

I was the manager of a clothing store in the vicinity of Pest at Dunaharaszti-Soroksag. There was only one other worker in the store beside me, a clerk. Our store handled about 3/4 of a million forint sales per year. We sold yard goods, shoes and some ready-sewn clothing. In order to be manager of such a store certain skills and knowledge in textile and store management were required. Therefore the ~~Communist~~ ^{Communists} used people like me who had the knowledge and experience of some 20 years. One did not have to be a good kader, however, here knowledge was more important because the poor or inexperienced storemanager could order material which would not sell and the state would suffer great losses. This did happen.

When there was a season for buying clothing the store business went well, but I was not compensated in the way I should have been for the responsibilities I had to assume in running the store. I received 900 forints a month. The reason for this low pay was understood by everyone, that is that employees of the state stores could illegally take what they wanted that is steal. The ministry knew that such stealing was going on and therefore did not want to pay any higher salaries. The stealing was done on the following basis: by making no. 3 quality yard goods into no. 1 quality. That is when a customer came in the no. 3 would be sold for no. 1 and the difference between the 2 prices for the qualities

pocketed
~~xxxxxxx~~
 would be ~~xxxxxxx~~ after the sale was made. Naturally
 on our daily forms and reports we reported that the
 no. 3-quality goods was sold for the standard price
 set by the ministry.

There were 5 qualities of cloth and material 1 through 5.
 The sale prices of these qualities were set as follows,
 that is No. 1 100%, No.2 5% less, No.3 10% less, No.4
 20% less, No.5 was inferior or substandard faulty pro-
 duct which was not offered for sale.

The whole country of Hungary was a great stage play in
 which everyone had his part and if a person fell out of
 the part he lost. There were no neutral ~~xxxxxxx~~
 positions.

Each day I had to make ~~my~~ my daily report ~~xxxxxxx~~ on
 sales and send in the money to the central ~~xxxxxxx~~ office.

The monthly report had to be made about the forint
 value of the goods in the store, that is the inventory
 according to the ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{Various goods,} wools, silks, and so on
 then the total value of those. Each half year an entire
 store ~~inventory~~ inventory was done by 2 men from
 the central office in the presence of the store manager
 with the help of the store clerk. This inventory was
 a ~~xxxxxxx~~ check of the store manager and the basis
 for controlling sales and records. If the inventory
 showed that goods were missing and a second inventory
 6 months later indicated a great discrepancy, that is
 a lot of material missing and upon examination of the
 case in detail the central office found that the store

manager had used these goods for his own personal profit, the store manager would then be jailed. In the net work of 56 stores which belonged to ~~the~~ ^{this} central office, if in the inventories it was not discovered why the goods were missing or it was not possible to establish the reason for the discrepancies and if the discrepancy was large, the store manager was replaced and demoted ~~transferred~~ to the position of a clerk. If the discrepancies in the inventory were slight nothing happened to the manager. Discrepancies in the inventory that is lacks or missing articles had 2 legal ~~bases~~ bases, one unknown, two known. If the discrepancy was established as being unknown this was not a criminal offence. If the cause for the discrepancy was known then it was a criminal offence and people involved were jailed. There were certain requirements for the education ~~xxx~~ ^{of} store managers, but ~~these~~ the central office never enforced these requirements because experience and skill were important than ~~the~~ education. Those store managers who lived in ~~the~~ and worked outside of the city, such as I did not have time to participate in seminars and social work. The central office employees had to participate in social work, that is tarsadalmi munka. This social work consisted of meetings for women and other meetings for men, but here these meetings were a big bluff, a bunch of phrases. However, everyone appeared because they feared for their jobs. In fact,

the whole regime existed ~~was~~ because one ~~man~~ feared the next man, and so everyone was dependent from the next person in this chain of fear.

The stores outside of Budapest had the following hours: 8a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2.30p.m. to 5.p.m. In Pest the hours were different. Some stores opened later in the morning and some of the workers in the stores went in to work earlier, where ~~z~~ others went in later and worked later in the evening. The stores in Pest were not very attractive. Perhaps one out of ten stores dealing with cloth goods were attractive. These were showplaces. The side-streets had the poor stores and were unattractive. Each community which had a certain population was designated for a store by the central office. In Dunaharaszti there was another store under our central office. That store sold ~~was~~ smaller goods and ^{woolen} ~~xxxx~~ things. On the national holidays our stores were closed. That is August 4th, May 1st, October 31st, on Christmas we were closed, but there was no second day, holiday for Easter and Pentecost.

Our enterprise had its ~~central~~ center in Pest. From there it maintained a network of distribution and control. The shipping of goods and distribution to the stores was horribly slow. What I ordered in the central office perhaps on July 2nd arrived 20 days later or next month August 10th. In the central office there were not sufficient numbers of employees to handle the

orders for the local stores. Frequently^{if} the local customers or buyers who could not get what they wanted in our store would have had to wait a month before something arrived ~~want~~ into Pest and at one of the state stores bought the goods they wanted. Thus our local stores ~~lost~~ out and I could not meet my norm, if I would not have the goods ~~and~~ ~~_____~~ available in time to sell locally. I would go into the central office to select the patterns which I knew would sell locally. This was particularly important. The articles which did not sell stayed in the store inventory from year to year and for this reason it was important for the state to select very carefully trained and experienced men for the managing of the store so that ~~xxxxxxx~~ an amateur or a ~~xxx~~ dilettante does not order goods which do not sell. There was a certain corruption in this matter of making orders from the central office. I had a personal acquaintance in the office who saw to it that I would get ^{saleable} ~~available~~ material, so that the goods would not stay in the store. For this he would get a certain kickback^{for} sending quality goods which I could sell. If there was greater traffic in the goods sold then he would share more in what we were able to make from our sales.

The direction of the ~~Party~~ ^{responsibility} was as follows. From the store to the central office, then the provincial Megye Council, then the clothing section of the

division of the Domestic Commerce Ministry. The idea of the Communists at first was that ~~xxxx~~ the market or commerce should direct the industry and the kind of products produced. But in reality it was industry which directed commerce and the market. Industry produced so much of certain things that we were not able to sell. They were post-fashion and of poor quality. Therefore we had great many sales at which some of the articles were sold for 1/4 of the price. The warehouses were full of such rubbish and cheap wares which could not be disposed of otherwise. Industry could not keep pace or parallel production with market demands and the requirements for certain articles. Above all there was a tremendous bureaucracy which had only the advantage of giving a lot of work for a lot of people and although I filled out many forms and sheets for the central office which was worked up in statistics for the whole country and we were ~~xxxxxx~~ overburdened with statistics customers had a great deal of troubles in getting certain articles, even during the best times under the Communist regime. For example, last summer during the season even for my own personal use I was not able to get any ~~sandals~~ ^{sandals}. There was not a ~~sandals~~ ^{sandals} in my store. Then I went to all the Budapest stores in order to locate this ~~sandals~~ ^{sandal} for myself. However, after the summer the industry caught up with the demand and sent out ~~sandals~~ ^{sandals} more than we needed, but it was too late. This

was the planned economy. "Everything for the interest of export" was the slogan. Internal or domestic sales were secondary and what was left after exports would be sold in Hungary. The greatest amount of exports went to the Soviet Union, then to other countries such as Brazil, Argentina, India, Pakistan.

Since the government gave great preference to the miners and sent all the consumer goods available to the mining stores before they were sent to any other places, a person could go to a mining community and purchase almost any article he wanted. Many of these things were not available in Pest. The things that were hard to get were available for the miners so that the miners should not be dissatisfied or should not have any unsatisfied needs. The government wanted to keep the miners in good stead. For the government, coal production was necessary.

The quality of Hungarian textile goods before the Communist regime was excellent. Hungarian textile industry had some good names such as Goldberger. Under the Communists this name was retained, only the quality was not the same. The idea was to produce attractive wear, but the quality of the clothing was not good. The pair of pants which I am wearing is Hungarian material No. 1 quality which was 70% wool, 30% artificial fiber. The dyes used in textile production were very poor. These dyes faded or came out

in washing. For example, there was a great rush order in production for export of cotton print to Pakistan. The pattern of course and the print were unique. When the order was finished and ready to be sent the Pakistan people did not accept the order because in the rush of trying to meet norms the dyes faded and ran together. These goods stayed in Hungary and it was almost impossible to sell the patterns or the prints. There were instructions given with ~~xxxxxxx~~ certain cloth and certain ~~xxxxxxx~~ dyed cloth, as to how to wash~~xxxx~~ them, not to dry clothing in the ~~xxxx~~ sun, not to wring them, however to wash in a lukewarm water adding vinegar to the water. These were preventive instructions, so that the dye would not fade or run.

Complaints about clothing ^{or} ~~xxx~~ shoes which were purchased at the state stores were sent along with the article to a central complaint office, where the article was examined and if the sole of the shoe came off because of a production error then the customer was given a new shoe. The same was due with cloth goods if the customer discovered that the goods fell ~~xxxxxxx~~ apart and this was established by the complaint office as a production error. However, fading, dyes running in print cloth ~~xxxxx~~ could not be exchanged.

When the factory produced a piece of material the retail price for it was already set. The price for each piece of cloth or article was the same all over

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the country. ~~It~~ was a monopoly by the state. Some times when the price went up the raw materials were scarce and the quality got worse. When the price went down there were more raw materials and the quality was better. The store managers were checked and inspected about the prices. Groups went out into the country from the central offices to check whether the store managers were charging the proper prices for the proper quality of goods. We store managers and clerks ~~we~~ were usually able to spot these inspectors. Sometimes they would even bribe local people to come into the store to buy certain things hoping to trip us up that way.

In the last few years the ready-tailored and ready-to-wear clothing production developed and greatly. For example, on a production line they were able to produce ~~for~~ ~~children~~ in Pest a man suit in 75 minutes. The state made more on the tailored clothing. It made a double profit and for this reason encouraged this industry.

In Dunaharaszti, the community had a population of 15 000. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population were workers in the Csepel Auto Works or in the Rakosi Steel Works or ~~in~~ at the Soroksag Textile Mill. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the people were of Swabian background, $\frac{1}{3}$ Hungarian. At first when the Communist took over the Swabians who had been members of the Volksbund or sympathized with the Germans were deported to Germany. But later those Swabians who re-

mained did not have any problem as a minority. Now most of them speak Hungarian. The children of the peasants now have taken on city habits by and large. They do not want to wear boots, but rather wear sandals. The same with their dress not being limited to local custom. The peasants were the ones who could buy most in my store because they could sell their produce at a better price. The industrial worker had perhaps an equal ^{buying} ~~kying~~ power as the peasant if he was able to produce above his norm in the factory or if 2 or 3 people were working in the ~~famiixy~~ family. The laborer or office clerk had the smallest ~~kyingx~~ buying power because office workers and clerks had fixed pays. To give an illustration of the effect of state control: The sales were very poor on consumer goods in 1953 or in 1954 as I remember. They were not moving. Then somehow the story spread, that the government was going to devalue the 100 forint by stamping it. It can be assumed that the state government~~s~~, the Communists started this rumor. Suddenly a tremendous buying fever started. People who constantly complained that they did not have money brought forth their money and I do not know from where, but bought all kinds of things, merely to transfer their money into goods. The peasant who previously would save his money, put it ~~awy~~ away, now under the Communists is ~~xynt~~ spending his money because he is afraid that it will not be worth anything.

A similar buying fever occurred in November after the Revolution. People would be waiting for me to open the store at 8 o'clock. They bought whatever they saw in the store. My inventory dwindled. People wanted to get rid of their money. Those who previously complained they had no money now had all kinds of money and were buying things. This buying fever was all over Hungary. People were afraid of an inflation, since the factories were not producing and they were afraid that their money would not be able to buy anything, because of a ~~scarcity~~ scarcity that would set in. Before the Revolution a regular day of sales in the store would be 4000 to 5000 forints. After the Revolution and during this buying fever, the store sales jumped to 60 000^{forints} a day. This occurred after November 4th and during the month of November. Even before the Revolution there were plenty of buyers, but there were not enough products that were satisfactory. People did not want to save their money, they were afraid of devaluation and they spent their money readily.

This business of hoarding can be illustrated from my own experience. During the Revolution I had a ~~big~~ pig killed out at Dunaharaszti so that I would have food in my ~~pantry~~ pantry. Never in my life had I so much food. Everyone hoarded whatever they could. This then later was reflected in the buying fever that swept over Hungary.

After the 1953-54 buying fever, a Hungarian film was produced about this particular fever and the buyers were satirized.

Since the motorcycle is a vehicle which can be allowed for the peasant, that is he has pay claim to such vehicle by his status, but he cannot by an automobile; the peasant enters a state store and buys a motorcycle, but only for crop products not for money, because money in Hungary is worth less, it has no ^{exchange} value. The grain which is received or the crop which is received by the government from the peasant can in turn be used a value or exported further. This is the serious problem of a government ~~which has~~ ^{to have} exchange currency or value.

The employed sales persons in the clothing store such as I managed had no real business interest, nor did they try to sell a product, nor even to give a good service to the customer. The salesperson always tries to see how much he can steal through the sale, and not how to please the customer as previously.

Many former store owners, small business men, if they were recommended by the nationalization committee were put in to stores as store managers. For such trading ~~an~~ experience was essential to the Communists.