

Interviewer's note.

This is a B type interview with a former member of the Communist Party. It is divided into 2 parts, the 1st part gives an account of the respondents disillusionment with the party. The second part of the interview describes the propaganda system of the Party as it was known to the respondent.

Part 1. The intellectual in the Party.

It is necessary to know something about my family milieu. My father was a half-Jew, my mother came from a military gentry family. The family was living near to Szombathely where we enjoyed the local prestige by several ~~x~~ by several generations. I had no handicap in my origin, I was not ~~supposed~~ ^{county official} to become a revolter against the existing political system. I was sent into a church school where I sensed at early adolescence a sultry homosexual atmosphere that surrounded the so called "Bishops Fortress" at Szombathely. The family was tied up with the county. My uncle and relatives worked either with the county or with the city. I suddenly began to oppose ~~the~~ the traditions of the family, I was driven into an extreme polarity. It seems to me that children usually revolt against the traditions of their parents. My son participated in all the conspirations of his school at the age of eleven. They were plotting as late as March 1957. This was the ~~main~~ main reason in my case why I left

Hungary. The traditions of the family ~~spelled~~^{spelled} out my future career. Seemingly I ~~was~~ followed those family traditions, but in the depth of my heart I was filled with a revolutionary spirit. Having finished the middle schools, I was sent up to Budapest where I lived at the St. Emmerich College ~~as~~^{as} boarder and attended the school of foreign affairs at ^{the} economic university. My colleagues and my fellows at the college were the sons aristocratic and gentry families, the pillars of the existing system in Hungary. I began to search for the contrast of the surrounding in which I lived. During this intellectual inquisitiveness, I made many new friends from a different social layer. In such a way I came to the Social Democratic Party and I became involved in its youth work. At the same time, ~~as~~ as a sign of open revolt, I left the school of foreign affairs and I transferred to the faculty of philosophy where I took the subjects of Hungarian and French language^s. At the university I learned about the existence of the illegal Communist Party, ^{and} it was my wish to get in touch with the Party. In order to reach the Party I did what many other fellows did at the same time. I went to Paris where I attended the Sorbonne for 1 semester. There I was able to establish contact with the Party and when I returned home I was a Party member myself. After my return to Budapest I

began a feverish literary and organizational activity. With a few friends we established a number of ~~publications~~^{series} such as the Kortars, Szabadon and Virradat. All these papers were of a very short life, living for one or two issues only, partly because of the police ~~actions~~^{actions} and partly because of lack of funds. The papers were not official ~~papers~~ Communist papers, but tried to be the mouth pieces of the so called leftist movements which actually included quite a number of bourgeoisie writers too. We could not get any funds from the Party so we had to establish our financial basis. At the same time I participated in the work of organization ^{that had been recruited} out of the students of the university and particularly out of the students of the Eotvos College. We established a so called university group where I functioned ~~as the~~ as the connection with the Party circles. The members of this group were Rajk, Fejtő Ferenc, Mod Péter, Mod Aladár, Schöpflin Gyula, and some other people. The other names escaped my memory except for the name of Stolte Iván who joined the Party at that time. Later on Rajk became the leader of this University group. When I was caught by the police, they tortured me and I was sentenced to 2 months in prison. With the investigation I spent altogether 6 months in prison. After I ~~became~~^{regained} my freedom I was expelled from Budapest and I lived in Szombathely and Szentendre. By that time my name was too well known to the police, I lost my

connections with the Party as it was usual in those illegal times. I had the feeling that I could not do anything so in 1937 I left Hungary and ~~went~~ settled down in Paris. In Paris I led the life leftist intellectuals, writing and doing some organizational work. However I had no connections with the Party and I did not work in any organizations of the Party. My attitude about the Party was somewhat hesitant. At that time I would have preferred a leftist bourgeois Party. In 1939 I emigrated to South America and settled in Argentina. There I became the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ editor of a Hungarian newspaper which was initiated by Count Karolyi Mihaly. Our aim was to establish a Hungarian newspaper on the basis of a leftist coalition of the Hungarians. The members of the radical bourgeoisie contributed to the paper, for example Szokoly Endre, Ver Andor, and a son of Somogyi Bela. This is the political tendency I still approve. In those times, however, we had to fight with the rightist circles of the Hungarian emigration, particularly with the Eckhardt circle. My political attitude underwent a great change under the influence of the events of the war. After the attack of Germany against Russia and after the disastrous policy of the capitalist countries I came to see that my place is in the Communist Party

again. In 1942 I joined the Party again in Argentina^s. Such a membership did not mean a very great change in those times. Those were the years of the Western line^s and even as a Party member I could continue to cooperate with my old friends. I think that most of my friends from the leftist bourgeoisie did not even notice that I became a party member. In 1946 I returned to Hungary. At that time I had definitely the feeling that my place is at home and I have to take my part in the socialistic reconstruction of Hungary. This was the time when the Party favoured the old Communists and I was greeted with a great friendliness after my return to Hungary. I did not know at that time that pretty soon a great change will come in the personal policy of the Party and the and the personal policy will turn against the ~~of~~ old Communists^s. I was greatly impressed by the friendly reception and I was filled with the feeling that finally I can work ~~under~~ ^{for} the realisation of my old ideas. Like many other intellectuals in the Party, I had idealistic plans. In spite of my experiences in the illegal party ~~work~~ ^{work} I did not ^{get} realize that the daily policy is shaped by the realistic conditions of the political ~~struggle~~ ^{struggle} and not according to our idealistic plans. After my return I became the editor of a weekly and after a short time I became the leader of the press section of the ~~Foreign~~ Foreign Ministry

in the rank of a ministerial sectional councillor. About the end of 1948 I got my first surprise concerning the personal policy of the Party. One day I received a written order telling me that I was transferred in the Ministry of Agriculture to become the leader of the press section there. I sensed immediately that something was wrong. A few days later I was ~~called~~ ^{called} by ~~Szongji~~ ^{Szongji} who was at that time at the height of his career being ~~a~~ ^{the} kader leader at the central party headquarters. When I went to see him, he accused me ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ sharp words, saying that my divorced wife was an American agent. He made no secret out of his suspicion that because of that fact I became unreliable from the point of view of the Party. I told him that although I have no more connections with my divorced wife I know that she was no American agent and I asked for proofs. ~~Szongji~~ ^{Szongji} did not mention any proofs and finally I thought this was one of those personal altercations which come up in the Communist Party so often and I was ready to begin my work in the Ministry of Agriculture. I began to work at my new place in ~~the~~ December 1948 and found indeed a strange situation there. This was the time shortly after the great ~~process~~ ^{purges} of the Ministry of Agriculture ~~where~~ ^{when} the old employees had been ~~pr~~ ^{pur}ched. The jobs were now taken by former ~~AVO~~ members who were no experts in agriculture and who were new members of

issued at that time. A few weeks later I had a similar argument with Gerö Ernő himself. The argument was about the propaganda trucks owned by the press department of the Agricultural Ministry. Those trucks were equipped with a film projector and their main aim was to visit the different villages and give educational lectures on agriculture. One of our films, ^{which} dealt with agricultural work purely, ^{ended with flashing the} ~~and in it could point a~~ picture of Rakosi. I cut out his picture because it had nothing to do with the subject of the film and I regarded it as a poor propaganda. The next day I received a written memorandum from the Party headquarters reproaching me for cutting out Rakosi's picture. ^{Then} ~~But~~ a few days later the propaganda department of the central party headquarters called me up and asked for 3 propaganda trucks for several weeks. ^{They} were necessary in the propaganda work of the Party. I answered that every truck had its own schedule which had been worked out weeks ahead, all the villages were notified and were expecting the arrival of the trucks. Because of such reason I refused to let the party Headquarters have the 3 trucks. Next day Gerö Ernő rang me up and me up and talked me down. At that time Gerö was in the supreme charge of the propaganda department of the Party and at the same time he supervised all the Ministries connected with

economy including the Ministry of Agriculture. After such skirmishes with the Party it was still a surprise for me that I was arrested in May 1949 in connection with the case of Rajk. As mentioned above, I met Rajk at the university of Budapest. We worked together in the university group but we did not have any personal or friendly relations. After 1947 I had no connections with Rajk except a few occasional meetings after 1946 in Hungary. In spite of such facts the police gave me a so called construction and wanted that I should accept my part in the police construction concerning Rajk. According to this police construction I knew from old illegal times that Rajk was a spy of the Hungarian police of Horthy. As another point of the same construction I was ~~was~~ organized into the English spy system during my stay in Argentina. ^{when} I came home to Hungary on the orders of the Englishmen, my first ^{step} ~~contact~~ led me to Rajk whom I blackmailed with a reference to his former ~~was~~ activity as a police spy and he had to join my spying. At my request Rajk gave me the secret documents of the ministry of interior which I handed over to the Englishmen. I refused to accept this construction and I never signed any ^{con} ~~conf~~ession in this sense. During the police investigation I was confronted with Rajk 2 times and both times he

admitted that I blackmailed him because he had been a former police spy and after my blackmail he turned the secret documents of his ministry over to me. I refused to sign a confession even after the 2 confrontations. Then a Russian colonel and several other Russian officers of the ^{NKWD} ~~AVO~~ took over my hearings. They wanted me to accept the construction and worked on me partly through persuasion and partly through torture. By the time I was filled with a *mad* anger against the Party and I was willing to take the tortures rather than to make the confession. It is not necessary to talk very much about the ~~ex~~ tortures. Some of my ribs were broken and my soles were beaten with rubber hoses 36 times. After such rubber hosing I was led in a cell where I could only stand on my soles. For nine days I have not received any food or ~~drik~~^{drik}, I was not permitted to sleep. When I was led into the toilet I tried to drink a few drops from the toilet bowl whereupon the AVO officer menaced me with his revolver. They used the electrical machine on me which was particularly painful since they applied it upon my chest which was *sore* because of the broken ribs. In the following years, I had many troubles with my broken ribs since they had never been ~~directly~~^{properly} treated. I can thank for my rather early

release from prison to those broken ribs. At the time of my release in 1954 I had very great ~~troubles~~ troubles in my chest and the prison authorities thought that I developed a TB. After my release a careful medical examination showed that I had no TB and the pain came from an infection of the broken ribs. All together I think it was a miracle that I survived all those tortures. On the other hand if I signed the confession I wouldn't have survived then. Finally I was ~~was~~ convicted at a closed trial for espionage carried out during ^{war} ~~war~~ time, ^{although} ~~also~~ during the whole war I had been living in Argentina. The trial came only after 1 1/2 year of investigation, spent in the different prisons of Budapest. I was sentenced to 10 years in prison, but the years of the sentence did not bother me since I knew I will not be ~~that~~ free after 10 years. I was set free in 1954, first I had to spend a few days in the TB sanatorium at Matra, then I had to rest at home till my ribs became healed. I could begin to work only in January 1955. After my release I was called several times into ~~the~~ the central headquarters ~~of the~~ of the Party. They wanted to give me jobs. Most of the jobs were ^{in the} ~~in the~~ Ministries, for example in the Ministry for the education of the people. I did not want to take such political jobs and in my arguments I referred

to. Babits who said that it is ~~the~~ the duty of the intellectual to doubt. At the same time my private telephone was ~~checked~~ ^{tapped}. An acquaintance of mine who was a mechanic with the tele^{ph}one company told me that he saw the ~~nick~~ microphon on my line. I wanted to get a non-political and non-dangerous job. So finally I became ^{an editor} ~~a~~ with the Szépirodalmi Kiado which was a nice quiet job. My salary was 1400 forin^s plus I received the ^dadditional salary for foreign languages. ~~All~~together I made about 1800 forins a month. My wife, too, was working as a translator and out of the salary of both of us we could manage a living. In my present job I could read and translate some classical works of literature, for example the Don Quixote of Cervantes. This job which I kept up to my departure from Hungary was the only one offered to me by the Communist system which gave me a satisfaction. After my release my original intension was not to participate in any politics. Pretty soon however, I came into contact with many writers who were party members. I met them through my job and then we met on a personal basis. We became good friends with Déry Tibor and with Losonczy . I came to realize that these people were just as much dissatisfied with the Communist system as I was. I would not describe their principles

as a national Communism. As a matter of fact, we were no more Communists by that time, ^{although} ~~also~~ nominally we were ~~mm~~ members of the Party. I remember one discussion we had with Losonczy in 1955 or ^{early} 1956. Then we concluded that Hungary must get out of the Warsaw pact and neutrality is very important for Hungary. At the same time we could not entirely deny our Communist indoctrination received in the susceptible years of our youth. At one occasion we discussed the organizational matters and we concluded that the principles of Lenin failed. His system of ^{conspiracy} cannot be carried out under the present circumstances. In such a way we arrived ^{at} a new form of organization, a loose group of intellectuals who still accepted a certain intellectual leadership of one member. This system was not an organization in the communist sense of the word, but it presented an important factor in those times. These free intellectual discussion groups were visited even by ~~mm~~ members of ~~the~~ the Party apparatus which was pretty much loosened up in those times. Actually, many members of the Party apparatus were at that time no more Communists but democrats in the bourgeois ~~sense~~ sense of the word. We discussed the different youth meetings, for example the meetings of the Petöfi circle. ^{Then} ~~There~~ was no uniform plan, there was no program behind

such meetings, however, we hoped that they will contribute to promote a change in the system. It was only after the dismissal of Rakosi that ^{we}_A were thinking of a unified program or a unified slogan. At that time it was me who cast the slogan of the policy of independence during one of our friendly discussions. The slogan became popular because it represented a policy which could be carried out in the different fields of life without any great danger. It could be followed by everybody. The Petöfi circle became independent from the youth department of the Party, the editor became independent from the central directorate of the publishing business. A factory tried to become independent from its supervisory authority. This slogan of independence sounded like * Titoism, although it was not. The actual situation was that as the dictatorship in Hungary was loosened up, a general tendency towards democracy appeared. I tried to glorify the political principles for myself. I did not join any ~~organization~~ organization since I regarded the old conspirational methods as out of date. ^{The} ~~an~~ old conspiracy was ~~is~~ good in the politics of the old illegal Party, ^{under the existing circumstances} but ^{it} did not lead to any final aims. The final aims should not be a return to the Hungary of Horthy, but a country which gives room for private initiative. This country

should be pretty similar to the democracy created by the Labour Party in England. Such a policy requires a neutrality since the economy^{ic} conditions of the country require that ^{the} a country shouldn't be tied down to the one of the great powers such as Russia. The ~~xxx~~ realisation of such a program seemed to be ~~physical~~^{feasible} in the spring and summer of 1956. It would have been possible to obtain the approval of the Soviets for the realisation of the program. The Western powers committed a great mistake by overestimating the Soviets and not giving the necessary help to the Hungarians and Pol^es. The Revolution was prepared by the intellectuals, the workers joined it only in the days of September. This was the time when the Irodalmi Ujság became so popular because of a few sentences. It was in September that the policy of independence was really carried out. For example the Ministries became independent from the ~~planning~~ planning office. The officials of the Ministry carried out this policy of independence at their own. For example I met one official from the Ministry of Public Education who told me that in old times he had suppressed all literary work which did not confirm to the norms of Communist realism. Now he was willing to apply another literary judgement. There was no much planning in the whole movement. We ~~discussed~~ discussed ^{the} ~~that~~ lectures delivered

at the Petöfi circle *by the writers,* but, such a discussion did not mean very much. I did not approve the plan, ^{not} text of Deri. Particularly I disapproved his famous reference to the race horses of Rakosi and to the many leaders of the Party who want to take the place of Rakosi. IN spite of my suggestions he delivered the original text and this was one of ~~the~~ reasons why the revolutionary events became ~~accelerated~~ ^{accelerated}. Just because of the lack of any organization it was impossible for Gerö to stop the revolutionary movement. The opposition could be felt in the everyday life. But it could not be pinpointed in a way which could be handled by the police. The university students were filled with the spirit of opposition and acted individually. For example one student came to see me in the office of the publisher and he brought with him a monography on Jozsef Attila where he discribed how the Communists ~~disturbed~~ ^{distorted} the literary picture of the poet. In the office of the publisher we had always guests coming, students, writers, all kinds of people. We could talk there freely and we had much better information about the actual situation in the country than the party headquarters. It is possible that the Revolution was a provocation of the Russians and they wanted to intimidate Poland. Let us not forget that the Communist propaganda is very poor since the ~~many~~ Communists

believe their own propaganda. It can be easily explained why and how the old Communists became the leaders of the new opposition. The Communists had a better practice in organization and in conspiracy. At the same time the old Communists had a moral motive. They wanted to realize the recognized truth. By that time the intellectuals lost their faith in the Party and saw that the Party had deceived them. The Party functionaries did not undergo the same changes, the Party functionaries were still working. By September 1956 the Party was clearly divided on the ^{line} ~~length~~ of intellectuals ^{also} ~~and~~ versus party functionaries. The political power rested with the party functionaries, however they were misinformed of the situation and they followed an unrealistic policy. I did not participate in the Revolution since at that time I was bedridden with ^{hepatitis} ~~hepatitis~~ for about 4 weeks. However I knew some of the leaders of the Revolution from my former life, for example Nagy Imre was an acquaintance whom I met very often during the last year preceding the Revolution. Nagy was originally a party functionary who by chance came to oppose certain principles of the Party. From 1953 up to 1955 he came to oppose the Communist principles in 3 important points. First of all he ~~was~~ believed in the necessity of a Danubian confederation. As a second point he wanted

a decentralization of the state power against the strict centralization of the Muscovite system. As a 3rd point, he developed a certain agricultural policy which is named after him and which is more or less connected with a certain liberalism in the inner policy. When he became prime minister in October 1956, he wanted to realize those 3 principles. He wanted to stay a Communist and he did not want to revolt against Moscow. However, in the days following October 23rd he was driven further and further away from the policy of Moscow. During his negotiations with Andropov he had to learn that the Soviets want to keep Hungary as an atom basis for the Soviet forces. Furthermore he was animated by a great animosity against Rakosi. In the winter of 1955 during the private compensation Nagy called Rakosi an adventurer and finally he was influenced by the young people around him such as Losonczy and Vásárhelyi. It is not true that Tildy alienated him from the Russians, the truth is that Nagy trusted Losonczy and Vásárhelyi and accepted their advices. At the same time Nagy was a Communist who believed in the Russians and believed in the Party. He saw that he could change the party policy by preparing good memoranda concerning the agricultural situation in Hungary. He saw that one could argue

with the party leadership in Budapest and Moscow. His political judgement was not very good. When Mikoyan came to Budapest and kicked out Rakosi, he wanted to see Nagy. After his visit to Mikoyan, Nagy became so optimistic about the future that he was willing to co-operate with Gerö. At that time Losonczy persuaded him not to do so. In the Communist circle, which surrounded Nagy Imre, Losonczy was the brain. With his good Western education he could make a good political judgement, whereas Léry Tibor was always taken away by his sentiments. Vásárhelyi was a former ~~party~~ opportunist in the Party who made a big success. In the 1950's, however, he was shaken up by the general deception of the system. In 1954 when myself and many other ^cacused people of the ^{Rozh}~~Rozh~~ case were set free, Vásárhelyi was the deputy press leader of the Party. At that time he really tried to find a good job for all of us. ^{He}~~We~~ established friendly relations with most of us and gave us good ~~m~~ information~~s~~ ~~gaw~~ concerning the party headquarters. The real anti-Communist elements had no part whatsoever in the preparation and in the beginning of the Revolution. I still can think of my uncle, the former colonel. Whenever I opened my mouth and said anything about Communism he was frightened to death. It is true that in the mob scenes, following the Revolution,

a few anti-Communists appeared, but their ~~part~~^{role} is generally overestimated. The present-day Communist propagandad~~ist~~^{distorts} the whole picture. If somebody is caught by the police and sentenced by the court nowadays as a revolt~~ionary~~, he is he is always described as a former officer. The truth is that the officers of the former Horthy army did not play any conspicuous ~~role~~^{role} in the street fights. The real heroes of the street fights were either the members of the Communist army or the unknown university students who found the revolver on the street and began to shoot. I stayed in Budapest after the Revolution and saw the first steps to reorganize the Communist Party ~~after~~ under a new name. The new Hungarian socialist workers Party is the organization of the opportunists who want to make success and obtain good jobs under the present system. Since it is supported by a police ~~terror~~^e, it will always find as many members as it ~~is~~ esteemed to be necessary by the leaders of the Party. The members of the Party are not real Communists but are willing to serve the existing system as long as no other crisis emerges. The organization of the Party will represent enough strength to maintain the existing system for a few more years.

Part 2.

The organization of the Communist propaganda.

The central office of the Communist propaganda is the department for agitation and propaganda at ^{the} central headquarters of the Party. The matters of propaganda are of great importance for the Communist Party which are decided at the meetings of the central committee or executive committee. All the important leaders of the Party participate in such decisions and the leader of the propaganda department is one of the most important party leaders. In Hungary Révai József was the leader but his power and influence was greatly limited in the 1950 is. The central party department for propaganda carries out its work through (main four) ~~ix~~ lines. The 1st of them is the party line where the propaganda goes down through the so called base units to the cells and the individual members. The 2nd line is ^{that of} the top state organizations such as the ministries, planning office, and so on. Each of the ministries has a huge press and propaganda department. In the Ministry of Agriculture I had 30 people, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 60 people, and these figures do not include the smaller administrative forces attached to our department. Such ministerial departments received their instructions

from the party headquarters but they are independent in carrying out those instructions. Number 3, the mass organizations have their own press and propaganda department^s working ~~up~~^{on the} same principle as the ministerial & departments mentioned above. Number 4, the press which is directed by the Party either through the trade Union of the news/papermen or through direct instructions issued to the individual papers. In the years of the terror the ~~papers~~^{papers} were in direct contact with the central department of the Party. The editors simply rang up the party headquarters and asked for their advice. After 1954 those connections were loosened up. The Revolution became possible only because the individual editors finally ~~accepted~~^{accepted} responsibility and made their own decision^s without consulting the Party. The Irodalmi Ujsag was particularly bold in refusing to accept any party instructions. After a time Andics Erzsebet came to visit the editorial offices of the Irodalmi Ujsag. At that time all the contributors of the paper and some other writers were called together fo^r a meeting. Andics Erzsebet delivered a speech telling the writers how to behave according to the party line. Finally she suggested that articles concerning delicate matters should be presented to the Party before being printed. Whereupon the writers

present at the meeting retorted that there is no necessity of such a censorship because the Irodalmi Ujsag was the official paper of the writers association, of a mass organization. Consequently the Party had no right to carry out any censorship. This was a good example how a mass organization became really independent in 1956. The other editors followed the example and even the central organ of the Party published articles which were highly critical to the system. As another sign of the growing independence the editor of foreign politics of the ~~MTI~~^{MTI} did not call the party headquarters, but edited his material according to his own judgement. In the 1950's the central propaganda department of the Party lost its former influence. The central headquarters of the Party were reorganized at a time when the personal influence of Révai declined. A new department for intellectuals was created which took over a great part of the work ^{of} Révai's department. The head of this department of intellectuals became Andics Erzsébet and she dealt with all the affairs of theatres, film, university and so on. There cannot be much doubt ^{that} Andics, a very ~~xxxxx~~ poorly educated person, was the ^{poorest choice} ~~first choice~~ for such a problem. Andics Erzsébet could not cope with the problems. Consequently she ran her department on the basis of statistics and

proportions. The whole cultural life was run on the basis of mechanical proportions and percentages. For example the national theatre was supposed to show 4 new plays in a year. Out of the 4 plays 1 had to be by a Soviet playwright, the 2nd one by a playwright of the peoples democracy, the 3rd one by a classical author, and finally the 4th one by a Hungarian author. The stupid bureaucracy of Andics evoked much criticism within the Party. At one of the agricultural exhibitions the picture of Rakos was ~~hung~~^{hung} up in the stable of the ~~castle~~^{cattle}. The situation became so bad that Gerö Ernő, the head of the organizational department of the central headquarters, had to interfere and took over the highest supervision of some of the propaganda activities, for example he was in charge of the slogans. The slogans used by the Communists were ~~written~~^{written} by a number of writers working at the central party headquarters, and the slogans had to be submitted to the central headquarters and were judged by a special committee. There were cases when the final decision was made by Gerö. I remember the case of one agricultural exhibition from those times when I was working in the ministry of Agriculture. The slogans and the posters exhibited there had to be submitted to the party headquarters where ~~from~~

~~where~~ they went from one commission to another one. We got them back in the last minute just ~~half~~ before the exhibition was to be opened. At the same time we had to carry out a special propaganda trick. The students of the agricultural academies ^{who} were ordered to visit the exhibition were received ^{there} by party members. At the end of the tour each student had to write a report of his experiences and each party member had to write another report of the student whom he conducted around. All these reports were submitted to the central headquarters of the party where every day *truckloads* of reports, printed material, propaganda material came in. The employees there were overloaded ~~with~~ with work and having ~~red~~ ^{not} such an amount of propaganda material they had ^{not} been able to form their own opinion and a sound judgement of the situation. During the time I was working with the foreign ministry the head of the Hungariah press bureau in London came home. In my company he went to visit Révai Jozsef at the party headquarters. During the ~~same~~ conversation the man from London said that the ~~English~~ English working man has a higher standard of living than the Hungarian. Révai immediately refuted this statement with the usual communist arguments. I had to interrupt him with the remark, you shouldn't get your information out of your own propaganda. The central department of propaganda

led by Révai was divided into several subdepartments. There was one subdepartment for agricultural propaganda, another one for propaganda connected with foreign affairs and so on. The instructions coming ~~far~~ from the highest party leadership went through those subdepartments and were ~~submitted~~ ^{thrust out} through many meetings. There was ~~also~~ always some meeting going on at the central headquarters for example Révai had a meeting with his deputies, then the subdepartment for foreign affairs called ^{another} meeting together where myself and the ^{foreign} ~~different~~ editors of the ^{different} newspapers and the MTI participated. After this meeting I was supposed to call together my deputies in the ministry of foreign affairs and held another meeting. The meetings ^a ~~meant~~ a great waste of time. They consisted not only of the actual instructions and the necessary debate but each time a ^{pep talk} ~~speech~~ was delivered. This system of meetings and subordination was in line with the ^{organizational principles of} ~~principle of~~ Communism, but proved to be very ~~very~~ ineffective. The meetings held by Révai himself reminded of a bedlam. They were interrupted in every 5 minutes because Révai was called out or an important telephone call came. At the end of a meeting many people did not know exactly what the party line was. Consequently they gave ~~ambiguous~~ instructions to their subordinates. In the 1950s when I was no more working with the propaganda organisation, ~~the~~ state planning was introduced into all

fields of cultural life. From this time on all the theatres were supposed to prepare a production plan ~~very similar to the plan~~ very similar to the plan of the factories. Such a planning in the theatrical life or in publishing ^{meant} a great annoyance and ineffectiveness. The theater was supposed to prepare its production plan more than a year ahead, and if the plan was fixed, it was impossible to change it. If the plan stated that a certain play will be given for 4 months it could not be taken off the program although the play failed. On the other hand if a play proved to be a good success it had to be replaced after a run ^{of}, let's say 3 months because ~~if~~ the planning required the performance of another play. When I joined the Szépirodalmi Kiadó in 1955, ~~we were~~ we were working on the basis of the ~~plan~~ plan. Our publishing firm was profited to publish the translated works of foreign poets and and novellists. According to the strict rules of the ^{we} plan, we were not ~~we~~ supposed to publish any Hungarian authors. In 1955, however, the general liberalisation could be felt. So we were able to change the plan to carry out the policy of independence, for example, our plan specified that we should publish 2 books by Dickens, but instead of those we were able to bring out one modern American author and one French one. Similarly we were able to bring out quite a few ~~more~~ books which were out

of the party line. For example the Hungarian translation of Dante by Babits then the works of Cervantes and of Lorca. As another infringement of the plan we published 2 books by the Hungarian Molnár Ferenc. By that time even the theatres were willing to deviate from the plan. This was the time when the plays of Molnar were played with a great success. In that year 4 Molnar plays were played at the same time. The public stormed the gates of the theatre to see them. It was something like the demonstration against the Russian plays of the previous years. It would be difficult to explain all the reasons why the ~~propaganda~~ propaganda system of the Communist Party broke down. The propaganda departments were made up of newspapermen and other intellectuals for whom it was difficult to conform to the Party. Originally the Communist propaganda system required a certain overwork or overenthusiasm for all propagandists. For example if the Ministry of agriculture issued an official statement about the sabotage of the kulaks, it was not enough if the editors of the newspapers printed the statement, they had to send their reporters and write it out in several reports, ~~but~~ even in whole series. The reporters had to exaggerate ^{in order} all details, to emphasise what a great crime had been committed by the ~~the~~ kulaks. They ~~spelt~~ ^{writes}

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not simply ^{as} the transmission ~~would~~ ^{belly} of the propaganda department, ~~It was a~~ ^{but had to do more} ~~centralization~~ for the Communists. The Communists had to convince themselves that they were right. Every editor had to convince himself, his readers and the higher ups in the Party that the Party was right again. The same overzealousness of the propagandists characterized not only the propaganda department ~~was~~ but even the work of the police. When I was arrested in 1949 the police received a little slip of paper which was shown to me and which read: Szász Béla is an imperialist agent, he must be realized, signed Farkas. This was the slip and the AVO people and the arrested persons had to ~~invent~~ invent the necessary tales. They had to prove that the Party was right again. The situation is well known to the AVO people. Many of them carry out their duties with cynicism, some of them with conviction and most of them as a necessity. The propaganda ^p apparatus of the Party ~~breaks~~ ^{breaks} down if one clerk ~~was~~ stops in such a system. When the paper ~~of the paper~~ of the writers association refused to pay ^{attention.} the Party ^{instructions,} the whole propaganda system dissolved. The party leader ^s tried to stop ~~this~~ development through their own sabotage for example they did not send enough copies of the Irodalmi ^{szag} to Budapest. People wanted to buy more and were willing to pay 30 forints for one copy.

At the same time 100 copies were sent to a ~~xxx~~ small village, where only 3 of them were bought and the rest returned after the 3 weeks, as remittenda. As long as Hámos was its editor, the Irodalmi Ujság ~~was~~ was confiscated twice, then Hámos was fired ~~out of~~ ^{from} his job, but the paper went on with its own line. Something similar happened among the newspapermen of the Szabad Nép. For many years they were willing ~~to~~ ^{to contribute to} ~~be~~ ^{into} the official ~~paper~~ ^{papper} of the Party which was not ~~red~~ ^{red} by anybody except the party officials. Then slowly they became fed up and wanted to write the truth between the lines. I remember ~~that~~ ^{the} time in 1955 when one could see many things written between the lines of the Szabad Nép. Most of the people overlooked such articles because by that time they did not read the Szabad Nép. Finally the newspapermen stood up with a great courage and published quite a few articles which were against the various party leadership. Those few articles gave a new popularity to the paper. People were ~~excited~~ ^{excited} to read the Szabad Nép and after a good article people called up their friends and told them about the article. There were days in 1956 before the Revolution when at 10 a.m. one couldn't buy one Szabad Nép on the street. The intellectual department of the Party under the leadership of Andics had a tremendous

power. It made the decision about the program of the theatres and so on. Under the poor leadership of And⁶is it made a counter selection. People without talent became the ~~good~~ ^{famous} writers. The good writers were silenced by the Party. Many of them took up a voluntary silence. On the other hand people without talent were ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ favoured by And⁶is. The favour of And⁶is ment^a very much for the writers since one could earn a lot of money from literary work. The Hungarian newspapers paid pretty well, ~~five~~ ^{five} times as much as the newspapers in Vienna. For my translation of Don Quixote I got 28000 forints and I made the translation in 4 1/2 months. If somebody's novel⁷ was accepted for publication, he could make 40 000 ~~dollars~~ ^{forints}. Sandor Bela got 250 000 forints for a poor play. Even the translators of a thatrical ~~my~~ play got 12% of the intake. If the play was shown in the national theatre, it ment^a 700 forints a night. In case of a success, a translator could make 70 000 forints. Under such circumstances most writers made a success by incident. For example, Aczél Tamás got the Stalin price because one of the Moscovites liked his name. He thought it was a good modern Communist name taken up after the trial of the Party. At the same time there are some young ~~delicious~~ ^{excellent poets} such as Juhasz Ferenc Weores Sandor, Vass László, who are persecuted ~~z~~ by the Party. Even such persecuted ~~xxxxxx~~ poets can make a

living because the lecturers of the publishing houses are willing to publish their books or particularly their translations. For example, Waores made a living through translations. It is due to the independence of the publishing companies that the ~~value~~^{book} of Örsi was published in April 1957, at a time when he was in jail. Only those writers could make a success within the system who were willing to write according to stereotypes. A good writer ~~is~~ doesn't like to ~~it~~ put down platitudes. The newspapers and other communications of the Party are written by people who ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ have no style, who haven't got any ^a ^h _i esthetical principles. The same principle had to lead the translators. For example Tolstoy or the other Russian authors were supposed to be translated ~~one~~ word by word rather than by their spirit. We had to translate a Russian pun which might be good in the original but it is against the ⁱ _x ^t spirit of the Hungarian language. The translator had to follow the sentence structure^e of the original Russian text disregarding the sentence structure of the Hungarian language. This situation led to a great deterioration of the Hungarian literary style. The announcement of the Communist politicians and writers had to follow a straight recipe prepared in Russia. Before the 20th congress of the Party ~~there~~ there was

only one science permitted called citology. The authors had to ~~sign~~^{cite} the Russian authorities disregarding the content. The same time it was prohibited to quote any Western authority. If somebody quoted Stalin he had to follow his style. As a lector with the publishing company I had to read a translated manuscript of a Russian book about the history of philosophy. According to this book after Aristoteles there was only one great school of philosophers, ~~the~~^{the} classical school of Russian philosophy. Since I did not ~~no~~^{know} anything about the classical school of Russian philosophy, I looked up the matter and I found that those Russian philosophers consisted of few newspapermen of the 19th century who wrote a few sentences which could be taken up by the Communism. This example clearly shows the fight of the Communists against the intellectuals. The Communists wanted official text^s in the same way as the text of the mass cannot be changed. In the Kadar policy the illiterates-~~ex~~ were favoured and the average party functionary always preferred the uneducated person to the well educated one. The literary policy of the Communist system was well summed up by Revai in his book, Discussion about our Literary Problems which was published in 1952. There he stated that the

duty of the writer is to conform to the policy of the state. Some writers were willing to do so and they became the successful writers of the Communist system. Most of the writers however, wrote for their desk only. We have excellent poems and novella in the drawers, ~~drawers~~ but nothing could be published out of them. If a young fellow wants to become a newspaperman, it is no more a matter of free ^{choice} ~~choice~~. The young newspapermen were selected by the Party mainly according to their class origin. The Szabad Nép had to have a certain percentage of proletarian origin on the staff. The Szabad Nép had 80 newspapermen on the staff, most of them did not write one line over a whole year. The recommendation of the Party was necessary to become a member of the writers association. Some of the members did not publish more than, 3 poems, whereas some great writers did not qualify as members. Another characteristic problem was that of the worker writers. It happened that a worker wrote a book which had a few good points in it, so a literary man rewrote the book, published it under his name and after all the worker believed that he was a real writer and claimed all the privileges of the writers. Revai wrote his articles and books himself, ^{but} ~~and~~ most of the other Communist leaders employed ghost writers. It happened

that an article appeared in the Szabad Nép under the name of ~~the~~ a Communist ~~writer~~ leader who learned about his own literary activity only when he opened the Szabad Nép .