

Interviewer asked respondent what he was doing since the end of World War II:

"As you know, during the second World War I was a staff member of the daily Magyar Nemzet. You know also about my incident after the Nyilas took over the power in October, exactly on October 15th, 1944. We gave shelter to Jews during the preceding ~~months~~ ^{months} and after Oct 15th Nyilas broke into our apartment. I have asked protection from my one-time friend who in the Nyilas gov't became Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron Gabor Kemany. In order to protect me he gave me a job in the Foreign Ministry. This incident had very unfortunate consequences. After the liberation of the country in 1945, when Gyula Seckfu was appointed Minister in Moscow, I have applied for the job of cultural attache in Moscow. My appointment, however, had not been confirmed. I became the target of violent attacks on account of my alleged collaboration during the Nyilas regime. So, I became a newspaperman again. I was working for Bela ~~Seckfu~~ ^{Zsolt} Seckfu paper Haladas. Later I became also a member on the staff of Uj Magyarorszag and Magyar Nemzet. As a result of the nationalization of the press I lost these jobs in 1948. The newspapermen became civil servants and the Ministry of People's Education in charge of the press appointed me to the staff of the daily Kiss Ujsag.

When in the spring of 1952 the paper ceased to exist, I have been transferred to the Szabad Hírvessz. This was the organ of the Hungarian Artists Association. I was on the staff of the paper from 1952 until the Revolution in October 1956."

Interviewer asked respondent about his experiences during the Revolution:

"From October 23rd to October 29th we lived most of the time in the cellar of our apartment-house, which had the most unfortunate location just across from the Kilian Barracks, scene of heavy fighting during the first days of the Revolution. The apartment-house suffered heavy damage during the fighting. Our flat was partly demolished. From the window of our third-story apartment on the night of October 23rd, I was watching the outbreak of fighting. I remember the shouting in the street "They are shooting at our children! They are shooting at the Hungarians!" "Give us arms!" I saw how the guards at the gates of Kilian Barracks allowed the crowd to enter the barracks in order to get arms and ammunition. I saw also the first transport of Csepel workers arrive on trucks, shouting "We are the people from Red Csepel! We want freedom!" Our apartment building received the first hits during the night from Oct 23rd to Oct 24th. We found shelter in our kitchen which was relatively protected and then went down to the cellar the next day and stayed there.

I came up, of course, several times ~~xx~~ during the next days. I have seen the Soviet tanks engaged in battles with freedom fighters. I have seen the Soviet tanks shooting indiscriminantly into the crowd and the surrounding buildings. I went over several times to the Corvin Koz, center of resistance in this area and talked to the freedom fighters. I have overheard them discussing why they were unwilling to obey Imre Nagy's appeal for laying down the arms. The freedom fighters said "We don't believe these people." Among the ~~xx~~ rumors these freedom fighters were spreading was one which I think was in particular stiffening their determination to carry ^{on} the fighting. The rumor was that in Jozsef district those freedom fighters who laid down their arms were massacred by the Russians. Another rumor was that German Panzertrains are on their way to Hungary. Among the freedom fighters I got to know, was a certain Iorgos Nikos, a former Greek partisan, one of the leaders of the freedom fighters in Corvin Koz. He was violently ^e anti-Communist. I heard him say that in Greece he fought against English imperialism, but during his stay in Hungary where he sought refuge, he became entirely disillusioned from Communism. He cursed the Soviet leaders, in particular Stalin, whom he called simply the "old ^{mail} ~~male~~ robber". On Oct. 28th or 29th we left the cellar and established ourselves in the kitchen of our apartment, which was intact. Also our telephone was in operation and ^{on} the 29th or 30th I received a

telephone call from my artist friend Tibor ~~XXXXX~~^{Wildt} He informed me that the Hungarian Artists Association, on whose paper the Szabad Művészet I have been working for the past years, will be reorganized and he invited me to attend a meeting of the association, which took place on October 31st or November the 1st, I don't remember exactly. My friend ~~XXXXX~~^{Wildt} told me that I should become a member of the Revolutionary Council, which the meeting will call into existence. I attended the meeting at which some 1,500 artists* gathered together. The meeting was rather disorderly. Several former Nyilas were present, who shouted wildly, accusing in particular the organizers of the meeting, Tibor ~~XXXXX~~^{Wildt} and Jenő ~~XXXXX~~^{Barcsay} as being communists. The meeting disappointed me. Nevertheless I have accepted a post in the committee of five art historians. This committee of five was one of the organs called into existence by the Revolutionary Council of the artists. In addition to being disgusted with the proceedings of the meeting, I have carried away also the impression that the so-called victory of the Revolution was not so firm. Together with several of my friends we came to the conclusion that we better leave the country. Before long we were anticipating trouble. We would not believe how the Russians would put up with this state of things as they developed in Hungary. About this period of the victorious revolution I must emphasize that as far as I have seen it, there was complete lack of organization, demoralization,

a lack of energy and ability to organize. -his I must say in spite of what I have no doubt felt, from time to time atleast, namely that the Revolution may succeed. You must understand that during these days it was difficult to see things clearly. My hopes of the Revolution's success were, however, heavily outweighed by my concern about a Russian intervention. During these days I have also showed up several times in the editorial offices of the Szabad Művészet in the New York Palace, the seat of most of the papers published by the Communist regime during the past years. I had ill forebodings on the evening of November 3rd, when late at night I have heard shoutings from the Corvin Koz, "The Russians are coming!" I ran down and asked what is it all about and I was told that a telephone message had been received in the Corvin Koz to the effect that the Russians have attacked the city; but after a while everything quieted down. The news proved to be a false alarm. Nevertheless I was nervous and anticipated trouble. Trouble came indeed, early in the morning of November 4th, when we woke up hearing heavy shooting. Soon we saw Soviet tanks moving up the streets and we hurried down to the cellar again. We stayed in the cellar until November 9th. The vicinity of our house became the center of heavy fighting again and our flat was so destroyed that we could no longer live in it anymore, not even in the kitchen. During the next 10 days we were staying with friends at several places.

Finally, on November 20th, my wife who is a doctor, took me to the Budakeszi Sanatorium for Tuberculosis and I have been a patient of the sanatorium until our departure from Hungary in January, exactly on 10 January 1957. The situation in Hungary became unbearable and as I have said earlier, we actually have been thinking of leaving the country earlier, after the Russian attack our decision to leave became the most logical decision we could arrive at. We were longing for spiritual and human freedom, we could not face the idea of continuing to live in Hungary. We came to Austria and settled down in Vienna."

Interviewer asked respondent to give his interpretation of Hungary's recent history and the ~~key~~ **road** that led to the Revolution of 1956:

"The roots of the Hungarian tragedy go back to the period before the first World War. The chief trouble was that the country did not evolve along the lines of Western democracy. There was an unreal, false, feudal decoration and behind this facade there was an inner corruption, a moral corruption. The burning issues of the land distribution and the problem of the growing industrial proletariat as well as the problems of national minorities remained unsolved. The Hungarian ruling class opposed federalization of Hungary within the framework of the Hapsburg Monarchy. This ruling class indulged in a cult of power. It cultivated the idea of the Hungarian nation, the idea of a uni-lingual Hungarian

nation in a country with ^ahuge population of non-Hungarians. This idea of the Hungarian nation was unfortunately void of any real humanistic value. These, I think, ~~are~~ are the chief sources out of which the great tragedies of the 20th century have followed.

After the ~~second~~ ^{first} World War the situation did not improve. On the contrary, the country remained backward in comparison with Europe's political, social and intellectual development, altho in some fields, like in music, we made real contributions to European culture. Nevertheless the basically wrong conception of power, the idea of Hungarian domination of the Carpatian basin, which had been the cause of Hungarian undoing before the first World War, remained the main pre-occupation of the Hungarian ruling class after the first World War. As to the views on what should be the Hungarian national policy, an important split had occurred after the first World War. This split had many aspects, but it was basically centered on the German question. One part of the nation continued to believe in the necessity of the Hungarian-German alliance and cooperation. Another part of the nation subscribed to an ~~anti~~ ^{anti} German conception.

This anti-German conception was coupled with democratic ~~tenets~~ ^{tenets} emphasizing the problems of the peasantry and the land problem at large. ~~As~~ ^{of} A concomitant of these currents was the appearance of pro-Soviet leanings. The first trend found its tragic conclusion in the pro-German policy during the second World War.

The second trend asserted itself after the second World War in 1945. At that time, in 1945, the pro-Soviet orientation found its support and justification in the East-West coalition between the Soviets, the United States of America and England. All political parties after 1945 favored this orientation as an inevitable one. Of course, the democratic parties, that is all the parties except the Communists, were hopeful of a democratic evolution of political life. The very fact, ~~however,~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ that Hungary following the second World War found herself in the Soviet orbit, marred the chances of a democratic evolution in the Western sense of the word. ~~xx~~ 1945 marks the beginning of a strong leftist shift in the country's position, followed by a radical social transformation. The development of Hungary after the second World War was not determined by the inner political forces but by the will of the Soviets and it is my conviction that the Soviets had pursued from the beginning a scheme according to which they bolshevized the country. The coalition regime from '45 - '48 was only a passing / episode followed by wholesale Sovietisation. I would like to point out also that the situation in central and Eastern Europe which enabled the Soviets to carry out the Sovietisation of Hungary and other countries, was the result of the agreement between the Soviets and the Western powers, that is England and the United States.

The western powers might have anticipated a different form of Soviet influence in central and Eastern Europe. The truth remains however, ^{that} they agreed to a Soviet influence over these areas. As to the Hungarian reaction to the country's Sovietisation, I would distinguish between two attitudes: one was that of acceptance, the other was that of opposition. The attitude of acceptance stemmed from the realisation that the country ~~xx~~ was irrevocably placed in the Soviet orbit. The attitude of opposition or resistance stemmed from the hope that the West, in particular the United States, cannot acquiesce in central Europe's ^{Soviet} domination."

Interviewer asked respondent to analyze more in detail the situation since the Communist take-over:

"I will analyze the position of the Intelligentsia, which I know best. First, there was the Intelligentsia which rallied around the Smallholder party. This part of the Intelligentsia was encouraged by Western encouragement, in particular during the coalition period. They believed that the West is behind them and that if they persist in opposing the Sovietisation, with Western help they may defy the Communists and prevent the country's total Sovietisation. The failure of the West to help and the Communist policy of force and violence disintegrated this part of the Intelligentsia and all that remained was confusion and disillusionment.

The next group of the Intelligentsia were the progressive, pro-Soviet minded intellectuals, who, partly from idealism, but mainly from opportunism, convinced themselves that pro-Sovietism is not only the only possible policy, but also the right policy for Hungary. Just to mention a few names who represented this group, I would list here Boka, Ortutay, Tolnay Gabor, Bogнар. Many among these pro-Soviet progressive intellectuals found justification for their attitude in the views of Gyula Szekfu. Most of them were students of Szekfu. I was ~~connected~~ ^{close} to Szekfu myself and I know well what his views were. As he saw it, the West was withdrawing from central Europe and he saw no other choice for Hungary but to adjust herself to the power situation. He no doubt was spreading the spirit of compromise, hopelessness, quietism. He drew the parallel between the 20th century Russian domination of central Europe and the Turkish domination of the 16th and 17th century. He was plagued by terrible visions of doom for the nation, would the nation oppose the Russian domination. He was convinced that in case Hungary would not follow a pro-Russian policy, the Russians would not hesitate to deport half of the Hungarians to Siberia. He saw no other alternative but cooperation with the Soviet Russians. He expressed this idea in his post-humous writing which was published in 1955, I don't remember in which magazine, either the ~~Magyar~~ ^{Csillag} or Tarsadalmi Szemle. In this article he explained also that the Hungarian Intelligentsia happily followed the policy of Rakosi and Gerö, a policy

of cooperation with Soviet Russia in re-building the country. As for my opinions, I am of the view that the policy of ~~aggression~~ ^{submission} actually suited the character of the Hungarian society. This society lived in the veneration of power, it was bound to submit itself to anyone who possessed this power, whether it was Karolyi or Kun or Horthy or Szalasi or Rakosi. This mongrel nation had no spine or morals. It was a nation that came into being thru assimilation, an assimilation which lacked an idea except that of the cult of power."

At this point I have interrupted respondent, asking him how he explains then the Revolution, if he has such views about the character of the Hungarian society.

Respondent's answer:

"Well, during the Revolution another aspect of the Hungarian character asserted itself, and this is the character of individuality, which leads towards anarchy and defies organization. This aspect of the Hungarian character had been strengthened under the oppressive policies of the Communist regime, which brutally suppressed individualism and mercilessly carried thru a policy of collectivisation. The bitter resentment against the Communist regime, which have been displayed during the Revolution, I believe was the result of this anti-individualistic policy of the Communist dictatorship.

And here I would mention a third aspect of the Hungarian character which was playing a role in the outbreak of the Revolution. This is the feeling of isolation, the feeling of linguistic and racial isolation. A feeling of isolation which was coupled with misty notions about belonging to the West. Of course I do not mean to say that you can explain this question of why and how the Revolution occurred, entirely in the light of the Hungarian character. The Hungarian national character may explain the way how the Revolution occurred. But of course the ground for the Revolution had been laid by the unsuccessful policy of the Communist regime to solve the political, social and economic problems of the country."

Interviewer asked respondent to elaborate the policy as he saw it, of the Communist regime:

support

"The main ~~parts~~ of the regime were the demoralized elements. This was true about the AVO, this was true about the agricultural collectives, this was true all the way long. The regime did not care for the interests of the nation. Nevertheless it was fond of national slogans. The regime paid lip service to the Hungarian democratic ideas. Thus it expropriated the ideas of Kossuth. They have ~~posed~~ as the successors, as the heirs of the glorious ideals of Hungarian freedom born in the revolution of 1848-49. They did this in a similar fashion as the Czech Communists have paid lip service to the Hussite traditions.

The Hungarian Communists were fostering the anti-Hapsburg traditions, but the chief aim of this policy was not so much to foster the hatred of the Hapsburgs, but to foster the hatred of the Germans, to estrange the Hungarians from their traditional friendship for the Germans. In broader sense, the aim of this policy was to isolate the Hungarian political thinking from the West. This policy however, did not weaken the traditional feelings of German-Hungarian solidarity, on the contrary. The sentiment of Hungarian-German solidarity had been strengthened. The recovery of Germany, Western Germany that is, had been greatly appreciated and widely admired inspite of the Communist regime's ceaseless anti-German propaganda. The regime would denounce day in, day out the Germans, the West, and the Americans. The people were inclined to believe the very opposite of what the regime was saying. As a result of this situation, the Hungarian public at large was not sceptical, but rather gullible towards the West. It was inclined to believe anything what the West had said. ^{This explains} ~~As~~ the gullibility of the Hungarian public ^{with} ~~in~~ respect to what Radio Free Europe was broadcasting to Hungary. This gullibility was an important factor during the Revolution when the Hungarians were so sure that the West would not abandon them."

Interviewer asked respondent to elaborate more systematically on the causes of the Revolution, as he sees them:

"The Revolution as I see it, was instinctive and spontaneous and the instinctiveness explains its spontaneity. The instinctive forces are of particular importance. Such was, above all, the general feeling of opposition against the regime. The regime was lying all the time and betraying everybody. There has been a widespread reaction against the ideology forced upon the country by Rakosi. What concrete solution this instinctive opposition had envisaged, was very hazy. Among the Communists there was a sort of hazy Tito romanticism. There has been, as I have explained, a strong feeling of Hungarian-German solidarity and there was of course an instinctive faith in America. These instinctive forces of opposition broke loose in the moment the regime proved itself weak in face of the popular demonstrations on Oct 23rd. Preceding that, of course, a rebellion of the privileged took place against Rakosi and this rebellion was actually clearing the way for the instinctive forces of opposition to erupt spontaneously. In this rebellion of the privileged, the writers no doubt played an important role. On the other hand it should be emphasized that the circle of the writers who prepared the ground for the Revolution, was rather narrow. It included university students, the new Intelligentsia of working class and peasant origin and the sons of the former rich Budapest Jewish Intelligentsia.

The rebellion of this narrow circle could not make a revolution, but it could loosen the power of the regime, and once the power of the regime had been loosened, the broader forces of the instinctive and spontaneous opposition would freely assert themselves."

Interviewer asked respondent what he thought of the chances of the Revolution to succeed:

"Had the Western powers acted fast and had they come to an agreement with the Soviet Union to revive the principles of the 1945 Yalta agreement, which called for a condominium in / central Europe, in that case perhaps the Revolution could have been successful. This return to the Yalta principles was perhaps what inspired the thinking of Imre Nagy and his followers. The failure of the West was, however, not the only cause why the Revolution failed. The anarchy inside the country was another important cause, because it did not leave enough time for an action of the kind I have referred to."

Rather than pursue this analysis further, interviewer asked respondent to discuss a few specific questions. Knowing he is a reputed expert on nationality problems, interviewer asked him what changes had taken place during the Communist era in the relationship between Hungary and its neighbors:

"Lip service had been paid to the principles of the Leninist, Stalinist nationality policy, but actually no basic changes had taken place in the relationship between the different nationalities of the Danube valley.

The old conflicts and controversies remained and inspite of Communist propaganda the Hungarian public opinion was very much aware of the unhappy lot of the minorities in the neighboring countries. Czechoslovakia and Rumania continued their policies of denationalizing the Hungarian minorities. The Rumanians granted the so-called autonomy^{to} the Hungarians in Transsylvania, but this was merely a fiction. The Communists continued the old policy of divide and rule. For instance, in the so-called Hungarian autonomous territory of Transsylvania Rumanians were appointed in the administration, whereas in the administration of Rumania proper Hungarian Communists were appointed. Thus the mutual hostility between Hungarians and Rumanians did not subside. Relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary became especially hostile during the break between Tito and the Soviets. During that period the Hungarian Communist regime was accusing Yugoslavia of oppressing the Hungarian minority. Similar accusations, altho justifiable, were not heard against the Communist regimes in Czechoslovakia or "umania."

Interviewer asked respondent about the position of the national minorities inside Hungary:

"The German minority suffered great injustice after the second World War thru the mass deportation and indiscriminant deportation of Germans from Hungary. Around 1955 there were signs of a new policy towards the remaining German Minority in Hungary. A German language newspaper

has been published, entitled "Freies Leben". The editor of the paper was an Austrian Communist and the chief objective of the paper was to prppagandise the Communist regime of East Germany. In general this revised policy towards the German minority was in line with courting the favors of Germany. This relaxation of the oppression was not significant. For instance, there was no talk even about allowing German-language schools for the German minorities in Hungary.

As to the position of the Slovak minority, the situation_n was better. The Slovaks had their schools and also their newspapers, altho Magyarisation continued and there were complaints heard that the Slovak language is being squeezed out from school where it was used during the pre-war regime.

Discrimination against the Serb minority in Hungary was especially violent during the Tito-Soviet break."

Interviewer next asked respondent what he thought of the Revisionist sentiments:

"Revisionism was latent. It was lingering on, altho the regime suppressed its manifestations. It came to the surface however, during the Revolution. I am referring here to an interview the correspondent Friedrich Abendroth of the Salzburger Nachrichten had with Dudas during the Revolution. In this interview Mr. Dudas expressed the view that after finishing off the Russians "We will go against the Czechs and Rumanians in order to restore

Hungary's integrity."

Next interviewer asked respondent what he thought of the Jewish question:

"Anti-Semitism was widespread in Hungary, mainly because of the tremendous role played by the Jews in the Communist regime. Many liberal Hungarians deplored the lack of political wisdom of the Jews who did not realize the evil consequences of their recklessness. There were of course great many intelligent Jews too, who were thinking with horror of the evils the Jewish-dominated Rakosi regime may bring upon the Hungarian / Jews."

Next interviewer asked respondent what he thought of the future of Hungarian Jewry:

"The overwhelming desire of the Jews in Hungary is to leave the country. The Jews who have been compromised thru their role in the Communist regime are eager to leave, because of their feeling of guilt. The non-communist Jews, on the other hand, are eager to leave, either because of longing for freedom, and this is the case among the more educated Jews, or they are eager to leave because they anticipate more favorable living conditions abroad. This is the case with the more materialistic minded Jews."

Finally Interviewer asked respondent what he thought of the future of Hungary and the whole area of **smaller nations** in Central Europe:

"There is only one possible solution of the terrific conflicts of the area and this is thru an agreement between East and West. The pre-condition of such an agreement is an internal adjustment, an internal change within the Soviet Union. But such an internal development inside the Soviet Union is hardly conceivable without general agreement, general relaxation of the present explosive tension between the East and the West."

INTERVIEWER'S RATING Rapport was good, frankness fair, cooperativeness good. There was no sign of compliance or flattery. The interview itself ~~was not very~~ revealed very little factual information. Often the respondent did not seem even to know very well the facts. Whatever the value of this interview is, it lies in the views and interpretation offered by one of the pupils of Professor Szekfü.