

(Interviewer's Note: This is a B-type interview with a person who was active in 2 kinds of illegal activities. Except for the names of some Communist leaders all other names mentioned in the text are fictitious. The essence of the interview was supported by certain documents and proofs shown by the respondent to me.)

To understand my activities explained below I have to mention that I had many good reasons to be filled with a hatred against the Communist system. All members of my family had to suffer from one form of Communism. My mother who received pension from the Hungarian state railways was deprived of the pension in 1946 or 47. Although her children supported her, the financial difficulties contributed to her death in 1949. My sister was attacked by 2 Russian soldiers right after the liberation and as a result she bore a child out of wedlock. My brother was an army officer in the times of Horthy and was taken over by the new army in 1945. In 1950 he was arrested by the Military Political Department. It is not known to us what happened to him. I saw him once in 1952. After that he disappeared and he was declared dead and his wife remarried. Added to this were my own occupational difficulties I had to experience. Having worked in the freight forwarding business, I became an independent freight forwarder in 1945. I was able to carry out my business for almost 6 years. In August 1950 an order of the Ministry of Transportation forbade~~d~~ to the state business concerns to use private <sup>freight</sup> ~~freight~~ forwarders. This put us almost out of business, and the last ~~stroke~~ <sup>stroke</sup> was only a matter of a few

months. In January 1951 the remaining private freight forwarders were called into the Ministry of Transportation where Prieszol, the Deputy Minister, informed us that our licence of trade had been revoked. We were not permitted to continue our business but according to the existing law we had to settle our affairs with the tax office. I visited the tax office immediately and notified them about the liquidation of my business. At that time the tax office told me that I owe paid my taxes with 2000 forints. I was very glad to receive that news since I thought that with the aid of my savings I'll be able to support my family. In the summer of 1951 I received a special delivery summon of the tax office which told me that I owe 28 000 forints to the state out of my liquidated business as unpaid tax. Nothing else could be done but I had to pay the money as demanded by the tax office. Together with the punitive interest I had to pay almost 39 000 forints which took up all my savings. In the meantime I had to find a job and with my past as a capitalist it was rather difficult to find employment. In the spring of 1951 I became an unskilled worker with an electrical factory in Budapest. A few weeks later I was able to secure a job as leader of the transportation system with a construction firm working at Sztalinvaros. IN



freight forwarding business I could do some services to him. I have to mention the fact that coming from a mixed marriage I was of Lutheran religion, but after the death of my father I would go with my mother into the Catholic church. Although my formal conversion to Catholicism happened much later, the Jesuit father accepted me as a Catholic right away. In 1949 the Jesuit father tried to organize the Catholic youth of his city into a *sport* organization which was supposed to be a replacement of the old boy scout movement. In 1950, about the same time when religious education was removed from the curriculum of the schools, the Jesuit father came to live to Budapest. He began to organize the illegal religious education. When I learned of his plan, I immediately offered my help to him and from this time on I participated in the religious education up to about the September of 1954. In 1950 when we began our work we realized that it was dangerous. However, at that time it was not <sup>strictly</sup> ~~straightly~~ illegal. About the end of 1950 or at the beginning of 1951 certain new regulations concerning the church came out and the Jesuit Order was dissolved by the state. From that time on, our work became obviously illegal and even the Jesuit father who was the head of the whole work lived for a while in illegality. When our work started in the spring of 1950 quite a few parents approached the Jesuit father asking him to give certain religious

education to their children. At the same time some university students came who were interested in a religious study circle or in any kind of group which carries on religious work. I have to add that at that time I had quite a few acquaintances among the university students because of my university <sup>years</sup> ~~years~~. Starting from those years up to its dissolution in 1948 I had been active in the sport club of the university students called Beac. For the purpose of the work we organized the youth into so-called circles which were actually the imitations of the patrol of the boy scouts movement. The circle consisted of 4 to 8 youth and each of them had a leader. The circle leaders were all laymen, some of them university students and other ones grown-ups like myself. For our own use we called the circles excursion circles, but we refrained from putting down any charters or strict rules. There has never been any formal organization. Since our work began in the spring the work was done on Sundays during excursions into the mountains of Buda. The leader of a circle met his members at some streetcar station or some other point in the mountains and then the whole circle moved into a remote and deserted part of the mountains. There the forenoon was dedicated to our main program which consisted of <sup>prayer</sup> ~~prayer~~ of catechetical teaching, of moral discussions and of discussion of our readings. The afternoons were spent with play and in the evening we

returned home. When fall came our excursion program could not be carried out. However, we managed to hold the meetings in some private apartments and particularly in one building of Budapest which we could use and where we could meet. Since the number of the members of one circle never exceeded 8, the meetings could be carried out without becoming conspicuous. Right from the beginning we had great difficulties in finding the material necessary to our religious education. Religious school-books were not available. In 1950 we still could find a few copies of the catechism, but soon after even this source became exhausted. We had a few copies of the books of Totk Tihamer and for the meeting of the students we used the current Catholic newspapers and magazines published in Hungary. This was altogether a rather meagre material. So about the end of 1950 we decided to prepare a special paper for the leaders of the circles. This paper became called the Way in Hungarian as it. It was a type-written paper prepared in 12 copies only and each copy consisting of about 15 to 16 type-written pages. Each issue of the paper consisted of 3 parts. In the first part we gave catechetical teaching, moral discussions and other texts belonging strictly to religious education. The second part *szaki* consisted of foreign news. However, we never published any political news or any news item taken from the foreign radios. We tried to describe the

life in the Western countries, particularly in America such as the life of the students, sports and ~~and~~ athletics and similar items which might be of interest for the youth. Finally the third part of the paper consisted of short stories and poetry and the main aim was to give good Catholic reading in it. Altogether the paper gave material for several meetings. It would have been good to have it published every month, however, we never achieved it. Usually we were able to prepare a new issue in every 2 or 3 months. The papers were given to the leaders of the circles only but not to the members, and the leaders were supposed to use them during their program. It was a general principle of the paper as well as of our program that we did not want to incite the youth <sup>for</sup> ~~against~~ any ~~and~~ action against the system which would endanger their freedom or their family. The main aim was to give religious education, but not to organize a resistance movement. As an additional point to the organization I have to mention that only the leaders of the circles met the Jesuit father and the leaders met him in small groups of 2 or 3. I have never met all the leaders and I don't know exactly how many leaders or how many members were in the organization. I think we had never more than 20 or perhaps 25 circles working at the same time, although I understand that over the 4-year period about 90 circle leaders participated in the whole work.

Most of the members were in school age. There were always 2 or 3 circles for university students and finally there was one for working youth. I was the leader of a circle consisting of university students. Concerning the recruitment of the members I can give you one example. One summer I had to spend a day in a city on a business trip. The next morning I attended the 5.30 mass. I immediately noticed a group of young men in the church and among them I discovered an acquaintance of mine from the sport club of the university students. After the mass we had a little talk and I learned that these young men had just been discharged from their summer military service and before returning home they wanted to attend mass. In such a way 3 members of this group became later interested in our work. My involvement in the other illegal activity came by another incident. On Christmas Eve 1951 an old friend of my family appeared unexpectedly in our apartment. He was the husband of my wife's childhood friend and we knew him for many years. In the old system he was a captain of the general staff and in the following context he will be referred to as the captain. Before 1951 we have not seen him for several years so his sudden appearance came rather unexpectedly. He asked us whether he could spend the night with us. Although I sensed immediately that something must have been wrong with him, it was impossible to turn down his re-



quest on Christmas Eve. He stayed with us for 3 days and during the conversation he told us that he was working for an American spy organization and he had been crossing the Hungarian-Austrian border several times. Some time later I learned that he was in connection with the OIC. After Christmas the Captain disappeared and I did not see him until April 1952 when he spent 2 nights with us again. From then on he reappeared from time to time and spent one or two days with us, then he disappeared again. He visited us perhaps 5 or 6 times a year arriving each time late at night and leaving early in the morning. From this time on, a certain cooperation became established between us. He brought me American magazines and other news items which I could use in our paper The Way. On the other hand I gave him certain data concerning my place of work the Komi and about that part of the forced labor system that I could see at my place of work. He told me that he wanted to make use of the information received from me and I voluntarily furnished my data. As mentioned above I was working at the Komi which was a business firm for organizing the work of the prisoners. I was subordinated to the 7th chief department of the Ministry of Interior. The leader of this chief department was Garaseny Rudolf and its deputy was Virag Miklos, Lieutenant-Colonel. Both of them were the <sup>most</sup> ~~great~~ emi-  
nences of the forced labor system in Hungary. Garaseny

Rudolf was a Jewish fellow from Ungvar who fought with the Russian partisans during the war. In his office he was the <sup>tough</sup> ~~best~~ guy who threatened everybody with sabotage and arrest. I don't know very much about his deputy Virag Miklos. I think he was one of those opportunists who joined the Communist Party after the war only. A good friend of theirs was Blitzer Armin who became the chief accountant of Komi and actually ran the whole business. He represented the Party line in the business. The Komi itself was divided into several enterprises. It comprised, for example, 4 prison farms. One of them was <sup>at</sup> a Bernatka near Szabolcvaros, another one was at Annamajor near Kapolnacsanyek, the third one was called Allampuszta near to the railway station of Barta, and finally Nagya near to the city of Szeged. Furthermore the Komi was in charge of several mining enterprises, for example, of the quarry at Komlo. Furthermore it worked in some mines of Dorog and in Yatabanya. It was in complete charge of the mining operations of Oroszlanbanya and to further mines near to Miskolc. An another department of the Komi there was a ~~shanty~~ and drawing instrument factory in the prison of Vac. All these enterprises were worked with the prisoners and deportees. At that time I was leader of the transportation department (in Hungarian Szallitasvegezo) with the Komi and I had to visit the different enterprises pretty often. I had information concerning the number

of prisoners working in each enterprise, concerning working conditions and many other details. I gave such information to the Captain as mentioned above. In the course of the year 1953 the Captain mentioned that my information furnished the basis for certain articles about the Hungarian Forced Labor System published in different German newspapers. In one case he made some notes in German language about the information I gave him. By chance he left those notes in my apartment where they got mixed up with my old papers. The notes found by the police in 1955 were the basis of the charges against me during my second trial. In November 1953 I was promoted in my job and became chief of the warehouse of the Kosi. I took charge of the warehouse on November 18th. About 4 weeks later one of the managers came to me and told me that different materials in the value of 400 000 forints are missing from the warehouse. I immediately took stock in the whole warehouse and at the end of it I found a shortage of almost 1 1/2 million forints. I immediately prepared a detailed report on the shortage and pointed out that since I was in charge of the warehouse for only 3 weeks, a shortage of such a great amount must be attributed to my predecessor. I submitted this report to one of the managers named Uilcer Egon. I submitted it just before Christmas and for a while I did not receive any answer. On a Tuesday morning in January 1954 I went to my office

rather disturbed since the Captain was living at my place again. Shortly after 9 o'clock Gilcer came over to my desk and told me that I should go over to the police for a hearing concerning the shortage. It was a strange thing indeed. I walked over from our office to the police at the Andrassy ut alone and reported there in the room as told by Gilcer. There I was told to wait and my hearing began in the afternoon only. About 8 p.m. I was told that I was arrested and should stay there for a while. After three days of hearing it became clear to me that the police did not know of my illegal activities. The police did not even go to my apartment and did not find the Captain there. The police was interested in the shortage of the warehouse only. They charged me with stealing material but nothing else. My conscience was clear concerning any stealing from the warehouse and I tried to explain that during the short time I spent in the warehouse, I simply could not steal materials in the value of 1 1/2 million forints. The hearings lasted for about 3 weeks and I could stand them only with the support of constant prayer. When returning to my <sup>cell</sup> ~~apartment~~ after a hearing, I prayed always for a long time. During those nights when I was permitted to sleep I awakened myself at dawn <sup>and</sup> prayed for one hour <sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ more. I have to mention that I was arrested in Budapest, but after 3 days I was transferred to the jail of Szatlinvaros because

the warehouse with the shortage was located there. It was the warehouse of the construction firm of the Komi which did construction work at Sztalinvaros. The jail in Sztalinvaros had one great advantage over that in Budapest, it had windows in the cell. After 3 weeks of hearing one night I prayed for a long time. At the end of the prayer the Holy Virgin appeared before me and announced that I will be free on the same day. Next morning I was led to the AVO captain who was in charge of my hearing. At that time he had the ~~shipment~~<sup>shipping</sup> cards and receiving slips on his desk and being in a good mood he even ~~karbix~~<sup>permitted</sup> me to look at them. When looking at the vouchers I suddenly got the idea that the bookkeeping department had made a mistake and had charged our warehouse twice with the material received. Since the shipping cards showed the number of the delivery slips as well as the number of the railway box cars in which the material was shipped I could prove my point in a very short time. By noontime even the captain had to see that there was no shortage at all in the warehouse, but a mistake of the bookkeeping department. Except for a shortage of something like 200 forints we ~~karbix~~ could clear up the whole amount of 1 1/2 million forints. On the same afternoon I was led to the captain again who announced that I was conditionally free and I can go home. I got home on January 27th, 1954. About 3 months later I had to

stand trial because of the shortage of 200 forints and were sentenced to a careless handling of goods for 6 months in jail. The sentence was conditional, so I was freed and I was not supposed to serve it. After my arrest I took a few days off, but in February 1954 there was nothing else left for me but to return to my job at the Komá. On the second day after my return to work, I came across the official mimeographed press release of the Ministry of Interior where I saw a little item saying that through long years of constant cheating, I caused a damage of 1 1/2 million forints to the socialistic economy and the press release expressed its hope that I will not avoid the gallowses. I immediately rang up the office of Garaseny and protested against the press release. The release was indeed suppressed and never published in the newspapers. I became more and more disgusted with my work at the Komá since the type of work could not be liked by a normal person. In once case, for example, I had to go out to the Gyujtófogház of Budapest on some official errand. It was Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock and I had to witness the execution of a death sentence. At another occasion when I was officially in the central prison of Budapest I could see by chance my own brother who was there on a trial at that time. My brother later on disappeared and very likely died in his prison. I wanted to leave my job and at the same time to give up my illegal activities. About Easter

time 1954 the Captain appeared in our apartment again. At that time I told him that I did not want to maintain any more connections with him and that he should not show up at our place in the future. That was the last time I saw him since he did not show up later on during our trial. About the same time I began to withdraw from the religious education too. The work still went on under the leadership of the Jesuit father. But after September 1954 I had nothing more to do with it. In the summer of 1954 when the situation was generally relaxed I could leave my job with the Komi. I had to spend a few weeks with finding a new job, but finally I found one in the transportation department of the Skovoss. This firm was in charge of providing the population of the villages with building material and it had a large transportation department. I worked there for more than a year up to my arrest. During that year I did not participate in any illegal activities but lived like every ordinary citizen lived. In the night of October 5th, 1955 the AVO arrested me in my apartment. First I was taken to the AVO house in the Cuokonay utca and a few days later I was transferred to the prison in Ru utca where I stayed for about 6 months. It is not necessary to say very much about the hearing. The methods of hearing were the same everywhere. I received stimulating drugs of the Aktedron type and I could not sleep for nights. Perhaps the

worst part of the hearing was that I was supposed to prepare long-written autobiographies, at least 10 of them which were supposed to be prepared over night. It was an ingenious system to deprive the prisoner of his sleep and to torture him over night. I was told for example, that I must write without any interruptions up to 8 a.m. and was told that the guard will watch me all the time that I should not stop. Soon I realized that the charge against me was espionage and the matter of religious instruction did not come up at all. I think the police did not know of it and I did not want to mention it. At the time of the hearings it became clear before me that the police had rounded up quite a few persons who were in connection with the Captain, but did not capture the Captain himself. As everybody else would do under such conditions first I tried to deny of having any connections with him and I tried to ~~deny~~ <sup>point</sup> out the fact that he had used different aliases. Finally I signed the confession that I had been in contact with him and had given him certain information concerning the Komi. The official transcript of the charges of the state attorney were given to me on April 10th. Then I learned that 22 of us were arrested as a spy ring. The Captain himself was not caught by the police. I understand that at the time of the arrest he was in Austria and never returned to Hungary again. I understand that he is still alive



in some foreign countries, however, I have not met him. As an interesting point of the official charge I want to mention that we were charged of carrying out espionage in the favor of Great Britain. As far as I know the fact was that the Captain was in connection with certain American persons but not with English ones. I still don't know whether this peculiar item was due to an error of the police or it was a part of some planned propaganda of the Communists. The 22 persons named in the charges were accused of having transmitted military and other information to the Captain. I was the so-called accused of second rank. According to the official charges I gave information concerning the work of the Kemi and submitted those informations to certain German newspapers such as the Kölnische Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung. I was charged of having furnished the material of 32 articles over a period of 2 years. I should mention that I never wrote any article for those papers, however, the information or at least some of the information of the paper might have originated with me. Moreover, as I mentioned the police found certain notes in German language in my ~~apartment~~ apartment and after this evidence I had to make a confession. The trial was held behind closed doors and lasted for 3 days on April 12 to April 15th, 1956. It was a ridiculous thing to try 22 persons in 4 days. One accused was heard for an hour and sometimes

for an even shorter time. The charges of the state attorney were read and each of us was supposed to say a few times yes. If we tried to say anything else, the chairman of the court interrupted us. After 4 days the sentence was announced. I was sentenced to death and this was the only death sentence in the whole trial. The other accused people received jail and 2 of them were acquitted. On June 5th our case came up before the Supreme Court. We were not present at that time but I was notified the next day that my death sentence was approved by the supreme court. As instructed by the prison director, I immediately applied for leniency. My petition for leniency did not receive any answer, but in the month of July I became ill and was transferred in the prisoners' hospital at Mosonyi ut and a few weeks later to the prison at Vac. I was already in Vac when in September 1956 I was officially notified that my death sentence had been transformed into 15 years of prison. In October 1956 the prisoners of Vac were released. It was on October 27th late in the afternoon when I could leave the prison. Trains were not running, so I began to walk home. After many calamities I reached my apartment on the next day having walked most of the road from Vac to Budapest.

I wanted to leave Hungary immediately, but my wife opposed this plan. This is why I stayed in Budapest

for 3 more months. Those were hectic months. Our apartment was located on the Ferenc Korut and was very badly damaged during the Revolution. We rebuilt it. We even received some benefits from the Kadar system. The Kadar government <sup>ordered</sup> all the belongings pawned by the pawnbrokers to be returned to their owners without any payment. That was a great benefit for us, since during my prison <sup>term</sup> my wife had pawned almost everything she could. I even returned to my old job with the Szovacs. Mainly under the influence of my wife I settled down to start a new life in Budapest. On January 5th, 1957 an official order was published in the newspapers ruling that all those persons who had been freed out of jail because of the Revolutionary events should immediately report at the competent prison commandments. I did not know what to do and went over to the office of the state attorney in the Maria Valaria utca where I could see one of the state attorneys. It turned out that the office has kept my personal card in its card system with all my details. The state attorney advised me that I should apply for a so-called interruption of my prison sentence. When I left the building I made the decision to escape from the country. My wife did not want to take the hazards of an escape and she stayed in Budapest with the 2 children. I made the necessary preparations and left Budapest on January 9th for good.