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CONFISCATION OF HOMES IN BUDAPEST

Revolutionary Government Said to Have Seized All Available Dwellings and Household Furniture for Use of Proletariat

By special correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

BUDAPEST, Hungary—Bad as were the housing conditions in Budapest during the past years, the drastic measures taken by the revolutionary government to remedy them seem unnecessarily ruthless and brutal against the unfortunate bourgeoisie. By one sharp edict the communist rulers in Budapest have confiscated all available dwelling accommodation —offices, shops, stores, houses, villas, in short any sort of place which could possibly be adapted for living purposes. Where it was necessary the government is also providing furniture.

A single family, no matter how large, cannot have more than three rooms; married couples without children only two rooms; and single persons, of all ages and classes, "at the most"—the decree reads—one room. All the rooms in a house or flat above these prescribed figures must be placed at the disposal of the Dwellings Commission of the people's government. The commission invites applications for new homes from all proletariat families and persons who are dissatisfied with their present quarters, but it is declared that the first preference will be shown to organized workers belonging to trade unions.

Rooms Taken by Force

Not only must the wealthy and middle-class house owners and tenants alike give up all that the revolutionary government considers superfluous rooms, but they must also leave the furniture in these rooms for the use of such proletariat families as may be quartered on them. Anybody who attempts in any way to resist or evade these orders, or remove any furniture from these spare rooms, will, according to the text of the Dwellings Commission's decree, "be brought before a revolutionary tribunal and may, according to the seriousness of the offense, be sentenced to death." This threat of death sentences, however, has become so common a feature of the Bolshevist government's manifestoes, that it has ceased to frighten the public as it did in the first days of the revolution.

As a consequence of these measures, scarcely a middle-class family in Budapest has not been put to the greatest inconvenience and has often suffered the grossest indignities. Families have come with hordes of dirty and uncared-for children from the lowest quarters of the city, and ensconced themselves in the luxurious villas and apartments of the wealthiest citizens of Budapest. In one such case a family took up their quarters in the salon of a millionaire banker, set up a cooking stove in the middle of the room; one of the children had a bed made up on the grand piano, and another slept on a costly silk oriental rug.

The government professes to be very solicitous for all intellectual workers, and Bela Kun told a representative of The Christian Science Monitor of one case where a well-known professor of history was allowed to retain his study, in addition to the rooms allowed to himself and his family under the official decree. But the revolutionary leader forgot to add that the professor had been his old schoolmaster. Baron Fejervary, grandson of a former Hungarian minister-president, was treated very differently. The latter is a most enthusiastic natural scientist and has a valuable collection of books and stuffed reptiles. His apartment has been filled with enforced guests, and the Baron and his wife are compelled to live and sleep in one room, amidst the crowded collection of books and specimens.

It will be seen that this decree makes no allowance for the accommodation of servants, and many persons have been compelled to send away their domestics as there is no room for them to sleep. No exceptions are made in any case, and many persons have been deprived of all household assistance.

The Stranger in the House

Quite often, utter strangers come and take possession of rooms in luxurious homes without any authority from the official Dwellings Commission. The owners are far too terrified to protest, fearing that greater trouble still may befall them. Next to their wrath at seeing their cherished household treasures broken and destroyed by these uninvited guests, is their anxiety as to how they are going to get rid of these people peaceably, when the present revolutionary cabinet reaches the end of its tether and gives place to a ministry which really represents the country.

After confiscating the dwellings the revolutionary government proceeded to seize all the household furniture upon which it could lay hands. Besides taking the stocks of furniture dealers, the authorities have seized all the furniture left in apartments by people who have fled into the country. The stocks of the furniture factories have also been confiscated. So far the furniture distribution bureau has furniture for 10,000 bedrooms, but none for dining rooms, parlors, and kitchens. Chairs, too, are lacking. Two thousand proletariat families have applied for furniture, and 500 have already been supplied. Most of them asked for chairs and tables and kitchen requisites, but there are none to be had. Everybody can have all the bedroom furniture they desire.

To make up for the shortage of chairs the distribution bureau is confiscating all the superfluous chairs in the cafés, especially in those frequented by the bourgeoisie. The luxurious chairs, couches, and tables in the clubs, casinos, and castles and villas of the aristocracy are all being collected for distribution amongst the proletariat.