

The following interview was taken with a 28 years old Franciscan monk, pater [REDACTED].

I was the prefect (supervisor or advisor) of the boys staying in our internat (boys' home) connected with our Franciscan gymnasium in Esztergom.

A few days after the eruption of the Revolution, after much doubt and meditation, I secretly left our monastery in Esztergom early in the morning, when everybody was still asleep and started out for Budapest. I knew that according to canon law, a monk who remains outside his monastery over 24 hours without a permission of his superior, will be punished by suspension of his priestly functions. However, during my over half a day walk, I became firmly convinced that I had to take part in the fight of the people, which I considered a holy war. (I was treated at that time with many different medicines because of exhaustion and weakness and also my ulcers, but now I had the feeling that the Revolution cured me and made me strong).

In Budapest I first registered as a nurse, then I presented myself to Pál Maléter in the Kilian barracks and applied for the job of a military chaplain. Unfortunately, I did not succeed ^{in getting} either assignment. Thus, in the first fase of the Revolution, I worked as a

reporter for the "Egyetemi Ifjúság" (University Youth) which was the newspaper of the Egyetemi Forradalmi Tanács, the Revolutionary Council of the university students.

On the 4th of November, when I heard the cry for help by Imre Nagy in the radio, I hurried up to the Buda Castle to see the Cardinal Primate, to whom I have handed shortly before a petition in writing. (In this I have outlined a program for the youth in the great tasks ahead, and at the same time I have asked Cardinal Mindszenty to use his immense moral influence over the entire nation, in order to prevent the consequences of every revolution, namely popular judgement and lynchings and other cruelties. I suggested in this connection the designation of certain churches as sanctuaries along *redakoval* ^{lines}. So the people persecuted by the mob could take refuge there until legal order was firmly established). But I could not find the Cardinal Primate in Buda anymore.

Under this terrific impact of Imre Nagy's proclamation, I decided to join the Freedom Fighters, who were just congregating there on the Buda hills. I offered my services to the commander of the castle, whose headquarters were at a student home, right there on Castle Hill. And when this man left his *post* without leaving

anybody in charge, I decided after a short meditation, that the best I could do, was to take over the command over the increasing number of Freedom Fighters, coming up to the castle. (Before I became a monk and a priest, I was a cadet in a military school. Since most of the boys around me were even younger than me, and had no military training before, in a certain way I was forced by the circumstances to take charge of the situation).

Under steady shellfire, I organized the military units and the supply of arms, ammunition, food and clothing. At the same time the wounded and the pregnant mothers were all taken to the nearby hospitals by a special unit, which I organized for this work.

My first aim was to organize a well equipped strong military garrison for the fortress of Buda, because we still hoped that under UN or Western pressure, the Russians might be forced to enter into negotiation and then ~~they~~^{we} would have needed a strong, however small unit, which could still represent Hungary's interests at such negotiations. Thus I have mainly concentrated on preparations for defense. The bitterness and enthusiasm of the fighters knew, however, no bound and I could hold them back only with the greatest difficulty from senseless and dangerous actions.

During the time of organization and busy preparations came up to ~~us~~^{us} Szabó Bési, a generally known Freedom Fighter who brought us some food. Many former officers have offered their services too. But in order to preserve the purity of the Revolution (namely that it was fought by students and workers and not by Horthyite officers, as the enemy claimed) they have not been allowed to take active part in the preparations and the fight.

My company commander, Gábor Folly, was since hanged. Zoltán Gzérna, who was appointed by me to be the second in command, was killed by a mine, not far from Bécsi Kapu, the entrance gate to the fortress. On the 6th of November, we have received an ultimatum by telephone through a Hungarian officer. We were listening all night to different radio stations with the last desperate hope and held meetings, discussing what we ought to do. Since our headquarter was discovered and shelled, in the early morning we carried all the weapons, ammunition, and explosive material over to the expresso at the Bécsi Kapu. This was an extremely dangerous operation since ~~we were~~^{we were} continually shelled and also attacked by planes. During this continuous bombardment, I took a broom and swept the office rooms of the Várgondnokság with my own hands, in order that we should not be branded

later as "looting Fascists", who left disorder and dirt behind.

During this time it was my job also to provide the population of Castle Hill with food and other daily necessities. The order was kept up by strict disciplinary measures.

The Russians attacked on the 7th of November. Around my neck I had a sub machine gun, in my hand handgrenades and sometimes bottles of gasoline. My heart was heavy with the tragedy of our inevitable defeat. All resistance was hopeless against the 4,000 tanks the Russians mustered against Budapest. We tried our best, but soon I saw that further resistance would cost only unnecessary lives. Therefore I gave order for dispersion. The fortress had many secret passages and so most of the fighters could escape ^{without} being caught by the Russians.

In the afternoon of November 8th, after dusk set in, I sneaked back to the fortress, wearing my monk's habit. I had a loaf of bread in my briefcase and hurried through the mass of tanks until I reached Disz Square, where I was arrested by a Russian guard. He took the bread from me and standing under the lamp he showed it around and said "Popa, popa!" then he examined my documents with an air of authority and lead me to the building of my former headquarters. He explained to me that this building was

occupied by the Fascists and they had there their ammunition dumps. Naturally I made an incredible face, but at the same time the cold sweat was running down my back. He finally let me go.

I visited the wounded in the nearby hospital, where one of the boys rose from his bed and greeted me loudly "com-
ra& commander". He promised me as soon as his wound would heal, we would continue. I also found the boy whom I gave the last absolution the day before, when I ~~said~~^{thought} that he was dying. Throughout the siege I never neglected my priestly office and submachine gun slung around my neck, I have heard confessions and gave absolutions to my boys and men, who were in dire need of religious consolation.

On the 9th of November, I took off toward the Western border in order to get some food and medicine for Budapest with a truck flying the Red Cross flag. A courageous student was my driver. Twice we were arrested by the Russians. For days ~~we~~ we were sitting in the Győr and in the Fehérvár jails. Perhaps this was my good luck, because by this time I have been looked for already in Budapest.

After my release from the jail, for which I could thank the ignorance of my Russian jailers, I went back to Budapest for the purpose of contacting underground organizations.

(I even secured a Russian identity card.) I soon discovered however, that to stay any longer in Hungary would mean suicide for me. The Soviet forces and the AVH had issued a warrant for my arrest, naming me as the commander of the Freedom Fighters in the Buda Castle.

I left Hungary in the middle of November 1956.

(Since the end of November 1956, father [REDACTED] was active in different refugee organizations in Austria. He was in charge of the greatest student camp at Schwechat bei Wien. He was interviewed also by the United Nation's 5 member Commission on Hungary. He is a member of the National Council of Free Hungary and a member of the presidential Committee of the Freedom (Nemzetör) Association. At the end of July 1957, father [REDACTED] left for the United States).