DDT would be produced above their target to November 28. The commitment was achieved before the deadline [...]."*<sup>19</sup>

The MTI news also featured that cheap horse blankets are made out of used tilts and rugs. It was also announced in the news that the Construction Joinery Company of Sopron produced ten thousand greenhouse windows made, which were essential for the horticultural nurseries.

Among the results of the competition to honor the Local Council Elections were the performance of the Enamel Factory of Budafok, the Enamel Factory of Bonyhád and Kőbánya. In 1954, these factories *"gave the public a lot more fat tubs than any year since the liberation"*. During the competition, the production process accelerated in all the factories. *"Three thousand pieces of tubs are delivered to the hardware stores per every week."* In 1954, *"for a total of more than one hundred thousand pieces of fat tubes was and*

<sup>15</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 19, 1954. 8:00 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 264<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>16</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 24, 1954. 4:25 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>17</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 25, 1954. 4:30 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>18</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 25, 1954. 4:40 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>19</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 25, 1954. 5:00 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

*will be marketed". According to the plans, "the production of this important article is continued in the first quarter of 1955 in order to have a formidable spare stockpile for the next year's cropping season".<sup>20</sup>*

One day before the Local Council Elections, according to the reports, the population of the country prepared for the big day with enthusiasm. The early morning broadcast of MTI on November 27, 1954, it was uttered that forty new apartment with district heating were handed over in Sztálinváros the day before the election. On the same day the "*Gyárépítő Vállalat – the Factory Constructing Company – announced the completion of the sub-contractors' work in an edifice with 128 apartments*". The owners could already move in December. Besides the new homes, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held in a nursery school in Sztálinváros.

According to news reports, Söréd in Fejér County were also eagerly preparing for the elections. "*Half of the candidates for council membership are new applicants, the most hard-working peasants is going to be involved in the leadership of the municipality.*" The provosts of the village, according to the information from the MTI, "*want to report among the firsts that every constituents of the village have participated in the voting*". The news agency reported of a similar atmosphere from Zala County "*as the result of the had working and enthusiasm of the population the decorated polling room is ready for the event*".<sup>21</sup>

"*On the election day an honorary gate is stalled in Szabolcs County.*" At the same day colorful cultural programs are prepared on several settlements in the County. In the Kemece district pioneers are greeting the candidate of the popular front. In Nyírbogdány the amateur theatrical society of the trade union is performing. In the district of Mátészalka the election day is closed by a shindig.

The election day will be a feast in one of the ethnic village, Katymár, in Bacs County, too. The citizens spent the last preparatory days of the election working hard: they were cleaning the houses, the courtyards, streets, because "*it has become a tradition to have a notable feast in exemplary order, purity greet*".<sup>22</sup>

The evening broadcast of the MTI on November 27 collected the news from the capital. In several districts of Budapest "*festive evenings and performances will be held*", on the election day. In the 1<sup>st</sup> District "*famous*

<sup>20</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 25, 1954. 5:10 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>21</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 27, 1954. 6:40 AM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>22</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 27, 1954. 6:45 AM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

artists" and the best theatrical societies, choirs and dance groups are scheduled to perform in the hall of culture of the Institute of Folk Art.

The inhabitants of Csepel "are going to spend pleasantly the evening of the election day: in the Mátyás Rákosi Community Center they can listen to the most popular opera and operetta arias". In the 5<sup>th</sup> district "the cultural ensembles of factories and companies are in charge of the entertainment of the population. In the 13<sup>th</sup> District schools' students are organizing theatrical plays and dances".

In the Community house of MOM (Hungarian Optical Works) the district's best cultural troops are giving a gala on the eve of the election. "This is also a reward program for the working people who achieved the best results in the electoral shift." Then, a shindig that lasts to the early hours is promised to the inhabitants of the district.

The newscast continued with rural reports. One of the news from Somogy County recounted that the members of the County's cooperatives and "many thousands of individually working peasants vowed that by the time they appear at the ballot box on November 28, they will not have been in debt towards the State. The pledge was made. Day after a day more and more pork, beef cattle, corn, potatoes, milk, eggs and poultry were on delivered to the ingathering centers". Just on the week before the election, "more than 2,000 pigs for fat have been turned into". And, on the day before the election, "the County's 150 cooperatives and more than 30,000 working peasants said proudly that they kept their word and prepared for the election with dignity".

Debrecen is also dressed in festive. "Everywhere, the decorated polling stations are ready, the list of council member candidates are enumerated on plasters in national tricolor. At beehive places the artistic portraits of the exemplary council members are exhibited." In Hajdú-Bihar County, more than 20,000 young voters are balloting for the first time. "The young people will be ceremonially greeted by pioneers before the polling rooms, and will receive cockades."

The inhabitants of cities and villages in Borsod County were also in the middle of the enthusiastic preparatory works. In the life of the people of Györgyarló the Popular Front Election was an important event. "The ranch-center 12 kilometers from Sárospatak has been organized in the recent years." Shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of The Hungarian popular Front of Independence on March 15, 1949, "the working peasants of the surroundings lived on scattered small ranches, far from the world and the possibility of education. Today, on the eve of the Local Council Election, there, where seven battered small shack stood, now 182 nice family houses have been built on state

loan". It is the first time that on November 28 the population of György-  
tarló has elected a council.<sup>23</sup>

*"The working people of Szolnok County employees greeted the election day  
with a new success." Two days before the election it was "reported that  
the farming equipment maintenance centers of the County outperformed their  
plan in deep ploughing with 7.4 %". The day before the election, as it was  
written, "arrived the first time that the electric light had gone on in Cserkeszlő  
and Kungyalu".*

News was received from Székesfehérvár on November 27 that the  
city's new mechanized bakery was inaugurated. *"The modern, automatized  
works with eight furnaces was constructed under the aegis of a two-million-forint  
investment. So far, the city's residents were provided with bread from 12 small  
bread bakeries. The daily requirement of 240 quintal is fulfilled by the new factory  
alone."*<sup>24</sup>

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After a successful Popular Front Congress on the November 28, 1954, the  
national Local Council Elections were held. Councils did not become au-  
tonomous, since they were supervised by the Office of the Council of Min-  
isters. The promise, however, was still lingering on. Not for a long time.  
Following the elections, the very next day the process aimed at expelling  
Imre Nagy entirely from politics has already started. Mátyás Rákosi did  
not hesitate to use any single means against him, trusting the support of  
Moscow.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 27, 1954. 6:35 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>24</sup> MTI Domestic News. November 27, 1954. 6:55 PM. MNL-OL XXVI-A-14-b. 265<sup>th</sup> Box.

<sup>25</sup> See M. RAINER, *János: Imre Nagy. Political Biography II*, Budapest 1999, pp. 105–109.