

In 1953 I was captured by the police and charged with a plot against the existing system. This was a part of the so-called plot of Baja where quite a number of innocent people were arrested and charged with plotting against the system. I was sentenced to 15 years of jail. On October 27th 1956 I was free. At that time I was in a rather poor condition, so I took a few days rest and then escaped to Austria. During that time I did not participate in any revolutionary activities, I did not even visit my relatives. I have some knowledge about the preparation of the Revolution since newspapers were coming into the jail. I read quite a few interesting articles in 1956, and I still remember the manifest<sup>o</sup> of the writers against the personal cult. I know that everybody was expecting a good turn after the 20th Congress of the Party. I did not ~~believe~~ believe in any great change. The Revolution itself had a psychological rather <sup>than</sup> political reason. It was a psychological explosion. This is why it was so united. Most of the people did not expect any success after the Revolution. I saw how the Russian monument in Vác was overturned. When it was laying on the street it was beaten apart by little kids of 8 and 9 years, the older people were just smiling. They were happy but they did not want to participate in any action of this kind. Xx

Concerning the working conditions and the economic conditions of the average people I do not have direct experiences as a layman would have. I know, however, that nobody was satisfied with his standard of living particularly the white-collared class was very dissatisfied since they had to work according the norms. I had an acquaintance at the office of the village council who had to produce a certain number of documents every day. The teachers were poorly paid and overburdened with the extra-curricular activities, they had to participate in the work of the pioneers, in the studying circles and so on. Their regular work started at seven o'clock a. m., when they had to read the newspaper articles to the little kids; but after the teaching hours they had to attend a number of meetings and conferences. The system of control was even more <sup>burdensome</sup> ~~..lowsome~~ for them. The teachers were supposed to evaluate the students, the directors of the schools were supposed to evaluate the teachers, and so on. The teachers were deprived of their summer vacation too. In the summer they had to accompany the different children groups to the resort places and supervise them. On such occasions the married teachers had to be separated from their families. At other times they had to attend special courses and seminars. For example a <sup>made</sup> great school teacher could become a high school teacher after attend-

ing a summer seminary of 2 1/2 months. The result was that many of the new teachers<sup>s</sup> had a very poor education. In some cases their education was inferior to that of a good student. The authority of the teachers were greatly <sup>red</sup> destructed by the communist habit of using them for general propaganda work. If a piece loan came out, the teacher had to go from door to door to ~~get~~ <sup>with a</sup> reliable party member and persuade the people to subscribe to the loan. In the case of election he had to do the same propaganda work, in case of a mass demonstration he had to participate in its preparation. This whole situation destructed the authority of the teachers, and finally even the communists<sup>s</sup> wanted to restore the old order. After 1953 the teachers were no more used for this kind of propaganda. In 1951 and 1952 I was working as a common laborer mainly in the Dunántúl in the different villages of the Bakony area. For a while I was employed in road maintenance work, where most of the other people were Union members. Our earnings depended on the norms. The workers were mainly country people, not used to idling. They did their best to fulfill the norms, however, it was impossible because of the poor technical outfit. The old ~~tools~~ <sup>tools</sup> could not be replaced, other times we could not work because there was no raw material. At one time we were supposed to lay cement on the road, but the raw material did not reach<sup>ed</sup> for two days. It was impossible to ~~fulfill~~ fulfill the norms.

I think that the road maintenance firm tried to jeat the workers on their achievements; in many cases the work actually done was not credited to the workers. When the pay-day came everybody got less money than he expected to come. The unionized workers tried to complain at the meetings, but for the non-unionized workers, and particularly for me, it would have been dangerous to open our mouth. The complaints, however, did not lead to any results. On the contrary, many workers who voiced complaints were dismissed or sent to interment camps. When I joined the working gang, the workers of good will warned me about the existing situation. Consequently, I never spoke up, but accepted the conditions as they were.

The road maintenance company had about 200 unionized workers and about 100 temporary workers. None of them was a conscious proletarian. The unionized workers *openly criticized the Party and courageously resisted* the anti-religious campaign of Communism. I remember one case which might be characteristic in this respect. The workers were transported from the neighbouring villages on trucks. One morning the truckdriver gave *ride* to a woman who turned out to be the propaganda secretary of the Party for that sub-county. During the ride she began to talk and gave a straight Party-line propaganda. Suddenly the driver stopped the truck and told her to get out right in the middle of the road. This happened in January 1952 at the time of the greatest terror. Almost all the workers were real country people of peasant origin. Out of the 300 workers there were no more than 3 so-called déclassé elements. There was a countess and a former landowner and of course myself. The local newspaper wrote a special item about the company attacking it for employing so many déclassé elements. However, the company did not fire any of us. During those 1 1/2 years when I was a common laborer I lived in the villages and saw their life. The village generally tried to maintain its old form of life. Many chairmen of the local councils were regular working people. They disliked policemen as well as the Party members who came *down from Budapest.* One Sunday afternoon the 2 local policemen were deprived

of their arms and given a great beating. The policemen never dared to go out into the woods. In another village a few Russian soldiers appeared on New Year's night. They became drunk, wanted to get girls, whereupon the boys took away their arms and beat them up. Within a few minutes the police came out from Veszprem. By that time they found only the Russians on the scene, they arrested them and took them away. Since the Russian bases were nearby we had quite a few troubles with the Russians. Once there was a May festival in one of the villages and a Russian without any reason shot a fellow who was just riding on a horse. The fellow died and his 2 sons gave a great beating to his murderer. But the most interesting thing was that after the burial the ministry in Budapest wanted to pay 1000 forints as damage to the family of the murdered person. The living conditions were rather poor in the countryside. There is no homebuilding activity. The youngsters stay with their parents after marriage because it is so difficult to find a home. My sister took in 2 subtenants shortly after the war. Later on, both her son and daughter got married and came to live with her, but she was unable to get rid of her subtenants. It was difficult to buy meat and sugar. Although the country people did not have much money there was not enough commodity in the stores. Every village got allotted a certain amount of meat every week. If that amount was sold it was impossible to replace it up to

next week. The ~~same~~ system was <sup>the same</sup> for cold cuts, bread and many other commodities. Generally speaking the wages were poor. I made 400 forints a month and a pair of rubber boots cost 390 forints. People went around bare-foot just as they had it done before the war.

Concerning the family life in the Communist system I can ~~give~~<sup>tell</sup> you my observations and evaluations. An example will illuminate my point. A cousin of mine ~~was~~<sup>has been</sup> married for 4 years. Both he and his wife were teachers. After 4 years of marriage he was transferred into another village, but his wife and the kids were supposed to stay in the old place. He went to see the local secretary of the Party and asked him that his wife should be transferred too, whereupon the Party secretary answered: "Wasn't the one wife enough for you for four years? You can get another one." The policy which shows up in the above case is well explained by Molnar Erik in his book Dialektika. There he explains that according to the Communist philosophy people should be well supplied with material goods and they should be bound to the Party, but to nothing else. The youth he says can be bound to the Party by granting a sexual freedom for them. The laxity of morals, the destruction of the family system can be generally observed, particularly in the villages. A village school teacher for example told to her pupils that it is not necessary for them to revere their parents since they had their pleasure in youth. Such statements are very dangerous. Of course, the good parents tried to counterbalance such influences. I know one case when a little boy came home from the school and explained to his mother that he must be independent from his parents according to the teachings of the Party, whereupon at



supper time the mother returned it to him: "Now be independent, I have not prepared any supper for you. You can get it for yourself." In spite of such cases there is a general decrease in the parental authority. The families are no more bound together. The kids often oppose their parents. I know <sup>of</sup> one case when the parent<sup>s</sup> did not permit that the kid should join the pioneer movement. But the kid wanted to do so and finally his will prevailed to that of the parents. According to the present law, kids over 16 years are permitted to frequent the taverns. Adolescents do so very often. As far as I could see there were more adolescents in the village tavern than grown-ups. The adolescents start sexual life at a very early age. There were quite a few girls at the age of 13 in that village known to me who already had sexual relationships. One of these young girls with whom I worked together told me that if a girl is not in love at the age of 15 she cannot be normal. She was very much amazed when I explained her that there is another morality. She said she had never heard about it. It is very difficult to describe the social structure in Hungary. One thing is sure there is a Communist aristocracy, the members of which have no more any direct connections with the average people. Their distance from the average people is much greater than the distance of the old aristocracy was. On the other hand there are no more social classes. The former lords are now the déclassé elements. The former

landowner is now a common worker, sometimes pretty near to the place of his former estate. The peasantry cannot be characterized either. There were villages, for example, where I lived in 1952 where there was no cooperative. On the other hand there were villages where everybody was a member of a cooperative. Those independent peasants who had a small farm could retain their holdings. This was so mainly because of the system of taxation and levy. Up to 7 yokes there was a certain amount of levy, then it jumped pretty much and the fellow with 15 yokes had to pay a much higher levy. Then after 25 yokes it was up again. As a result very few peasants have now more than 20 yokes. There was a time in the fall of 1952 when even the dwarf holders having no more than 3 or 4 yokes joined the cooperative since they wanted to take up a factory job which was better paying. Generally speaking, I do not think that there is a great social difference between the individual landholder and the member of a cooperative. The kolkhozes depended pretty much on the leader. Some of them were good, other ones not. For a while I had the idea that together with my relatives I formed a cooperative, but this idea could not be carried out. Anything like that was prohibited by the Communists. The trouble of the cooperatives is that the idea of common work does not instigate the people. If a few members do not work hard, even the other members get a smaller pay out of the cooperative. There is ~~a great~~

a great social difference between the old peasants and the new settlers. The new settlers have got quite a number of nick names and have no prestige. From my part I do think that the new settlers were mainly recruited out of those people who did not want to work. The other trouble with the new settlers is that they do not take over the local customs and habits. They exclude themselves from the communal life of their new village. I have heard of many cases where 2 cooperatives were established in the same village, one for the old peasants and another one for the new settlers. In all such cases the cooperative of the old peasants did a much better work. On the other hand the old peasants, too, lost their courage, their entrepreneurial spirit. They do not feel like doing an honest work since they do not know whether they can enjoy the crop of the next year. They withdrew from the community affairs. They are not interested in the local councils. Their children very often migrate into a neighbouring village and take up factory jobs. This is the only way how somebody can avoid the charge of being a Kulak's son. I have a niece who was a teacher far from her native village up to 1954. Then her kader card was found and it was found that she is the daughter of a kulak. She was immediately fired and now she is a worker in a tobacco factory. In the village where I was from 1951 to 53 the population was mixed, half German and half Hungarian. At the present time there is no discrimination between the Hungarians and Germans, but there

is a great social difference between old peasants and new settlers.

In the time~~s~~ right after the war the Germans had to suffer pretty much. Many of them had to give up part of their belongings, for example a new settler occupied half of the German's home. They are still living the same way, the 2 families in the same house. The German is sometimes complaining bitterly, however, they get along without any quarrels. In our village the church services and the sermons were carried out in Hungarian language all the time. In the neighbouring villages the sermon was preached in German up to the end of the war. Then everywhere the priests began to preach Hungarian. The Germans disappeared entirely from the church service. They are disappearing even among the younger generation. I know furthermore the so-called Bunyevac and Sokac population in the villages around the city of Baj~~o~~. Up to 1949 the sermon was preached in their native dialect in both villages. Then because of the Tito case the Hungarian~~s~~ became the language of the church. Right after the war the Ministry of Education tried to establish Yugoslav schools in the same villages. However, the people opposed it and they referred to the example of the Germans. As far as I know it the Yugoslav schools never opened their classes. In the village where I lived there were no Jewish persons. Generally speaking, the Jews left the villages after the war and concentrated in the

cities. One part of the Hungarian Jewry recognized the real development and tried to find its place in Hungarian life. The other part of them served the system. One of my former students became a Party member. He became an ideological leader of the Party. In October 1956 he joined the group of Nagy Imre and was captured with him. He is still with him in Rumania. I would not say that there is an anti-Semitism in Hungary, but there is a certain suspicion and an animosity. The chief positions are still taken in by Jews and it is impossible to explain it to the simple people that this is not a consequence of the racial attitude of the Jews. The idea of collective punishment is still very popular. Whenever the economic police came into the village, it was full of Jewish people. It was the Jewish plain-clothe man who dug up the peasants' cellar and the peasants seldom forgive for such an act.

Hungarian society is filled with an animosity towards Communism. The proletarian class of Hungary living in a very poor condition was in a constant tension and tried to improve its lot with every possible means. The proletarian class was willing to support any movement which promised a better future. That was the secret of the success of the Arrow-Cross movement. It became popular because it promised a social change. The same thing happened to Communism. It was popular among the proletarians but for a very short time. The elections of 1947 clearly showed that by that time even the proletarians became disillusioned about the promises of the Communists. The elections clearly showed that neither the peasants nor the workers were for the Communist Party. The ideological form of Communism is completely alien to the Hungarian soul. Only those people who had no inhibition who wanted to get money and success at any price joined the Communist Party. This could be particularly observed in the villages where the outcasts, the people with a bad reputation became the members of the Party. This psychological factor sealed the fate of the Communist Party in Hungary. Although the Party tried to be popular and promised many improvements for the workers, carried out the landreform for the peasants, the Party could never get their approval. Because of the psychological animosity, many people refused to accept the benefits given to them by the Communists. The case in point is what happened with

estate of the Cistercian Order at Lajoszallas. The Order possessed a model estate there. When the land reform came in 1945, the former employees of the estate refused to take up individual farms allotted to them <sup>from</sup> ~~the~~ the former church estates. The manager of the estate, himself a Cistercian priest, had to persuade his people that they should accept the farms allotted to them by the land-reform office. Not even the landless agrarian proletarian was a Communist and did not join the Party. Only the uprooted persons in a village became members of the Party. Then around 1950 a great change came in the policy of the Communist Party. By that time the Party leaders had to realize that <sup>they</sup> cannot expect any popular support so they resorted to sheer terror. The terror could be felt in every village and it could be carried out only by the strangers, only by those people who were from some other village and had no relatives and no connections in their present place of living. This was the time when the whole local administration of the villages was transformed. Every village got new leaders. The old notaries, judges were deposed and expelled from the village and new people came very often from the cities. The new people were willing to carry out all the orders of the Party. The new chairman of the local council was a former laborer who took a 6 weeks' course with the Party and was sent upon the peasants to terrorize them. Similarly the real leaders of the sub-county and county councils

were always elected from out-of-county people. The old and reputable people in a village or in a county could not do anything else but withdraw and they were glad if they were not deported to the Hortobagy. The landholders in the villages had many complaints. <sup>Their</sup> ~~These~~ greatest complaints were the levy and the forceful establishment of the cooperatives. Let us not forget, however, that the nationalization of industry and commerce afflicted even the agrarian population. The private sector of commerce was liquidated which meant that the state stores of the villages did not get the necessary commodities and the landholders could not buy what they wanted to. There were shopkeepers and storekeepers in every village who were now deprived of their licences. The shoemaker, for example, felt as a great loss of prestige to give up his independent shop and to join a cooperative, although at the beginning the cooperative promised him a greater pay than he had made before that. There were few Party members in the villages and even less enthusiastic Party members. The administration of the village was carried out by the local council. As far as I know, a certain discussion was possible within the local council. Most of the council members were honest people, even landholders and they aired their complaints in the village house. However, nothing came out of their complaints. The most important duty of the village council was the distribution of the taxes. The tax was levied upon



the whole village. Then it was the duty of the village council to apportion it according to the households. The kulaks had to pay unproportionally high taxes. If there were many kulaks in one village the whole village had to pay a very high tax and even more levies in kind. If a poor peasant could not pay his levy, the state was willing to wait for a while. But if the kulak did not pay it right at the date, he was immediately sent to jail. The whole system was full of primitive revenges. If a council member was insulted in the tavern, he took a revenge and declared his enemy a kulak. If somebody had an enemy, he reported him to the police, the police descended upon his house and if they found 3 kilograms of sugar he was jailed as a speculator. A terror ruled over the villages and the terror was enough to maintain the system of the Communists, but it could not make it popular. I do think that the Communist system was unable to influence the people of the countryside. The Party members were uneducated, had no prestige and had an obviously immoral life. Nobody followed their example, nobody believed their work. In one of the cities where I lived I met a Party secretary and newspaperman. He was one of the few well-educated Communists and in one of his earnest moments he complained to me that his voice was like a cry in the desert, nobody listened to him. It was quite interesting to see the fate of those teachers who joined the Party because they hoped some

advantage in such a way. These teachers became often principals but they lost their prestige in the community of the village. I remember one case from the city of Baja when the position of the trade union secretary could not <sup>be</sup> filled simply because there were no local candidates for the position. In the villages everybody despised the Communists, but nobody showed any resistance. Sometimes in the taverns one could hear a remark saying: "Once there will be a hanging here!" As far as I know, some people withdrew from the Party because they were afraid of the future. The same situation could be observed in the schools too. The schools tried to educate the youth in the spirit of Communism. The teachers were under constant pressure to produce Communists for the Party and all their efforts were without any results for the Party. As one of the teachers told me, there was class struggle going on in the country: the struggle of the pupils' classes against the teachers.

In those small cities and villages of the Dunantul where I lived people read newspapers up to about 1950. In those years there were still <sup>some</sup> non-Communist papers. For example, the Kis Ujsag which was pretty popular. In 1949 or 1950 the non-Communist papers were suppressed. From that time on only those people subscribed to a newspaper who got their salary from the state and had to subscribe. They subscribed to the Szabad Nep and the Magyar Elet. One day for example, when I was still a priest the salesman of the Szabad Nep came to me and tried to persuade me for a subscription. When I said no he said: "As far as I know, referend, you receive a ~~prop~~grua from the state," whereupon I subscribed to the paper. The peasants never subscribed to any of the papers. They did not even read them, but they liked the radio very much. Of course, they listened to the foreign radio stations. In 1951 loudspeaker systems <sup>were</sup> established ~~installed~~ in every village. The loudspeakers were installed in the village hall and at the main points of the village. The loudspeaker system replaced the old positions of the kisbiro and it announced the official orders. At certain times it gave musical programs from records. At the same time the people were very much interested in what was going on. They always discussed the foreign news among themselves and whenever they met an educated person, their first question was: "When is a change coming". In the barber shops of the villages people talked about politics

quite freely. They discussed there even the news broadcasts of foreign radio stations. The situation was pretty much the same concerning reading books. There was a great propaganda for buying Communist books. The so-called book days were arranged every year even in the smallest village. The official people who got a salary from the state had to buy the Communist books. The other people did not buy any books, but the old books published before the Communist system went from hand to hand till they fell apart.

The Revolution of October 1956 outlined a program for the future of Hungary and I agree with most of the points of that program. A greater democratization would be necessary for the country and for the time being there would not be any necessity of introducing measures against the Communist Party. In case of free elections the Communist Party would fail anyhow. It would be good to maintain the Revolutionary Councils at least for a while. Everybody should be permitted to establish political parties freely. I know that there are many dangers inherent in a multi-party system, however, I think every party should have a freedom of propaganda. The main trouble in October was that so many parties sprang up. The existence of a special Catholic party is not necessary, however, it is important that there should be one good and strong Party which has a definite program and which can give a good government. This party should represent the interest of the whole country and it should be led by a *real brain trust*, by the best people of the country. The private sector should get possibility of life. It is simply a requirement of the humanitarian philosophy that a person should be able to go into business and build up his own existence. In work the norm system is bad because it debases the human beings into machines. I do not think that the factories should be restored to their former owners, however, the former owners should receive an indemnity. There should be a workers' council

in every factory. I do not believe in the stiff principles of the Roman Law. Private property must be maintained. At the same time a certain nationalization is advantageous. The workers must have a voice in the management of the factories. The problem of the distribution of the agricultural landholdings does not exist anymore, since the present distribution cannot be changed to a great extent. I think that only those people should get land who are able to cultivate it and I am afraid that many of the new settlers are unable to do so. The state farms should be dissolved immediately, the cooperatives should be transferred into really free and democratic cooperatives which employ good agricultural experts. Either the existing agricultural cooperatives or some special cooperatives should ~~the~~ own the agricultural machinery. My brother, for example, established a small cooperative during the war. The cooperative bought a tractor. It did a good work for the whole village and it made some money on it. The restoration of the former large estates is impossible because it would lead to bitterness and to a new Revolution. However, the former estate owners should get a certain indemnity, for example the land credit institute should pay them a certain obligation which should be fully paid within 50 years or so. Moreover, this indemnity should be based on a degressive system whereby the former owner of 100 000 acres gets proportionally less than the owner of ~~500 000~~ 5 000 acres. Not even the church

estates can be restored. Cardinal Mindszenty does not want to get them back either, although many people interpret his words in such a way. The estates cannot be regarded as *sacrosanct*. It is quite just that after a great social change the society should claim the large estates for some useful purpose. The financial problems of the Catholic church could be solved through the establishment of certain special funds. Those funds, for example, can pay a certain sum each year to the Cistercian Order out of which the order would maintain its 5 gymnasiums. Then again the fund would pay a certain sum to the bishopric out of which the *seminary* and the other obligations of the bishop can be maintained. A similar system is ~~presently~~ presently existing in France. We could copy that system. I do not think that the relationship between state and church poses any real problem. The Hungarian state of the future would not be anti-church and anti-Christian. The free political parties of the future including the Social Democratic Parties want to revise their ~~past~~ philosophy of materialism. Not even the problem of the schools would pose any difficulties. It is in the best interest of the state that church schools should exist. Concerning the future of the present Party members, I am very much against mob actions and against collective responsibility. The important Party members and those people who committed crimes should answer <sup>due</sup> for them in the ~~new~~ process of law. There are many Party

members who behaved *decently*. I still remember one corporal from the prison of Vac. When we were set free in the wake of the Revolution, many former prisoners pressed his hand and said good bye to him. Concerning the problems of foreign policy I *do not take* the standpoint of revisionism. Hungary cannot claim any more of the lost territories simply because the number of the Hungarians living there has decreased so much. There is no more a Hungarian hegemony in the valley of the Danube. The nationalities live there without any clear-cut national borders. It would be good to establish a United States of the Danube Valley or something a confederation on the lines of Kossuth. The Hungarians could achieve a leading role only by the establishment of such a confederation which would be acceptable <sup>for</sup> ~~by~~ the Western countries too. In such a way Hungary and the Danube valley would be a real bridge between West and East. In this respect the Hungarians may expect a leading role indeed, since the Hungarians are of the Turanian race and have kindred peoples all over Asia up to Japan. Only such a federation of the nations could make an end of the present Chauvinism and nationalism, could insure the peaceful co-existence of the different small nations living there. This is the only way how Hungary could achieve a real neutrality.