



SMALL FAILURES, SMALL SUCCESSES

How do you explain the fact that the Delegates' Meeting elected you and not Gábor Horn?

Csaba Óry: There really were no political differences between us. During the past half-year we established LIGA's policies in cooperation and we were both in the old leadership. LIGA's policies will not be qualitatively different now than in the past. However, I did sense a difference between what those persons forced out of their workplaces, those left to themselves, the more radicals felt, and the political big game that rival trade unions do, on occasion, play. To establish a trade union is a task made up of tiny tasks, of everyday organizing, and of small failures and small successes. I believe we should give greater emphasis to this work. It's no secret that I think along these lines, I spend quite a bit of time with the member organizations.

It seems as if there is still some political difference which exploded into debate now, at the Delegates' Meeting. Following the agreement between the Big Six of October 10 and the ET Agreement, *Gábor Horn* seemed to be a supporter of reconciliation with MSzOSz (Hungarian National Federation of Trade Unions, the official union under Communist rule) and the other old unions. The other camp, that is, your side, is less supportive of such policies.

Óry: That MSzOSz survived the reform period must be accepted as fact. It is also a fact that it is desirable for the trade unions cooperate on a number of social, job-related, and privatization issues. But, what is MSzOSz and what is LIGA? If we mean the upper bureaucracy, that



might not be what the people expect of a trade union. The fact is that the debate was as follows: we can cooperate with MSzOSz, but that does not mean that we must forgive the injustices and dishonor to which the trade unions subject one another in specific workplaces or within specific trades or areas.

Pál Forgács said that the reason he would not accept the honorary presidency is that he considers the results of the election to be a criticism of the previous leadership (with which he identifies himself) and that the membership wants something different than what the leadership had offered until now. Do you agree with his assessment?

Óry: The election does indicate this. *Pál Forgács* always defines everything very wisely and very exactly: yes, this is

what happened; the work which I took part in was inadequate for the people. It's not enough for them that we enter into spectacular agreements or that we achieve successes in the Interest Negotiation Committee. They want to have tangible results in their own workplaces. If we cannot help them in this, they will hold us accountable for it. From a certain point of view, we were threatened with a schism. Our regional organizations, which are trapped in the dead-end of local job politics, have different interests than the trade federations, which are made up of stronger trade unions and which are already lobbying in an easily discernable manner, not solely for their survival, but for their future. These two types of organizations (regional and professional) differ, but both desire to extend concrete results to their membership. And, well...these two teams have started kicking each other. It's good that this happened, and it's good that LIGA's various interest groups were able to reach some sort of compromise with one another.

The fact that there are conflicts of interest does not necessarily indicate a parting of the ways. Why did the danger of schism threaten the organization?

Óry: When people are unsatisfied, they become radical very easily. LIGA has been a believer of consensus, discussionary politics from the beginning. The stake now was, would we become, in our own hast dissatisfaction, a single trade orregional union and chase everyone else away, or should we instead try to protect the organization as a whole, and maintain the politics of discussion. We decided

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on behalf of the second choice, but the price was that we had to change a few faces at LIGA.

According to quite a few people, you were the radical element's man.

Óry: I wasn't the radicals' man, because there is no such thing in LIGA. I only know that I was elected by about 60% of the voters and that I have a big responsibility now.

Don't you see a resemblance between the present situation, and that of the Alliance of Free Democrats (the largest Hungarian opposition party in Parliament) in '91, during the election of *Péter Tölgyessy* to the Party Chairmanship?

Óry: Histories always resemble one another a little. I trust that, though we've parted paths, we will stay friends. I enjoy a great friendship with *András Körössy*, LIGA's former Vice-President for Financial affairs, who refused to accept a position this time around. *Béla Kalmár*, who also refused a Vice-Presidency, did finally become a presidential advisor, which position was confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Delegates' Meeting. So you see, we've taken steps to prevent the experiences of the AFD from repeating themselves, to prevent the leadership from isolating itself by allowing the old leadership to evaporate. Whoever becomes LIGA's President, he has a responsibility to prevent the formation of barbed-wire fences, of concrete walls, of opposing camps. This requires a lot of patience, a lot of mediation, but it's these small tasks that will preserve the peace for us.

I understand that LIGA's old patron, the AFL-CIO would rather have seen the election of *Gábor Horn*. How do you see the future of LIGA's international relations?

Óry: Neither the American unions, nor any other foreign union gave their support to either X or Y. They gave their support to the free Hungarian trade unions and these unions, if led by capable hands, can count on their friends.

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Three Nights, Three Days Hot Tempers After the Delegates Meeting

At the end of January, the LIGA Trade Union Delegates' Meeting decided, after tough battles, the type of by-laws and programs would be accepted by the representatives of the member organizations. Following the section meetings and officers' elections which lasted until morning, the delegates had to finally accept the fact that nothing had occurred as it was outlined on paper beforehand.



Applause

Even on the first day, despite festive appearances, the strains among delegates could be felt. After the applause was received by Hungarian guests such as *Árpád Göncz*, President of the Republic of Hungary, and *Pál Forgács*, former LIGA President, and by representatives of some two dozen foreign unions, the report read by *Gábor Horn*, on behalf of the leadership, was rejected by 18 of the 220 delegates with proper mandates. The votes against were cast to demonstrate a rejection of the "shift of emphasis", of the opinion that LIGA's leaders had placed political considerations to the forefront while relegating protection of interests to the background. In the same hard style with which they scourged management in the work-place, they now judged LIGA headquarters, but were unable to support their accusations and revelations satisfactorily. They shook their heads when the acting president stated his conviction that LIGA must come to a reconciliation with other trade union confederations. There were also those who were not fond of

the fact that *Sándor Nagy* was present personally. They considered it sacrilege to allow MSzOSZ into the Delegates' Meeting, even though MSzOSZ had showed its intention to come closer by allowing LIGA to represent itself only on a "lower level" at its own Delegates' Meeting last year.

Branches Against Regions

The elected President's name, *Csaba Óry*, was quite familiar to the rural member organizations, but the defeated incumbent was able to place a strong corps of officers behind his back. The battle was fought between two parties, all other candidates having withdrawn prior to the voting. Certain foreign groups found this openness strange, noting that in their organizations, the battles among candidates were settled prior to the Delegates' Meeting. There was, however, a period of preparation in LIGA with the President and officers travelling around the country trying to gain consensus on the future by-laws and LIGA programs and collecting opposing

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opinions. In the last weeks, however, the conflicts between the interest of the trade and regional unions became increasingly sharply defined. Although both groups insisted, prior to the voting, that the roles of both regional and trade unions are equally important, *Horn* emphasized the trade aspect, while *Óry* was a supporter of the regional groups.

This proposal favors those trade unions which have become strengthened after successful warning strikes, such as the railroad or bus transportation unions. This camp would have liked to see more delegated members in the LIGA Council. If this, however, was allowed to happen, it would have made meaningless the burden of responsibility borne by the elected officers, because they would have been in the

they will play an increasing role in the relief of regional job-related problems.

Surprise

The transportation union, which supported Csaba Óry, failed to get in among the elected officers, even though the team supporting *Gábor Horn*, seeing the 128:91 ratio by which Óry was victorious, left the LIGA leadership almost to a man. Following this cold shower, only *Jenő Szalai* accepted a Vice-Presidential role from among all the former officers, and he was accepted most strongly by the Delegates' Meeting, including a number of *Horn* supporters, which feared a schism. This eased the doubts, to a certain extent, showing that although the Delegates' Meeting wanted changes, they rejected the radicals in no uncertain terms. The next day, the circle of elected officials increased with the addition of officials from the regional headquarters. As a matter of fact, Óry rival *Béla Kalmár* even accepted a post as presidential advisor. The President himself asked him to accept this position, drawing the anger of those demanding a more radical approach, who by now were demanding the old leadership's heads on a platter. All attempts to bring back *Gábor Horn* and *Sándor Körössy*, the former Vice-President for Finance, who, even according to his critics, had good reasons for his position during the asset negotiations and was able to obtain the Tarogato Street building complex where the Delegates' Meeting was being held, were unsuccessful.

These people will be hard to replace. Even though the membership gives the union its strength, the trade union movement in Hungary cannot boast of too many leaders of good appearance, who are credible and accepted as good leaders. In any case, Óry now has to apply a strong hand to keep a leadership filled with rookies on course, even though the by-laws call for a „weak” president. The role of monthly revisor belongs to the LIGA Council. The leadership can decide on the dismissal of elected and delegated members of the Council on a semi-annual basis. The movement, built from grass-roots up, does not much like a hierarchical structure, but they must learn that the race has begun within LIGA, as well. The leaders must demonstrate that they are capable, not only in front of the internal LIGA lobbies, but also to the employees they represent.

K.L.



Top 10

LIGA's regional and trade structures live side by side with the member organizations having the choice of freely joining either or both types of federations or of joining the national confederation directly. It's difficult to make any type of comparison between the 300 member organizations because their numbers vary from a few hundred in some to 14,000 in the largest. The by-laws, until now, have given the Delegates' Meeting exclusive right to elect the leadership, thus it could theoretically come about that the representatives of the 15 smallest member organizations would represent their much larger counterparts in the national forums, that is if the Delegates' Meeting takes a liking to them. The new by-laws established a new body, the LIGA Council, made up of 21 members, including the 11 officers elected by the Delegates' meeting (the President, 5 Vice-Presidents, and 5 other Officers), as well as 10 members delegated by the 10 member organizations with the largest memberships. The largest memberships are defined as those with the most dues paying members. This solution demonstrates the changing power ratios from month to month and forces the largest groups to pay the central office what's coming to it, if they wish to take part in the national decisions.

minority against the unelected members, who are not accountable to the membership. The strategic branch trade unions defined their (otherwise defensible) desire to limit the members delegated by the largest organizations to 3. The regional groups thought this a bit greedy, who wanted the total number of delegated members to be decreased and demanded that the groups sending the delegates pay their expenses. "Why should our money serve to strengthen the large groups? He who orders should pay," was how they voiced their opinions.

The branch lobby had tangible motives for their stance. The asset agreement between the various trade unions delayed the division of the share ordered to branch unions in the interest of the former National Council of Trade Unions' agreement. The future of the property due the branch unions will only find a temporary solution in this year's elections. The Industry Council elections to be held in the near future will strengthen the hand of those demanding a more radical solution. Aside from this, the role of middle level negotiations will most likely increase. All this, however, does not mean that there will be no more need for regional organizations to tie the smaller member groups together for a good time to come. They are the ones on the county labor issues councils, and according to LIGA's new program,

During a Break at the Delegates' Meeting

We spoke with *Susanne Florio* the leader of the Italian CIGL's International Office.

- The influence of the German mark is having an increasing influence in Italy. The recession is growing worse. Unemployment is on the rise. This is in keeping with European tendencies as a whole. Many Italian entrepreneurs are coming to Hungary, especially in the food industries while Italian factories are being closed.

- So, you're saying that trade unions have competing interests...

- No, no, not at all. Trade unions must find a solution to these problems. We believe in Europe's future. We don't want to see the development of a two-tier Europe, where we lock certain countries out of the top tier. Trade unions must act as partners in this.

- What types of cooperation do you see as possible between LIGA and CIGL?

- This competition among trade confederations is strange for us. In Italy, we have three trade confederations working side by side, but we are able to be partners in the questions of interest protection. A while ago, we did not have such a good opinion of LIGA. We had no consistent picture to judge from. Later, we read the Gdansk Agreement, and met with your representatives at the ICFTU Caracas Conference, and our opinion became much more positive. LIGA's autumn seminar also played an important role in this. I think it important to exchange experiences between the two organizations.

- What is your opinion of the Congress?

- With us, the battle between the candidates occurs before the Congress, and we debate issues rather than personalities. It's strange that the question of professionalism has received such emphasis. No one is born a trade union official.

K.L.

LIST OF OFFICIALS ELECTED BY THE III DELEGATES' MEETING

President:

Csaba Őry (former LIGA VP)

Vice-Presidents:

Márton Béres (LIGA South Zala Federation)

Ágnes Hadházy (TDDSZ)

Dr. András Péterváry (Independent Union of City Workers of Zalaegerszeg)

Gábor Soós (PDSZ)

Jenő Szalai (former LIGA executive)

LIGA Council Members:

Judit Agócs (LIGA Baranya County Organization)

Sándor Böröcz (former LIGA executive)

István Kiss (Independent Fejér County LIGA Trade Unions)

József Vámos (LIGA Békés County Federation)

Economic and Financial oversight Committee members:

Tamás Harth (LIGA Construction Federation)

László Hertelendi (Health care Workers Interest Negotiation Organization)

Tamás Kaszás (Győr Construction Workers Independent Trade Union)

Béla Megyesi (LIGA Heves-Nógrád County Regional Council)

József Szalai (former LIGA executive)

Negotiation Committee members:

Miklós Kósa (Gyöngyös MEZŐGÉP Independent Democratic Trade Union; LIGA Heves-Nógrád County Regional Council)

Katalin Mezey (Writers' Guild)

Ferenc Nagy (Zala County Coordinating Office for Independent Trade Unions)

Tibor Óriás (TDDSZ)

Miklós Varga (Balinkabánya Independent Trade Union)

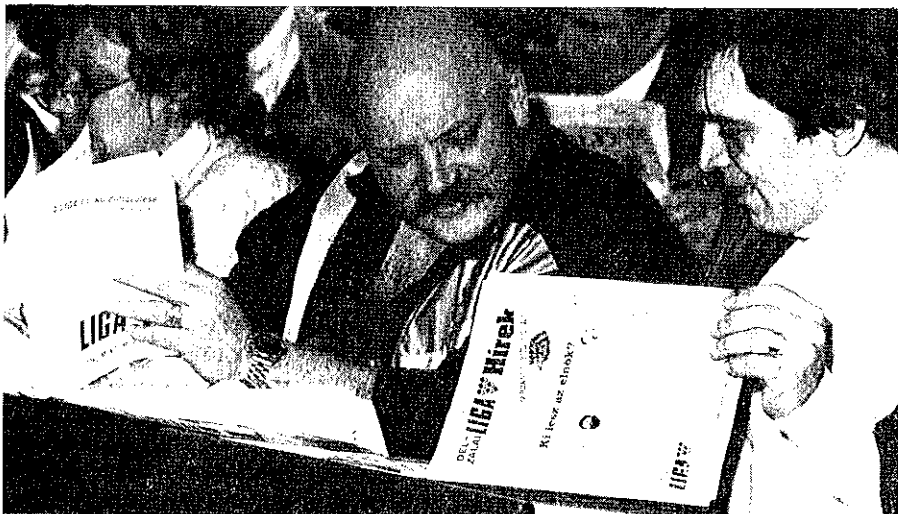
Mandate Inspection Committee:

László Balázs (FSZDL Regional Office - Győr)

Mihály Gyói (Alumínium Workers' Interest Protection Organization - Székesfehérvár)

János Kovács (NEGOSZ)

Zoltán Deák
György Szerény



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