



## EXCERPTS FROM THE DOCUMENTS OF THE GDANSK CONVENTION OF THE MID- AND EASTERN EUROPEAN FREE TRADE UNIONS

Pál Forgács, President and Mihály Csákó, International Secretary represented the Liga at this Convention.

### DECLARATIONS

1.

We, the representatives of Mid- and Eastern-European democratic, free and independent unions at our meeting in Gdansk, Poland, oppose any kind of cooperation with former communist or covertly communist labor organization.

We disagree with any dishonest use of union property or funds wherever this practice still exists, just as much as with any attempt to transfer property to those organizations which oppose reform in their structure. Such actions can not legitimize these unions.

We request from all free unions and our international organizations to refrain from any cooperation with these groups.

2.

We come to the conclusion that the change from governmental ownership to private in our respective countries created serious danger to union rights.

In order to prevent serious consequences, and to maximize the advantage of our individual experiences we will establish a central international data bank.

We will also organize, according to needs, but not less than every six month a meeting similar this one.

We announce the creation of a consulting committee at the level of union central committees to coordinate this work. This committee and machinery will not replace the individual member organizations at international federations.

We suggest that the official coordinator of the consulting committee should be the same person or organization which will host the next Convention.

3.

The free unions emphasize that special attention is necessary in a pluralistic democracy for the respect of constitu-

tional laws and the restoration of human rights. International laws and the standards given by the ILO should be the guiding principles.

**The participant trade unions at Gdansk seminar agreed on meeting regularly to decide upon their current problems. The next seminar will be held in Budapest. The topic in unemployment and the role of trade unions during transition to a free market.**

The governments in these countries where only a short time ago a single union organization existed should become more energetic in the demonopolization process. The ILO guidelines for organizational freedom should receive the necessary attention and protection against abuse.

The Governments must provide, according to ILO guidelines, for the division of the former communist controlled unions assets.

These assets should be divided among the new labor organizations in order to aid their healthy growth and their ability to execute their prog-

*As you might have noticed, we were not able to publish our news letter since February. Unfortunately, we had some organizational and technical difficulties beyond our control, for which we apologize. To catch up with the news, this is a double issue and so will be the next one. We have every reason to hope that we could resume monthly publication before the end of the year. We appreciate your continued interest and hope that you were not inconvenienced.*

rams, but above all their ability to protect and represent the interest of employees.

The resistance to change and demands of the post-communist unions clearly demonstrate their attempt to protect the old unfair, unlawful and discriminative structure.

Strong laws should be established in the spirit of the ILO guidelines for demonopolization and asset division. We request that the ILO take active part in these proceedings and supervise that these governments follow the course of demonopolization and division.

### WARNING:

We recognize signs of danger to the democratization process, as a fact the possibility of a reversal.

The most danger comes from the deliberate attempt of destruction from the post-communist organizations. They take advantage of democracy, the privilege fought for by the free unions. Based on their wealth, they strengthened their strategic positions and protected previous power bases.

We see threat of governmental indifference toward democratic reforms to protect wages and social benefits.

There should be actions to establish the lawful protection of collective agreements. The relation between Government, employers, and employees should be regulated to provide safeguarding of negotiated rights.

To reverse the effects of economic instability, we demand cooperation between governments and the free independent unions.

Based on this collaboration, action should be taken to protect social and financial security and that solutions to prevent the problems of unemployment should be initiated.

## NOTES CONCERNING POST-CONVENTION ACTIVITIES.

The President of Solidarnosc, *Marian Krzaklewski* accepted our invitation to our May day celebration;

\* President *Alexander Ivaschenko* of the Free Ukrainian Trade Unions accepted an invitation from the LIGA;

\* an agreement forged between FRATIA and the LIGA for closer cooperation and a meeting near the mutual borders;

\* we recommended Budapest for the next meeting of the Free Trade Unions;

\* a Polish born Belgian labor expert will visit Hungary and conduct a seminar for our activists.

\* DOCUMENT \* DOCUMENT \* DOCUMENT \* DOCUMENT \*

# LIGA DELEGATION AT THE ICFTU CONGRESS

*Csaba Óri*: (Vice President of LIGA)

- We participated as observers. About forty resolutions were adopted, new officers were elected. All this was accomplished within a week. Although there were disagreements, at the end consensus prevailed. This is the way the ICFTU works, despite many opinions the decisions are acceptable for everyone.

- *Is it true that the ICFTU rejected the Gdansk Resolutions of the East-European Free Trade Unions?*

- Categorically no. *Sándor Nagy* of the MSzOSz said that to the Hungarian newspapers. The Gdansk Resolutions weren't even on the agenda. What happened is that *Konstantin Trenchev*, a Vice President of the International Association of Free Trade Unions, distributed copies of the Resolutions in a given moment. He did that because the MSzOSz, without clearing it with the ICFTU have themselves disseminated their literature. The Gdansk papers contained reference to the post-communists and their attempt to obstruct progress and regain their previous positions. The Resolution used very explicit language describing these so called unions of the old totalitarian regimes. How was the LIGA received?

We have many friends among the free trade unionists, who were obviously happy to see us and occasionally opportunity came to engage in conversations with them. Some people of course already visited us in Hungary. The LIGA NEWS was widely known, to the credit of our International Department. There was no differentiation in the friendly manner we were received just because we were only observers. We had East-European friends who told us that if we

wish to add anything to resolutions they will gladly include our proposals into their own. Because of this gesture, we became participants. What are your most unforgettable moments?

I recall the meetings with groups who distances themselves from us. We put an effort into contacting organizations who, for some reason have some reservations about us, or shown outright hostility. We went to both Swedish Unions, the Danish, Norwegian and Finnish groups to extend an invitation to visit Hungary, because we found it necessary that they receive correct and multilateral information. Up till now they received material only from the bias of the MSzOSz. We found it pleasing that they paid attention to us also. This reversal of regard gave us the most valuable experience. We told everyone to come to witness our election. If we are concerned about the integrity of the ballots, the presence of impartial observers is vital, the more the better. Of course we met some of our close friends as well, among them the Force Ouvriere, the CFDT, the AFL-CIO, and three Italian Unions.

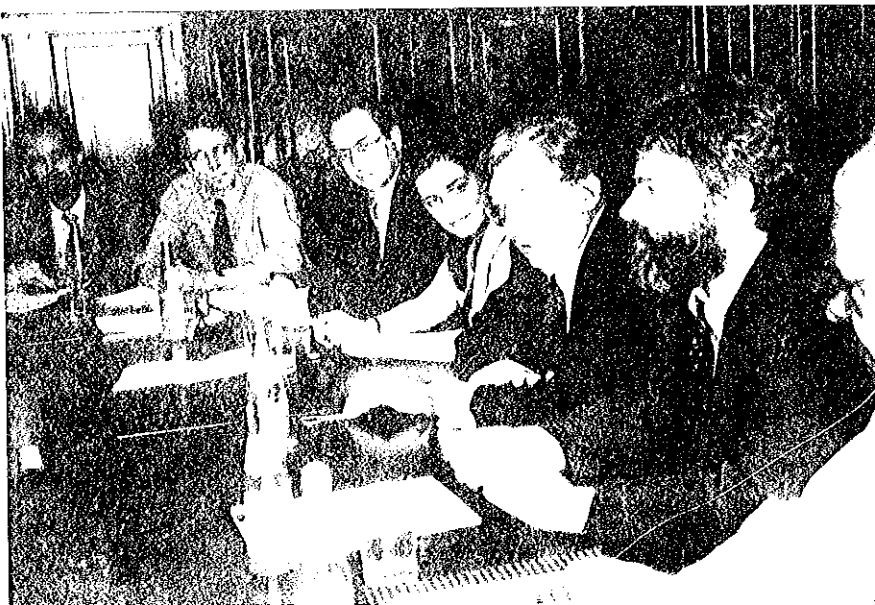
- *With what did you fill your luggages?*

We destroyed our luggages with 60 kg literature, that is over 100 lbs. We gathered everything to be found, including the French and English language official documentations. It is now in our library. Figuratively speaking, we put into our luggage promises from our French and American friends of their support during the elections. We developed agreements of educational cooperation which Germans, Israelis and Italians. The conclusion is that international solidarity helped the free trade unions in their work up till now, will still be an important factor of our ability to represent the interest of our members in the future.

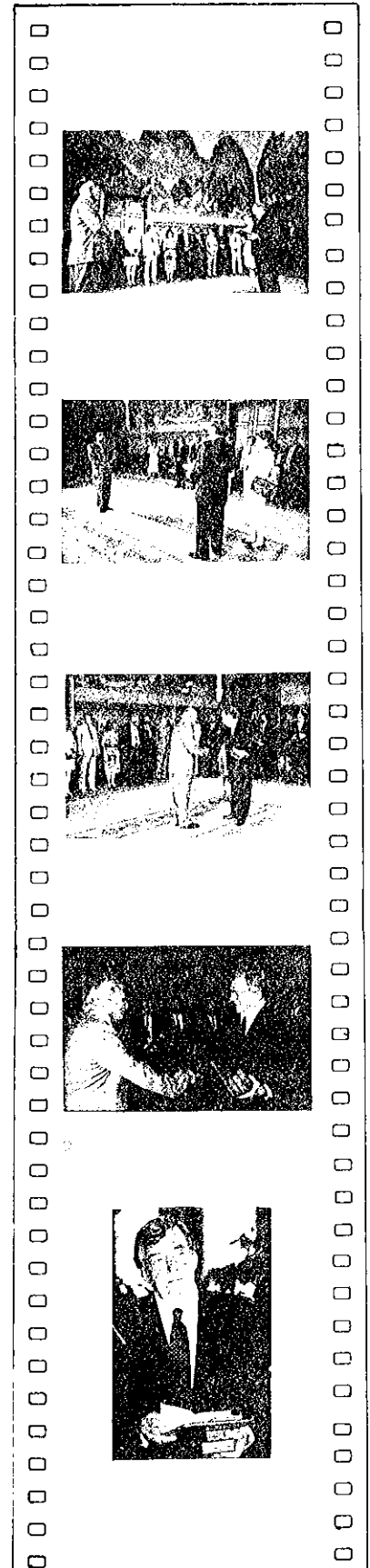
# AWARD TO LANE KIRKLAND

To recognize his contributions to the success of the country's democratic transformation, the Intermediate Cross Medal of the Hungarian Republic was awarded to the President of the AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland. The request was submitted by the Prime Minister and President

*Árpád Göncz* made the presentation. Ambassador *Charles Thomas* of the United States, the Minister of Labor *Mr. Gyula Kiss* and Hungarian union representatives were present at the ceremony in the Nándorfehérvár Chamber of the Parliament.



The press conference at LIGA



# DRAFT RESOLUTION ON SECURING DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

*The 15th World Congress of the ICFTU, meeting in Caracas from 17-25 March 1992:*

## CONCERNED:

that the deep social and psychological wounds of more than 40 years of Communist Party control, coupled with the inheritance of an obsolescent and polluting industrial structure, chronic economic mismanagement and an entrenched old leadership at all levels of society, including in the former totalitarian trade unions, present huge obstacles to recovery;

## WARNS:

that, unless there are massive coordinated international efforts to provide credible social dimension in the reconstruction of post-communist Europe and the former Soviet Union, fully engaging free organizations of workers and employers in the process, the ensuing social dislocation can only too easily degenerate into a resurgence of racism and xenophobia, a rising wave of emigration, and instability threatening not only the region, but the whole continent.

## A LETTER FROM PÁL FORGÁCS: "THIS IS NOT GOOD-BYE"...

### DEAR FRIENDS:

I regret that many of you learned from the press, radio, or TV of my decision to step down. Unfortunately, despite my personal taste, indiscretion and the news hungry press made a one day sensation from this information.

It is natural that leaders change in a democratic organization. When one finds his strength declining and it is obvious that he succeeded to transfer most of his experiences, knowledge, and ethics to a younger generation, time has come to retire.

The most precious present of my life that I had an opportunity to take up where we left off many years ago. As an older person I could continue to carry out the youthful ideas which at times was actually life threatening to express. What I started as the youngest labor union leader I could, continue as the oldest one. The communists took over the labor movement of Hungary in 1948. Exactly forty years later in May of 1988, fighting my tears, I declared the formation of an independent labor organization. Although we were still living in the Soviet Block, we created our own version of the Polish Solidarity. Today, in May of 1992 I leave as the head of an organization with 250 thousand members. I don't regret the demanding hours, the energy spent and some of the frustrations in these four years, - we prevailed. Perhaps I succeeded to be connecting link bet-

ween the great leaders of the past and today's progressive young ones.

My dear friends who just like me, dedicated your work to safeguard the interest of working men and women: you must be well-aware that this is not an easy habit to walk away from, one can't just turn his back and retire. I travelled to every corner of the country in the past years, held many meetings and must confess that each trip gave me renewed strength, hope and much happiness. I have a feeling that I know each and every member of the LIGA. So

when I call you "dear friends" it is not intended to be only a formality. We belong together. This is not a farewell, I am still a unionist. When advice, a friendly ear will be needed, you know where to find me.

Many talented young people blossomed out of the LIGA in the past few years. I am convinced that they are capable of leadership, and they will triumph in the upcoming elections. My decision will not change the accomplishment of success, to which I wish moral and physical health to all.



# GÁBOR HORN TALKS TO THE LIGA NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Last year could be characterized by the fact that the mighty union bureaucracy, which survived the changes, seemingly kept its position. However, we have proven that although we are smaller we are not weaker. Yet, it is not enough to be enthusiastic, one needs infrastructure to run a union organization effectively; this could hardly be accomplished without lawyers, financial experts, impossible to get telephone lines, a place to set up offices, Xerox machines -all what takes money. So, the law for distributing union funds has its merits. One could question how some could get away with disregarding laws in a constitutional country, but that is another matter.

We could count among our achievements, that our organization did not get caught in the quagmire of demagoguery, we didn't shout slogans against the Government and Parliament, but

kept our composure. The result of this sane course was the establishment of the National Reconciliation Council to discuss socio-economical issues. Now we have a forum to discuss minimum wages, increased child support benefits for families and easing the tax burden for low income families. Although Hungarians are growing tired in an increased proportion about organizations of any sort, the LIGA's membership grown day by day.

We received affiliation requests from union groups just today. We are yet to fulfill our dream, millions of people did not join the LIGA. As a fact, maybe the slow growth is better because those who join do that from conviction. Let this not be misleading, we have many successes to count. Some local organizations are sound both in numbers and results. We interfered success-

fully and stopped a process to bring about bad laws affecting education; we stopped school closings; we could tell about beneficial wage negotiations, not to talk about major judiciary victories over unfair labor practices. We are present everywhere, but will have to increase our awareness to certain crisis situations. The Government is unresponsive to social needs, our people must get closer to those who decided. We feel many of times that we have the right solution if we could get someone to listen. There is chaos concerning the elections, added to it that the union bureaucracy survived the political changes. The problem is not with their organization itself, but with their structure. It does not represent the workers but only its internal bureaucracy.

## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH GÁBOR HORN, PRESIDENT OF THE LIGA

*Now that you took over the President's responsibilities, will there be changes in the course the LIGA will follow?*

I hope that Pál Forgács's legacy will still be our guide. We will face situations where what we learned from him will determine our path and when the occasion calls for it, he will help us to evaluate the best action. We promise to follow his teachings on negotiations, on the importance of the role our union renders. We will conduct our work with devotion to our responsibilities.

I joined our work in 1988 and since then I grew more experienced to deal effectively with the need of organized labor. I believe that, due to being younger, I am more optimistic than Pál. This was the source of some discussions between him and me. I evaluate our achievements more positively, we succeeded in some very important confrontations.

Our work was somewhat hindered because we meant well, but had no experience, only enthusiasm. We have to experience growing pains, but it is coming together in a more effective organization, professionalism. We keep our good humor, enthusiasm without over estimating our own importance. This is the trick to keep the LIGA's profile: the spark of impetus and flexibility. We must stay away from demagoguery and focus on our needs and abilities.

I don't believe that there is another union in Hungary with our expertise. We will create more contact between the headquarters and local level activists. They are the key, therefore the upcoming election campaign will also serve to

strengthen the entire organizational structure. The issue will be the fair distribution of the former single communist controlled union's assets, but we are aiming to use the whole process to acquire organizational strength. The number of our members is increasing who understand the importance of strong, competent unions in Hungary. That is the only way for a better life.

*What are your predictions about the outcome of the election?*

It isn't only optimism, when I say that we must win and prove that the Hungarian workers are capable to decide what is best for them. They will reject the former bureaucracy which lead us into our current ineffectual predicament. This is not a prediction, only my hope that they will give us the mandate. The voters must recognize that we are dedicated to their cause. It is my feeling that we will get out of this electoral mess with recognition and stronger than ever before. As we prepare for the election, we search for the need where we could effectively help those who feel the ever increasing burden of weakening economy. We are not necessarily for maintaining every job but for creating new ones to eradicate unemployment. Those former governmental factories which are constantly in the red are not the future, but sound new work places, those which have abilities to grow. We must get decent collective agreements and laws to protect their provisions. After the elections we will be able to develop an effective infrastructure.

# THE HISTORY OF THE BETWEEN LABOR UNION ELECTION LAW

The controversy started two years ago about an election. It was intended to be the solution for equitable distribution of the formerly government controlled union's assets, and for a choice of representation as well. A law became necessary to settle how the votes will be cast and by whom. The fact that there are still heated arguments concerning this election indicates the seriousness of the predicament. There is a committee set up with representatives of the government, employers and the labor unions, the National Reconciliation Council (ÉT). Although negotiations within the committee started years ago, the situation became more complex, because new interest groups shown up, and member organizations give in to political pressure.

Needless to say that, since the very beginning of the reconciliation, the LIGA has put an emphasis on early settlement. Only an election would give legitimacy to the chosen unions. Also, the result of an election would provide an appropriate and just dissemination of the wealth. Our reasoning is obvious; this would be a rational solution. Unfortunately, there are strong self-protective interests that oppose this conclusion of the conflicts. The strongest obstruction comes from the old union, the MSzOSz. Their chances to be able to hold on to the assets would be slight.

They impede every possibility for the acceptance of any proposals of this law. As we have previously reported, they refused

cooperation with the Temporary Assets Management Committee (VIKSz) at the beginning; later the MSzOSz decided to join but mainly to hinder the work.

At first, the government tended to ignore this unlawful behavior. An alliance was announced this Spring between the MSzOSz and the successor of the Communist Party, the MSzP. There are instances when the MSzOSz union gave support to the MSzP at local political elections. This pact alarmed the Administration, as countrywide Legislative elections are approaching. Now, the government switched gears and they use every opportunity to discredit the MSzOSz and to break up their power base: the membership. Unfortunately, this drive harms all the other participating unions as well.

What do we expect from the government?

The party with the majority in the Administration suggests that the elections should decide the need altogether for labor unions. They contemplated to set up their own organization, a foundation that would take care of social and welfare work currently administered by the unions. Due to violent protest from the unions, they had to back out of this absurd proposal. Their newest idea is that there should be an election every three years which would decide about 1/3 of the assets each time. Furthermore, if the

turn out of voters is low, this ratio should also be lowered. All the unions in the National Reconciliation Council rejected this recommendation as well. The Administration disregarded the union protest of the unions and proceeded to send it to the Parliament in its original form.

The fight between the successors of the communist union federation and the truly independent organizations complicates the confrontation with the Administration. As for the arguing unions, there is some clarification in the way on the boundaries of power structures, but the solution is far away. An election would certainly solve the problem. One has to realize with some apprehension that these disputes happen in a drastically changing society. There is practically no rein on this market economy. The labor unions and the employers themselves are unclear about their respective roll in this turmoil. The election would have extremely important significance to settle some very important issues, but the results would only be productive if the LIGA's point of view would prevail.

We received news after the deadline that the unions reached an agreement among themselves concerning the apportionment. This makes the choice of union to represent, and the administration of National health care program (formerly a union governed service) the "only" issues.

## NEW NAVIGATOR IN THE SEA.

Moral and legal rights triumph, with help from the LIGA, in the confrontation between Hungarian seamen and their employers.

Bad news came in May from the Hungarian Shipping Line Company (MAHART). There had been talk of wide scale layoffs, incredible losses, and selling assets way below their worth. The employees believed that their wages were already too low as the result of the high inflation rate and not receiving any raises in the last two years. The final straw was drawn when the collective agreement expired on December 31, 1991. The company decided unilaterally to offer individual contracts for only 6 and 9 months' terms. According to the existing collective agreement, the workers were entitled to receive a lump sum settlement if their services were no longer required. The LIGA affiliated Hungarian Seamen's Union (MTSz) believed that this contractual provision would be disregarded once the employers could get their new policy in effect. Furthermore, not realizing the true intent, the employees would actually sign away their jobs. A very nasty situation developed. András Fáty, the Company Director decided that he will separate himself from the negotiations. He ca-

tegorically refused to discuss anything with the union and stated that their allegations were not true. He went that far that he disputed the legitimacy of the union because the writing and signing an agreement is the exclusive right of the employer and employee. He came up with a unique idea to end the dispute: the Company filed a lawsuit against three union leaders because, in their judgment, the union officers' public statements were defamatory and damaging to their finances.

The Company Manager expressed his desire to form a new union with leaders who would 'have a constructive attitude toward the company'. The LIGA distributed information of this dispute among unions outside the country. We received statements of solidarity from the Belgian CGSLB and from the ÖTV of Germany. President Lane Kirkland of the American AFL-CIO happened to be visiting Hungary and promised us that he will make sure that this affair will be widely publicized.

Meanwhile the case reached the Court of Labor, and they decided in the favor of the union. The Court said that the demands of the union were proper. This is how the LIGA piloted the Seamen's (MTSz) ship into port.

# LET'S HOLD ON TO A TRADITION...

About our May Day celebration

The LIGA's May Day party was one of those great occasions one will remember for a long while and we will have an even better one next year.

The first surprising conclusion to draw is that despite hard times, May Day celebration cleanses one's spirit. We need the festivities and to share the sunshine we enjoy with our families, the relaxation and the ecstasy of spending the day together. Looking at the wind playing with the LIGA flag, one realizes that we all share concern for the present and future.

We also learned that a good thing does not need advertisement, everyone remembered last year's celebration and came with new friends this year.

We should have paid somewhat more attention to environmental problems. We missed the Greens. Hungary faces severe environmental problems, such as the ill conceived Bős-Nagyymaros project to change the course of the Danube with a dam. Environmental protection is one of the LIGA's concerns since

the beginning. We consider the environment one of the few issues about which Hungarians will agree above party politics.

My compliments to *Sanyi Böröcz* and his team for organizing this successful event; their expertise made everything come together into an enjoyable celebration of Labor.



## FRIENDS, INVITED TO THE CELEBRATIONS OF 1ST OF MAY WERE THE FOLLOWING:

1. *Markku Jaaskelainen*  
Deputy General Secretary, ETUC
2. *Marian Krzaklewski (Csaklevszkij)*  
President, Solidarnosc
3. *Jean-Pierre Delhomenie*  
International Secretary, CFDT
4. *Jerry Evans*  
Training Specialist, AFL-CIO
5. *Ferdinand Sulaj*  
Albanian Free Trade Union
6. *Ms. Emel Etem*  
National Secretary, PORDREPA
7. *Mr. Charles Tomas*  
Ambassador, USA

*Flóra Fencsik*

# WARM FRIENDSHIP WITH ITALIAN PENSIONERS

A warm friendship formed between the Pensioners' Section of the LIGA and the Italian Pensioners' Union a year ago. Our relationship has been active since then, with much support from our Italian friends.

We received an invitation last September to the 14th Congress of the SPI-CGIL. *Dr. András Kispéter*, member of our Pensioners' Committee represented us in Pesaro. He gave a detailed report of this interesting event.

The International Director of the organization, Mr Sergio Giuliantisent the report of a two day conference held in Madeira, Portugal as the result of a resolution by the European Community Council. The meeting in

April dealt with several issues concerning *Senior Citizens*. The main concerns were the relationship of retired people and their families, also the concord between generations. The date of next year's conference was set for March 1993. The three Italian pensioners' unions (SPI-CGIL, FPN-CISL, UILP-UIL) were represented by a single unified delegation. SPI-CGIL Secretary, *Mr. Gianfranco Rastelli* reported for all to the plenary assembly. We read this report with much interest which told us that we face similar problems in representing our members. This and other information proved very useful.

The fact that the Italian Pensioners' could join in one delegation gives us the

hope that something similar is also possible in Hungary. The protection of our 2.5 million retired workers' interest would be better served by a united organization.

We appreciate the report from our Italian friends. We hope our representatives might be able to participate in the work of next year's conference, particularly for the reason that we might learn much from the more experienced European organized pensioner community and their leaders.

*György Makai*  
President of the LIGA  
Pensioners' Committee

## ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE LIGA PENSIONERS' SECTION

The joint executive conference of our Organizing Committee and the National Assembly of Hungarian Pensioners' was held on June 25, 1992.

The most important issues on the agenda were:

- pensioners' fundamental rights;
- problems concerning pension increases;
- pensioner representation in governmental decisions;
- housing problems;
- retired agricultural workers specific problems.

There were several resolutions aimed to better the quality of life for pensioners:

Representing organizations will fight for having domestic conditions follow internationally accepted standards.

We demand constitutionally guaranteed rights for protected living standards. The consequence of the Go-

vernment's financial problems, and loses caused by the economic recession should be equally distributed among the population, - senior citizens should not carry a disproportionate burden.

Adjust pension benefits with the inflation index. Senior citizens should be able to maintain a decent lifestyle from their pension without welfare assistance.

The Hungarian National Assembly should primarily be concerned with current pensioners when making laws. Our needs should be protected as well as future pensioners'.

There are certain issues, currently neglected, which require immediate attention. Such as:

- senior citizens' personal safety;
- income for senior citizens who are not eligible for pension or the term of their unemployment insurance ran out;

- supplementary income when necessary to maintain decent living conditions;

- means to deal with crisis situations;

- national health care should not deteriorate for senior citizens, the cost of medicine and medical care should not become an additional financial burden;

- decent provisions for widows, the current statute is unfair to widows who earned their own pension as well as eligibility through marriage;

- increase the amount deposited in the National Pension Fund and by that act secure inflation indexed pension benefits.

*György Makai*  
Head of the LIGA  
Pensioner Section

LIGA HUNGARIAN LEAGUE OF FREE HUNGARIAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION  
Address: 1071 Budapest, Margit körút 15. sz. 1. emelet

Pfone: (36-1) 142-6957; FAX (works 24 hours): (36-1) 142-8143

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