

HUNGARY CLEARS HANGED 'TRAITOR'; SOCIALISTS FREED

Rajk, Foreign Chief Executed
in '49, Has Been Vindicated,
Red Party Leader Says

OTHERS ARE ABSOLVED

Trial Reviews Called Gesture
Toward Tito and a Result
of Anti-Stalin Drive

By JOHN MacCORMAO

Special to The New York Times.

VIENNA, March 29—The name of Laszlo Rajk, Hungarian Foreign Minister who was executed on charges of high treason and Titoism in September, 1949, has been cleared. The same thing has been done for his associates who died with him.

The cases of other Communists and a number of Hungarian Socialists have also been revised. Those found innocent have been freed and others pardoned.

These developments were announced, according to the Budapest radio, in a speech delivered in the old cathedral city of Eger by Matyas Rakosi, First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers (Communist) party. It was at his order that the executions and imprisonments took place.

The rehabilitation of the purge victims was the not unexpected result of the recent condemnation of Stalin by Nikita S. Khrushchev, Soviet Communist party leader.

The clearing of Mr. Rajk's name is interpreted here as a gesture toward President Tito of Yugoslavia, who virtually insisted on it in a speech in Karlovac last summer. He had also condemned the purge of Rudolf Slansky, Czechoslovak Deputy Premier, and his ten comrades, who were executed in Prague in 1952 for alleged Titoism. So far Prague has shown no signs of undertaking a rehabilitation in their case.

Review Ordered Last Year

A special commission was appointed by the Hungarian Ministry of Justice last December to revise the verdicts in the trial of Mr. Rajk and his associates. It was reported last month that Mr. Rajk's widow had again been accepted as a member of the Hungarian party and given a position.

The rehabilitation of the reputations of the Hungarian Social Democrats is interpreted as a gesture toward world socialism. A new policy of seeking a popular front with Socialists was announced at the recent Soviet Communist party congress in Moscow.

Thirty to fifty Social Democrats, including Anna Kethly, were released last year. But others known to have been imprisoned were not set free at that time.

According to the Budapest radio, Mr. Rakosi said one major recent accomplishment of Hungarian communism had been the strengthening of "Socialist legality." He continued:

"After the exposure of the imperialist agent Beria [Lavrenti P. Beria, Soviet Minister of the Interior, executed in December, 1953] and of Peter Gabor [Hungarian police chief, sentenced to life imprisonment in March, 1954] and his band in Hungary,

Continued on Page 4, Column 4

The New York Times

Published: March 30, 1956

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HUNGARY CLEARS KEY PURGE VICTIM

Continued From Page 1

our party leadership revised the Rajk trial.

"It established that the trial had been based on provocation. For this reason the Supreme Court rehabilitated Comrade Rajk and other comrades. It also revised similar cases, rehabilitating those who had been condemned though innocent and granting amnesty to others.

"Simultaneously, it reviewed the trials of former Social Democrats who had been condemned. Most have already been freed. The others will be set free in a few days. Those not guilty have been or will be rehabilitated, those who offended against the people's democracy have been amnestied."

Along with Mr. Rajk, Tibor Szoenyi, party organizer, and Andras Szalai, the party's youth leader, were condemned to death. Lazar Brankov, an anti-Titoist Yugoslav diplomat, and Pal Justus, deputy head of the Hungarian radio, were sentenced to life imprisonment, and Milan Ognjenovics, clerk in the Yugoslav Legation, to nine years. Lieut. Gen. Gyoergy Palffy, inspector general of the Army, and Col. Bela Korondy, a police official, were condemned to death by a military court.

Rajk Associate Freed

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, March 29 (Reuters)—Hungarian authorities have already released Lazar Brankov, one of Laszlo Rajk's co-defendants. M. Brankov was understood to have been freed during the past winter.

Execution Was Swift

Mr. Rajk was hanged about 6 o'clock on the morning of Oct. 15, 1949, in a Budapest prison courtyard. He was 40 years old. Executed with him were two associates, Tibor Szoenyi, 46, and Andras Szalai, 32.

The executions were carried out less than twenty-four hours after the Council of People's Courts, the Hungarian court of last resort, had refused clemency.

In a typical Communist confession scene at the trial, Mr. Rajk admitted having been a traitor to the Communist party for seventeen years. He testified he had been engaged in a plot "to lead and organize an anti-Soviet movement in every people's democracy." If the plot had succeeded, he said, he was to have become the "Titoist Premier" of Hungary.

He also confessed that he had



Associated Press

HIS NAME CLEARED:
Laszlo Rajk, Hungarian Foreign Minister executed in 1949 as a traitor. Hungarian Communists now say he was innocent, and was convicted on false evidence.

plotted to assassinate Matyas Rakosi, then Deputy Premier of Hungary; Gen. Mihaly Farkas, Defense Minister, and Erno Geroe, Finance Minister.

After the prosecutor had asked for the death sentence, M. Rajk said: "I fully agree with your statements, Mr. Prosecutor, and want to state in advance that I will consider the verdict of the court justified."

Mr. Rajk was a native of Transylvania. In the Spanish civil war he was wounded while serving in an international brigade against Generalissimo Francisco Franco.

In March, 1946, he became Interior Minister of Hungary. This role enabled him to play a leading role in the Communist coup in 1947. It was he who paved the way in that year for the ousting of Premier Ferenc Nagy, who represented the middle-class Smallholders party, by staging police round-ups of alleged reactionaries among the Smallholders.

He also rounded up sympathizers of the former Regent, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, on charges of plotting a revolution. He wrote the new Communist election law of 1947, and became Foreign Minister in August, 1948.

But he was not one of the inner group of Moscow-trained Hungarian Communists, and barely ten months after becoming Foreign Minister he was arrested.