Budapest, in Hungarian to Hungarians in West Europe, Jan. 18, 1958, 1900 GMT--L

(Text) Today the Hungarian Telegraph Agency published the material of the talks that Dr. Ferenc Munnich, Vice Premier, had on Jan. 16 with the 12-member delegation of American editors and journalists visiting Hungary. Dr. Munnich answered questions asked by the journalists.

Of the country's economic position, he said that we succeeded in making good in one year the damage caused by the counterrevolution. Our budget is balanced; what is more, there appears to be a certain surplus. This is, of course, due not only to our own efforts but also to aid from the Soviet Union and other friendly countries. In the first days after the defeat of the counterrevolution, we received large quantities of fuel, oil, and other industrial raw materials from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government has made available goods-credit exceeding one billion forints and a deal of freely convertible currency. Of our foreign trade, Munnich said that, according to approximate data, we are doing 60 percent of our foreign trade with the socialist camp and 40 percent with the capitalist countries.

To a question raised in connection with Premier Janos Kadar's journey to Yugoslavia, he replied:

Yugoslavia is our neighbor; a centuries-old struggle against the common enemy link us to her people. We are also dependent upon each other economically. Our countries display mutual respect for each other; we should like to improve our friendship as much as possible. For this very reason, it would not be surprising if the leaders of the two countries should pay a visit to each other at times convenient to both parties. In any case, in regard to this, we have come to an agreement with the Yugoslav delegation in Moscow.

In connection with Imre Nagy, he said:

Imre Nagy is a Hungarian citizen who has committed grave acts against the Hungarian People's Republic; for these he is responsible.

To the question of whether relatives of Hungarians who have immigrated to Israel will be given the opportunity to leave, Munnich replied:

In principle there is no objection to this, although in Hungary, as in any other country, emigration is regulated by law. I am bound to say, however, that Hungarian citizens who returned from Israel had very unpleasant experiences there. It was for this very reason that they returned.

Finally, Vice Premier Munnich replied to questions concerning Cardinal Mindszenty:

Mindszenty is a Catholic priest under the orders of the Pope. Although we have no diplomatic relations with the Vatican, we respect the Pope as head of the church, and, if he orders Mindszenty to remain in the American Legation, we shall respect his order. Also, we cannot give orders in regard to the hospitality of the American Legation. If they deem it fit to have Mindszenty as their guest, let them do so.
As for the granting of safe conduct to the cardinal, during the counter-revolution Mindszenty demanded over the radio the return of the distributed land and restoration of capitalism. If Mindszenty were to leave the legation, we would have to protect him from the wrath of the peasantry. To give amnesty is the sovereign right of the state and it will exercise this right when it deems necessary in the interests of the people. In any case, those who are trying to put pressure on the Hungarian Government from abroad are doing a great disservice to the cause of amnesty. A foreign country cannot give a Hungarian citizen a safe-conduct certificate.

Relations between the government and the churches, including relations with the Catholics, are very good and are settled, declared Munnich. Archbishop Grosz is loyal and is helpful in developing good relations. In any case, we count freedom to practice one's religion among the democratic rights of freedom.

(Editor's Note: Budapest, in English to Europe on Jan. 18 at 2000 GMT adds: "In reply to questions on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Germany, Munnich said that it is closely linked with a number of other questions—for example, the stationing of American troops in many other Western countries and the military bases in these countries. He added that Soviet troops in East Germany and in Hungary do not protect the regime itself, but offer joint security on a legal basis.")

Further Details

Budapest, Hungarian Home Service, Jan. 18, 1958, 1000 GMT--L

(Excerpts) The U.S. Journalists asked: "What changes have taken place in Hungary since October 1956?"

Munnich replied: Vast changes occurred in the life of the people. While during the counterrevolution the foreign and internal bandits let loose on the people could freely indulge in murder in the streets, we have since restored law and order. We prosecute the murderers on a constitutional and legal basis. Today every honest citizen of the country may enjoy undisturbed sleep.

To the question whether there had been separate negotiations in Moscow, on the occasion of Nov. 7, between the Hungarian and Polish delegates, Munnich said that no such talks whatsoever took place.

Munnich said that the Soviet troops in East Germany and in Hungary do not protect the regime itself but offer joint security on a legal and contractual basis. "As you, too, know," he said, "recently 17,000 Soviet soldiers were withdrawn from Hungary." Munnich then emphasized that the Warsaw treaty was concluded after the establishment of NATO and after the rearmament of West Germany had begun.
"We have had very bad experiences in connection with German imperialism," he said, "and it is we who decide how to protect ourselves against it. The Soviet Union has already made several proposals which give the answer to your questions."

In reply to questions about Imre Nagy, Munnich said: "Imre Nagy committed grave acts against the Hungarian People's Republic for which he is responsible. For this very reason he is hardly in a position now to grant the interview for which you have asked.

The journalists asked Munnich whether complete freedom of movement was insured to U.S. journalists in Hungary. In his reply Munnich emphasized that members of the present delegation could see this for themselves. Correspondents of the ASSOCIATED PRESS and of REUTERS are working in Budapest, and according to his knowledge, MTI, the Hungarian news agency, is engaged in negotiations with the UNITED PRESS. "Of course, I must add," said Munnich, "that during the counterrevolution there were many Western journalists here who were spies rather than correspondents."

Finally replying to a question on the Hungarian military budget, Munnich said that Hungary's military expenditure is very small because Hungary is a small country and, at the same time, is part of the one billion-strong peace bloc. About two to three percent of the annual budget goes for military purposes. Hungary cannot afford more because she has other great tasks in the sphere of peaceful construction.

Additional Details
Budapest, MTI, in French Hellschreiber to Europe, Jan. 18, 1958, 2200 GMT-L

(Excerpts) "As to the orientation of Hungary's national economy, Munnich said: 'Hungary is a country poor in raw materials. Therefore we base our economy on cooperation with the friendly countries which are industrially more advanced and which have the necessary resources. It goes without saying that we, too, have our own resources but in insufficient quantities. I quote the example of Japan which, though industrially developed, imports 80 percent of its raw material requirements.'

"Asked about the Soviet sputnik in its relation to Soviet and Hungarian military potential, Munnich said: 'We belong to the camp of the socialist countries fighting for peace. If one of the members of this camp becomes stronger this also strengthens the others. Otherwise our economic system absolutely needs peace."
"Our society is not divided into layers with opposite interests. We all unanimously want peace. The situation is entirely different in the United States. Mr. Dulles and Mr. Stevenson represent different policies. Meanwhile what is certain, however, is that the progress of science influences military potential."

"To the question whether on the occasion of Nov. 7 there had been any separate negotiations in Moscow between the Hungarian and Polish delegates, Munnich said that no such talks whatsoever took place. 'I was a member of the Hungarian delegation, therefore I can confirm that no separate talks took place. The aim of our talks with our Polish friends centered on the search for means to strengthen friendship and economic cooperation between the two countries. What the Polish Government does in its country is its internal affairs, as our measures in internal affairs are ours. I do not ignore the fact that the press often puts forward assumptions in connection with these questions but even after this question is asked it remains an artificial one, lacking objective foundations."

"To the question whether it was true that the Hungarian and Polish delegations proposed many modifications to the Moscow declarations, Munnich replied: 'As for the Hungarian delegation I myself was assigned to take part in the drafting of the documents and I can readily confirm that no difference of opinion whatsoever emerged."

"To the question: 'Do you believe in the people's right of self-determination?' Munnich replied: 'Of course I do. But one must be exact and state that at the present moment we are free, whereas had the counter-revolution triumphed we ourselves could not have used the right of self-determination. Eastern Germany, too, has the right of self-determination and it is a free and democratic state.'"

"Asked about Pal Maleter, Munnich stated that Maleter is guilty of grave crimes which come under the competence of a court."

On the question on Kadar's visit to Tito, the broadcast adds: "A meeting of this kind can be more easily realized because relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia are not as complicated as those between certain Western countries, which while talking at the conference table mutually interfere in each other's colonial affairs. For the rest, the leaders of the states are too busy and contacts between the two countries could assume manifold forms, such as meetings of diplomats, scientists, various delegations, and others."

On the question of the legation in Israel, Munnich said: "As to the legation in Israel we have no intention of reducing the staff of any diplomatic mission. One needs very serious motives for resorting to such a measure. The development of Hungarian-Israeli relations will decide the size of the staff of the legation."