

- (1) Everything. This is a joke.
- (2)a) There was a long incubation period, a period of ferment, both objectively and subjectively. Objectively this consisted of the economic breakdown as well as of the political breakdown, which was also subjective. Yes, there was a long period of fermentation from 1953 on.
- (2 b) There was a general restlessness and uneasiness in the satellites after the death of Stalin. After that came the changes in Hungary, the coming to power of Imre Nagy and the June Central Committee resolution which stated: "The Central Committee deeply condemns the adventurer policies of Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Révai, and Farkas, which policy is taking the country on the edge of ruin." This resolution was inspired from Moscow and was never published, because it would prove that Imre Nagy is not a rightist deviationist. The writers battled within the party for the right to publish this. In the spring of 1953 we faithful Communists realized that the country was politically and economically in a catastrophic position.
- In March 1953 Hungary held elections and in his speech before the elections Rakosi's speech that Hungary was happy, prosperous, etc., was greeted with a shouting chorus of approval. Ten days later, approximately, there was the Berlin uprising. Two or three weeks later the leaders of the party, including Imre Nagy, were ordered to Moscow. In Moscow, the Soviet leaders, Malenkov,

Molotov, Khrushchev, Beria, etc., gave the "big four" hell. They called Rákosi, Gerő, Révai, and Parkas every possible name you can think of. At this time Imre Nagy was named Prime Minister. It was at this meeting that Beria, who was a supporter of Imre Nagy's told Rákosi: "Listen, Comrade Rákosi, ~~she~~^{I've} heard that Hungary has had Hapsburg emperors, Polish kings, Turkish sultans as her rulers, but Hungary has never had a Jewish king, and it looks to me as if you were trying to become just that."

Then came the July 4 meeting of the Parliament at which I was present. I felt a fantastic relief, but also a certain amount of fear about possible reactions in the country; in fact there were some rightist manifestations. Rákosi came over to me, and I said: "This is just wonderful!" Rákosi sharply said: "Oh, ^{think so!} yes, you ~~are~~ Well, we'll see ---." That's what the old, bald pig ~~he~~ said, and then he left. A week later, on a Saturday, I was invited to a conference of the Budapest party activists; I was the Agitprop secretary of the Writers' Association party organization at the time. Here Rákosi countermanded the Imre Nagy policy; he was able to do this because Beria was arrested that week, and since Beria had supported Imre Nagy before, Rákosi immediately ~~drew~~ the correct conclusions. This connection is significant. It was not so clear to us at the time; we did not understand what was going on, and we were desperately unhappy. We could clearly see the joy radiating ^{from} ~~on~~ the faces of the party apparatchiks. ~~apparatchiks.~~ Now, at the "June road," the Imre Nagy policy, was

undone -- there was October, December, March, April -- I mean the Central Committee resolutions. We lived on the basis of these resolutions; they prescribed to us our daily tactical role.

The October 1954 resolution was a great break-through for Imre Nagy, but then came the March '55 resolution, and after that the opposition could do nothing for two months. It was a remarkable thing, how efficiently the party functioned whenever it came to the carrying out of Rákosi's policies, and ~~ME~~ how they could sabotage things when it came to carrying out Imre Nagy's policies. They were always in a hurry when it was good for them, but sabotaged whatever was bad for them. For instance the October resolution did not get to the ^{lower} ~~same~~ levels of the party for many months, but in March, when Imre Nagy was kicked out, the party resolution's printed text was ready on the day of the Central Committee meeting. The day after the meeting Andics read us the ^{printed} ~~original~~ text of the resolution against the right-wing opposition, with a gloating look on her face.

The undoing of Imre Nagy's policies was the real doing, (see the March 15th editorial of Irodalmi Ujság). In other words, it was Rákosi who prepared the Revolution. We, the Communist presidium of the Writers' Association, prayed, begged, and cursed from 1954 on. We told the highest leadership, the Politburo, at a number of conferences -- we had ten to twelve conferences with them. We begged them! We said, "comrades, if you continue,

there will be counter-revolution in this country; you are pushing people to a reactionary stand, to fascism."

Of the external events, the Polish happenings contributed to the Revolution, as well as the XXth Party Congress. ~~XXXXXX~~

Of the internal events, the rehabilitations were extremely significant. In addition, there was the struggle of the writers for greater freedom.

(2 c) The spring of 1956 was the turning point -- not any single event, plus the fall of Rákosi. The phrase "the masterless country" ^{*} is quite correct. The ~~terror~~ apparatus didn't function any longer, and the people were streaming up from below, replacing the writers and the intellectuals ^{in the struggle}; by then the workers and even the peasants were participating. Our tactics, Imre Nagy's tactics, ^{were} ~~was~~ to get people, to get the party functionaries, to say openly that they wanted to have Rákosi replaced. We started it all, it was we who ^{provoked} ~~provoked~~ ^{the} people into the Revolution. We tore open the true, the hurting, the sensitive wounds; we encouraged people. The terminology of the Central Committee resolution against us was not accidental, when it stated that: "all you do is rub salt into the wounds."

(2 f) It was chiefly ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ Irodalmi Ujság and Béke és Szabadság where the new atmosphere was noticeable. Irodalmi Ujság was the ^{leader} ~~leader~~ ~~was~~, and when the right took it over, Béke és Szabadság as well,

*"a gazdátlan ország"

which was run by Méray as the substitute of Nemes. I was his chief correspondent. Nemes was ashamed of himself; we used to tell him what a coward he was. I used to say: "You cowardly bum." This sort of thing was done in those days.

- (2 g) Oh yes, of course, Benjámín's Köznapi Dolgok Igézete (The Magic of Everyday Things), and many other poems, etc.
- (3) According to Lenin, a revolution breaks out when it is ripe; Lenin claims that when the old ruling class is unable to rule the old way, and when the ~~old~~ masses don't want to live the old way, then the revolution breaks out. It was the same in Hungary. The leaders of the regime could not continue their policies from above, and the people did not want to live the way they were forced to.
- (3 b) This only proves that in the West they have no idea what it was like, how it was. The control apparatus didn't collapse all at once, it rotted away gradually. The AVH was rotten. Not everyone in the AVH was a scoundrel; there were many convinced Communists in the AVH who did not want to, or simply could not, continue the horrible things they had been doing. The party membership meetings of the AVH were used as platforms for protest. Those who ^{had} committed villainies, were afraid and were not willing to continue. I mention the AVH because the secret police is the essence of the regime, and when it is unable to function any longer, -- and this goes for Russia too -- then the regime collapses.

- (3 e) The participants of the demonstration on the 23rd of October had no revolutionary intentions, if we mean revolution with arms, though theoretically the demonstration was revolutionary, but not in the barricade sense of the word. The intention was to wring immediate concessions, changes, from the regime. The first time I heard the word "revolution" was when Vásárhelyi told Imre Nagy at the Parliament, on the evening of the 23rd, "Why do you hesitate? There is a revolution!"
- (3 e) Yes, naturally people had different purposes in mind.
- (3 f) That depends on the time; some people opposed ~~it~~ it on the 23rd and on the 24th, but not on the 26th. I mean ordinary people of the middle class, doctors, engineers, with whom I talked. Of course, the majority of the party functionaries and the AVH were against the revolution, but not all.
- (3 g) Actually no one was neutral, everybody had some sort of relationship to the whole.
- (3 h) Independence, the Russian troops should leave Hungary, neutrality, as well as the democratic and Socialist slogans, such as "We won't return land or factory!" Actually, though, ~~we~~ quite a lot of the factories should have been returned to their/^{old}owners, and new ones should have been allowed -- this would not have changed the Socialist views and aims of the Revolution.
- (3 i) Of course. The Revolution was progressive, the Revolution was

a revolution because it was against a regime that was rotten to the core. It was merely an accident that this regime was a Communist one.

- (3 j) Practical action against the theoretical and practical system of Marxism-Leninism.
- (3 l) X Yes, there were many reactionaries in the Revolution. There were those who waited to use the Revolution for their own purposes, for instance Mindszenty, whose speech was reactionary and a-political. He spoke absurd idiocies. Mindszenty is a stupid, feudal, medieval, shady character.* That murderer, rascal, idiot Rákosi made a martyr of him. Mindszenty is not a Viszinsky, or a priest with European standards, with whom one can sit down and argue.
- (4) ** It is very fashionable today to talk of what one did during the Revolution -- I, I, I. I think it is very immodest to speak only of myself. I won't talk about this. (Respondent later agreed to send me an account of what he did between October 23 and November 4, but he has not yet done so.)
- (4 a) Yes.
- (4 b) Yes.
- (4 c) No: I saw a hanged man, and was not very happy about it.
- (5 a) Yes, I participated in many demonstrations.
- (5 e) Yes.
- (5 f) I was a member of the Revolutionary Council of the Intelligentsia.
- (7) The Writers' Association and the Revolutionary Council of the Intelligentsia had the greatest authority. All the insurgent

* "buta, feudális, középkori, sötét pacák"

** I was a member of the Revolutionary ~~Committee~~ ^{Council} of Intellectuals,

groups were in touch with us and asked our advice. An army captain called me at one point and said that the Russians want to occupy the Labor Movement Institute. I told him to prevent them from doing so by occupying it with his own men. Subsequently he reported to me that he had ~~accepted~~ ^{carried out} my suggestion.

(7 a)

The greatest conflict was between us and Dudás's group. Dudás was just a little condottiere. At his headquarters, he had a table heaped with money, revolvers and submachine guns, ~~heaped money on the table,~~ between two candles, ~~the place~~

He carried out the most

terrible executions. Dudás had once been a Communist. During the Revolution the ~~un~~ unfortunate man found this ^{new} way of life most suitable to him. He had once been a Smallholder, too. It was impossible to coordinate anything with Dudás's group; they were anarchists. This was our greatest problem during the Revolution, the lack of coordination. If the Revolution had been led, it could have been victorious. There were 20,000 small revolutionary groups. We constantly worried about this problem of coordination.

(7 c)

I had contact with university groups and military units.

(78)

The leaflets addressed to the Russian troops were without effect. I talked to a Russian officer who did not know what was going on. He had been in Hungary for four years, and he told me he knew this was not a counter-revolution. He had been ordered to Budapest from Kecskemét on the 23rd, and told that there was a counter-revolution. He was sent back on the 29th or so, when he was

I told that it was a revolution, and then on the fourth he was sent back again with the renewed claim of counter-revolution. He simply did not understand. I performed a very successful propaganda and educational ~~work~~^{project} on him, saying: "You are filthy rascals." He tolerated this. The Russians were tremendously afraid; many of the new recruits sat in their armored cars and tanks with their hands on their sub-machine guns, afraid that the car would bounce, and they would accidentally ~~shoot~~^{fire} the gun.

(8 c) I had no contact with them; I heard that they behaved decently.

(8 d) They were panic-stricken, and escaped ~~where~~ whenever they could.

I saw Kopácsy's Soviet Police adviser on the 23rd of October. He was ~~deadly pale~~^{pale as death} and scared, and he muttered: "Grazhdanskaya voina." He bit his nails and his handkerchief, etc., but nobody paid any attention to him. He disappeared around dawn.

(8 e) No, I was, and am, quite suspicious of claims that the Russians defected during the Revolution. I have heard it said that on the 25th at the Parliamentary demonstration the Russians fired on the AVH. I was there and I saw it differently. (How did it happen?) Well, I went home whenever I could during the Revolution to bathe and to put on a clean shirt, etc., feeling that this must be done well, in style. I met a friend when I got back to the street and we joined the crowd going to the Parliament. At the Parliament there were three tanks and ~~by~~ four to five thousand people; ^{many of} the people were fraternizing with the Russian tanks.

I met many people I knew, writers and journalists; we stood just a short distance from the Russian tanks. An open tank column came through and the crowd, thinking that the Russians had defected, jumped up on the tanks. ~~They were not~~. At the next moment, machine guns from the top of the Ministry of Agriculture opened fire. I ran under the arcade, because it reminded me of the decimations of the SS used to carry out in Mauthausen, and I did not like it. The Russian tanks threw off the Hungarians who had gotten on; the latter now hid behind the tanks. Some other people ran up to the Parliament where they broke down the doors because the guards would not let them in to hide inside. The three Russian tanks now opened fire with all their guns, shooting upwards, in the direction from which the initial firing came. I think it was the AVO which started the fire, the Russians therefore fired back in self-defense, and not because they had ~~been~~ defected to our side and were now attacking the AVO; But actually there was a great deal of fraternization, and I suppose some Russians did defect. The Russians did sell tanks to the Hungarians; in Tatabánya they sold their tanks for civilian clothes, for bacon and bread.

(c) The Writers' Association was an important headquarters of the Revolution; we had a complete setup for receiving news from every source.

- (10) Everything collapsed on the dawn of the 23rd, the Central as well as the local power. Spewing smoke and gunpowder, the edifice collapsed in less than twelve hours. It was like the poem: "The past, collapsing, vomiting smoke."
- (10 b) Essentially by the morning of the 24th, the party meant only the Academy Street headquarters with the party functionaries inside. The party's function disappeared completely. The party members and functionaries went, escaped, wherever they could. There was a skin-saving campaign -- whoever needed it.
- (10 c) On the night of the 23rd, we had a tremendous argument with Kopácsy because he said that it was a counter-revolution. By damn he had every intention to organize ^{the} defense against ~~a~~ the revolution. We attacked him with [REDACTED] and said: "Whom do you want to shoot, the workers of Csepel?" He ordered that the rebels should be disarmed, and continued to think of the Revolution as a counter-revolution. We mobilized all our friends to convince him that he was wrong. By the next day he came over to our side.
- (10 f) It disintegrated. I visited the Ministry of Defense, that club of disturbed hens and generals. There was General Hidvégyi, Colonel Bognár, etc.; those filthy, sectarian, cowardly rabbits. They were clueless and asked us for advice. Grinding their teeth, they conceded that there was a revolution and they were frightened. Later the Ministry of Defense ^{surrendered} ~~generally~~ to the Russians

without a single gunshot. I saw General Eugene Hazai, an arrogant, self-centered character, whom I met in December 1954 on the tenth anniversary of the Debrecen Parliament. At that time Hazai was accusing the writers, and I was quite fresh to him, saying: "Just because you are a general -- -- --". He had been angry at me since. Now, during the Revolution, Hazai said that it was all over. He said that it should have been done differently. I told him that now it was too late and said: "I told you so." István Kovács was one of the few high-ranking officers who behaved decently; he had attended the staff academy in Moscow. Kovács was an honorable man, a good revolutionary. We had to knead him a lot, because he was a maniac of *partiinost**. Fazekas was responsible for Kovács; In our group, among my friends, each of us was responsible for a number of people in higher party circles, the army, etc., before the Revolution. It was our job to win them over to our cause. ■

(10 g) They were scared stiff. The ministries collapsed, and there was no official life at all. The compromised ministers ran home in fright. On the 23rd of October I met that stupid gang, [redacted], etc., when we were going to ^{Uncle Imre} [redacted] at the Parliament. I reminded [redacted], who was pale and frightened, that a few months ago we, [redacted] and I, ^{had gone} ~~went~~ to him ^{to} and warned him. In general, these people now said: "Now help us!" Ferenc Erdei was scared

* *partszerség*

stiff. They conferred in the Parliament, and awaited Imre Nagy like the Messiah. I met Bognár here, the cleverest one in the last government, a very skilful man who sold himself. He was a skilful politician. I also met Tildy and that scoundrel Imre Horváth.

(10 j) They didn't use any of the old organizations, except the Writers' Association. The revolutionary organizations were all newly formed, such as the student and workers' councils, and the Revolutionary Council of the Intelligentsia.

(10 k)l)m) The workers' councils: they were established from below; they were truly organized by the Revolution. I certainly would not say that we guided them, but we did have a certain influence. Events went beyond the Writers' Association and literature, and the people stepped on the stage. But the writers did their duty.

The various revolutionary councils were also among the new organizations of the Revolution, as well as the parties, about twelve million of them, a tremendous number. There were also religious organizations. About the many parties: they would have been dangerous to Hungary during the first few months, leading to political irresponsibility and recklessness.

After the Revolution, the desire for revenge, injustice would have come to the surface. We expected very difficult times and were prepared to be attacked and put on the shelf as old Communists. Not many of the Communist writers would have been

interested, would have cared, because at least we would have been able to write. The future government had no contours yet; the ideal of the rebels was something like the Danish and Swedish form of democracy, but this would have been difficult to achieve because of the immeasurable human passions, the desire for revenge in the background. A serious, hard, central power would have been needed, which would have solved the problems cleverly, wisely, and gradually. There would have been a great danger of anarchy. On the fourth or fifth of November, with Imre Nagy in power and Maléter and Király in charge of the army, the chaos could have been overcome. Elections could have been held in about half a year or three quarters of a year.

(11) Yes.

(11 a) Of course it was useful, but it would have been better to avoid it, not to do it like this! I think its historical importance is greater than that of 1848, because it was here, in Hungary, that the Soviet regime first fell, anywhere in the world. But as far as my own personal human existence is concerned, I live only once; everyone has but one life, and therefore I wish it had not happened, I wish that it had happened differently.

(11 b) If my grandmother had a mustache, she would be a hussar ^{sergeant} ~~sergeant~~.
Of course, it could have been successful, it had every opportunity in the world and we won't have such an opportunity for the

next ten thousand years. So they made Suez, that stupid business. American diplomacy stopped, it went bankrupt; postponement for 48 hours! We simply did not know what to think; we were dumb-founded.

- (11 c) We did not necessarily expect armed help, but we did expect moral, ~~any~~ not immoral action. By immoral action I mean Suez, by which the West gave the Russians the opportunity to say: "Well, if you can, why can't we?" The Americans should have tried to organize the Asian countries against the Russians. Those impotent resolutions in the United Nations were no good at all. The Americans should have taken some sort of action against the Russians. I don't say that they should have started a world war in the interest of Hungary; the Russians would not have gone into a world war. But, without Suez, and with a firm American stand, the Russians could have been isolated in the U.N., and they would have retreated.
- (11 d) The Revolution broke out in Poland too, but it was more far-reaching in Hungary, because the Hungarian Revolution was intellectually best prepared. The Hungarian Revolution was prepared as any revolution was prepared: the way Voltaire and the ~~the~~ Encyclopedists prepared the French Revolution, and Gorky, ~~the~~ Chernishevsky, Herzen, the painters like Repin, Dobroliubov, the narodniks, the ~~social~~ revolutionaries, and even the

reactionary Dostolevsky prepared the Russian Revolution. The soil was well prepared.

- (11 e) I have a very good opinion of Imre Nagy; I am very fond of him, poor thing. This was too much for him to take. He was not a Kossuth who had a nose for the crowd, for the revolution, who knew how to act in every situation, and knew how to ^{act} ~~do~~ on March 15, on September 4. Uncle Imre had no instinct for the crowd, he did not know how to act before the Parliament,. He was always too late. As Ady said: "We are always too late for everything." He was a clean, honorable man, Moscow-trained, with 20 years of Comintern experience. As a man he was a charmer, and had no phony leadership poses. It was amazing how he was able to maintain his decency and honor, his firm principles, in spite of his background and all the pressure placed upon him. He never ^{performed} ~~performed~~ self-criticism in spite of Rákosi's demands. He was a grand symbol: ~~in~~ in the spring of 1956 he walked freely all over town, and everybody greeted him and went up to talk to him. The Rákosi-gang almost exploded with fury. The workers on the street went up to him and said: "Comrade Nagy, when are you coming back?" Jauntily, elegant in his green hat and glacé gloves, he promenaded in Budapest, eyeing the pretty women. His moral stand with regard to ~~his~~ self-criticism was very important in the development of the Revolution. He went to

Gerbeaud, everywhere. We used to take him to the countryside by car; what a circus! At the same time Rákosi and his crowd had not dared to step on the street for the last ten years. Uncle Imre used to go to town by the number five bus which stopped for him, although it was not a regular bus stop. We often went with him. I remember a simple old woman, who went up to him on the bus and said: "God bless you, when are you coming back? We just can't stand this Rákosi any more." There was enormous laughter on the bus, while the AVOs looked out the window.

- (11 f) ^{Bibó}~~Bibó~~ of the Peasant Party, Losonczy, Donáth, Vásárhelyi, Gimes, Iócsel, Kopácsy, Maléter, Déry, Háy.
- (11 g) Youth, intelligentsia, workers, soldiers, irresponsible elements, peasants.
- (11 h) No, I only realized a little before the Revolution that they were also right in the midst of it.
- (12)(12 a)b) I decided to leave Hungary on November 25, after the kidnapping of Imre Nagy and the others. Méray and I made this decision together. I discussed it with people in the Writers' Association, with Háy, Déry, Benjámín, Hámos, etc. My friends urged me to leave in spite of our unanimous decision to stay in Hungary until Imre Nagy should be freed.

- (1) I was a writer.
- (2) From September 1945 to January 1946 I worked as a staff member of the coalition newspaper Szabadság (Freedom). From January 1946 to the spring of 1947 I was head of the press department of the Hungarian National Cooperative Center. They simply put me there. From March 1947 until September or October 1947 I was head of the Education Department of the Trade Union of Private Employees. From the fall of 1947 until spring 1949 I was ^{editor-in-chief} ~~editor-in-chief~~ of the Szikra ^{publishing company's} ~~publishing company's~~ literary and political readers' department. Then I was free for two or three months, and in September 1949 I was named manager of the Franklin publishing company where I stayed only one month or a month-and-a-half, fortunately. Then I was sent to the Party Academy for a year. From September 1950 to the end of 1952 ~~or~~ or beginning ^{of} 1953 I was editor-in-chief of Csillag (The Star). I was fired for leftist and rightist deviationism; I was told that I allowed bourgeois influences to penetrate the periodical. I was found guilty of petit-bourgeois, and sectarian left-wing mistakes. Then I was free for about a year, a year I ~~was~~ spent writing. From June 1954 to June 1955 I was secretary of the Writers' Association. I was member of the Writers' Association praesidium from 1950 until the beginning of 1956, and I was member of the Writers' Association's party ^{committee * (leadership)} ~~leadership~~ from August 1950 to 1952, and from 1953 to 1954. From Spring 1953

* partvezetőség

to spring 1954 I was Agitprop secretary of the Writers' Association; I was not reelected for having neglected my work. I lost my position as secretary of the Writers' Association in the summer of 1955, when I was dismissed for my right-wing attitudes. After that I did not have a job.

(3,45)

Editor-in-chief of Csillag. I made 2700 forints a month as editor of Csillag. Two of us edited it, Zoltán Hegedűs and myself. This was during a very interesting era, the era of the so-called literary debate. Hungarian literature, Hungarian Communist literature, was divided into two groups in this period; see Révai's brochure discussing the clique of the "young gentlemen" (úrifiúk), and the opposition clique. Essentially, the clique of young gentlemen included Karinthy, Devecseri, Somlyó, Méray, and myself. The opposition clique included Benjámín, Zalk, Lajos Tamási, and Déry. This was the era when everybody began to awaken. Déry wrote the second volume of his ^{novel} ~~book~~ "Answer." Both groups were occupied with the problems of depicting the truth, reality. This was the situation: everyone assumed, took it for granted, that our clique was the group supported and backed by the party, but at the same time our group was ~~rough~~ roughed up and attacked ^{by the Party} just as was the other group. The methods used by the other clique ~~were~~ were very crude; ~~especially~~ ^{especially,} the Benjámín-crowd ^{was} very rough, cruel, and stupid in its methods.

of fighting us, with tactics designed to liquidate us. They wanted a literary monopoly for themselves. Later we found out that Révai was egging them on against us, and egging us on against them. I remember some trouble I had at about this period; I published Örkény's short story "Purple Ink" in the magazine, and Rákosi called me up to his apartment and gave me hell for it.

At the end Révai destroyed ~~MM~~ both groups, including Déry. We could have seen what it was all about, ~~M~~ but we did not realize ^{it} yet in 1951; not until 1953. Meanwhile, both groups kept prying away at the truth, from the left and from the right, and thus the problems were revealed. During this period, however, we were ~~MI~~ full of personal hatred for each other, ^{each} ~~one~~ clique ^{hating} the other clique; those who abhorred each other during this period became the best of friends later, for instance Benjámín and Karinthy. Benjámín had been a friend of mine since my youth, but at this period I hated him; later we made up and ^{became} ~~were~~ friends again. Personal hatreds characterized this period. Révai deliberately, consciously incited us in order to prevent a free development. He threw in the slogan "petit-bourgeois moralizing," attacking those who brought up the fact that people were living badly, or that people disappeared at night. He said, what was happening was necessary in the interest of ~~K~~ socialism, and therefore should not be judged sentimentally, from the point of view of the

individual. Révai was an aristocrat; we used to call him the crazy count. He was a brilliant man, and actually he hated socialist-realist writing, and only cared for the classics. Révai is Jewish, and hence he is an anti-Semite, and hence he respects only Veresa and Illyés because they are ~~the~~ sons of the people. The heart and the intellect were in constant conflict with him. There was only one way to treat him, to scream back at him. He used to call me after each issue of Csillag; he was unbearably arrogant, and at first I used to fall for this. He has a brilliant mind, a serious intellect. But during the Revolution he was scared stiff. Today he is a madman. The literary debate lasted two years, with a great deal of brutality used against both camps. Révai used brutality only against the Communists. He loved Illyés, Veresa, and Szabó.

My friends and I tried to find a way of reconciling reality and truth with the theory. This was the era of the struggle against schematism; it was no good, since we simply could not write the truth. I was a loyal, convinced Communist and a practicing newspaperman. These two could not be reconciled in that period, because what I saw ~~is~~ conflicted with what I had to write. So I did not write; I have thirty unfinished pieces dating from this period. Reality simply could not be reconciled with socialist realism. They demanded a positive hero, but

there was no positive hero, only the party secretary, who was anything but.

Secretary of Writers' Association, June 1954 to June 1955.

I received a salary of 2500 forints a month when I held this position. There were three secretaries, Sándor Erdei was first secretary and responsible for administration, and Urbán and I were responsible for ideology; the Writers' Association had to have an ideological planning group which would prepare debates, etc. This was our job. At the beginning the three secretaries, Urbán, Erdei, and I were in unanimous agreement on policies, but later on Erdei and I began to conflict with Urbán. Until December or January, we did things by unanimous agreement, for instance my Further on the June Road was written in complete agreement and with the advice of the other two. When Szabad Nép started to attack Déry and Benjámín at the beginning of 1955, Benjámín for his Köznapi Dolgok Igézete (The Magic of Everyday Things) and other things, the three members of the secretariat, Urbán, Erdei, and I, issued a statement against these attacks, and we saw to it that all of the high party organs received a copy of the statement. When I was secretary, we had many conferences with various members of the Central Committee in charge of culture, people like Farkas, Andics, Rákosi, Horváth, Hegedűs. From the Writers' Association,

these conferences were attended by the party group of the Association's Praesidium, ^{all} ~~PRaesidium~~, except Illés and Urbán, who usually missed them because they did not want to take a stand. These were epic battles.

(See Section G, Question 19 on this subject.)

- (5 b) I always wanted to be a writer.
- (6) I lived in a villa and I could afford to buy myself everything I wanted.
- (8) ^{Interviewer's Note:} Respondent promised to send the budget questionnaire, but has not yet done so.
- (11) The poor material conditions were an important cause of dissatisfaction, but the Revolution was not a hunger-revolution.
- (7 a) My income in 1952 was 130,000 forints, including the Stalin Prize of 75,000 forints. I earned about 5-6,000 forints per month; Várkonyi made twice as much! I received 40,000 forints per book, and got paid for articles and radio scripts, in addition to my salary.

- (1) I graduated from secondary school in 1939.
- (1 b) I attended public school.
- (1 c)d) I was admitted to the university in Budapest in 1940 and attended it for one year, but then I was forced to stop because of the numerus clausus. After the war ~~and~~ I again attended Péter Pázmány University from '45 to '47 and received my degree in literature. In 1939 I attended the Academy of ^{Hotel} ~~Restaurant~~ Trade. Afterwards I attended a toolmakers' apprentice school and became a journeyman toolmaker, working in the trade from 1940 to 1942, that is for two and a half years. From 1949 to 1950 I attended the Party Academy for one year on the orders of the Party, although I did not want to go. Here they greeted me as a petit-bourgeois. A certain Mrs. Csikess was the head of my study group; a stupid, limited, uncultivated creature, incapable of work or leadership. She was a born ^{Kaidar.} ~~essie~~. Once when we were ^{cataloguing} ~~examining~~ the library, I made the comment that the petit-bourgeois ^{called} ~~social~~ (communal) work forced labor. They held a special meeting with the cry "there is trouble with Comrade Aczél," at which they claimed that I had made the statement that social work was equivalent to forced labor. I denied it, ^{but} ~~they~~ they did not believe me, and attacked me. In the evening there was a special seminar meeting; at which one member called me a petit-bourgeois. The head of the seminar was Antal Apró's wife, and unprecedented idiot. Meanwhile, they had worked on those who had been on my side and

made them attack me. The horror of communism was that one couldn't even keep quiet, one had to denounce. I was outraged; I jumped up, and told them that I resented their allegations, ~~XXXX~~ thought them vile and revolting. I told them to drop dead. Then they went ahead and proved that I was a petit-bourgeois, because I did not relate well to ~~their~~ criticism. They broke me, so that for two or three weeks I did not know whether I was a scoundrel or not. The ~~the~~ person responsible for this was Erzsi Ács, who later became a deputy minister. From this episode on I was treated as the black sheep of the Party Academy. I discovered that this was a deliberate policy; they consciously broke the spine of anybody who showed opposition or individualism. I attended the Party Academy for ten months and hated every minute of it, although I was a faithful Communist.

(2) Yes.

(2 d) Average.

(4) That is clear: to educate the greatest number of janissaries.

(4 b) They could not win youth, not ever. It is interesting that these young people in Oxford (Interviewer's note: respondent is referring to the group of Hungarian students ~~XXXX~~ at Oxford) were Communists after 1945, but became disillusioned in three or four years.

(4 g) They are not different; they are the same in a different world. They are just as conceited and egotistical, ~~they~~ just as

stubbornly convinced that they are right, acting as if they had discovered America. They are just as eager to redeem the world as we were. Youth does not change: in Goethe's time there was Werther, and today there are political emigrants in Oxford. The boys in Oxford are a mixture of DISZ and the red-vested Kosztolányi. We were different in some ways; we were affected by Western cultural influences and education. Take X for instance (again one of the Oxford boys). The pose he affects was outdated 50 years ago, and dates back to the period of Oscar Wilde. I think Novalis is closer to their basic character than Huxley. When I was a young man I adored Thomas Mann and read Huxley who belonged to one's growing up. In the early 'forties we used to argue about Goethe, read Dilthey, had debates about the meaning of words in Goethe. I read the Magie Mountain and Tomio Kröger; the latter had a great effect on me, meant a great deal to me, as it would to any beginning artist. Then there was Joseph... The German cultural influence was far stronger on our generation. There is really a fantastic difference between my generation, which is ten years older and saw more of the world, and today's youth. Today's youth is more indoctrinated. But there are some ways in which they are not different; they are just as prickly, they lack balance just as we used to -- these are qualities, ^{universally present in the youth of every era.} ~~essential to the youth of every era.~~

~~These~~

- (4 h) Communist education affected youth negatively, that is it influenced them against communism. Communist education had a harmful effect on youth's attitude towards the world: youth is more distrustful, more prickly, more cynical, and perhaps more selfish, as a result.
- (4 i) Communist education is effective until the intellect begins to develop. It is effective until education is only play, involving the Pioneer Railroad, etc. When the Communist dogmas begin to conflict with the young Communist's development, when his family relationships, his attitude towards women, cannot be reconciled with the party's demands, and dogmas, then the trouble begins.
- (5) My father was a bank employee. "The Revizor." My father was the most progressive member of his family; he was an old Social Democrat and anti-Communist. We had many conflicts about this during the war. He was a cultivated, progressive, literate, charming man. He worked at the bank until 1949 when he was pensioned; ^{he} ~~and~~ died in 1950. I was always in conflict with my ~~XXXXXX~~ big family; my father had nine brothers, who lived according to a petit-bourgeois hierarchy. The oldest brother was very rich and the others had ~~the~~ ^a clannish, dependent attitude towards him. He was president of the Cable Works, and owned a villa, car, etc. We, my parents, lived in a two-room apartment, a petit-bourgeois milieu. My father's brothers adored each other.

- (5 c) Gymnasium graduate.
- (5 d) Yes.
- (5 f) Probably better than the average. My father had a small salary, but we had a servant and we always spent the summer in the country. Usually by the 25th of the month there was no money in the house. My father played the stockmarket. I knew no poverty when I was a child, ^{but} buying new clothes always involved a difficulty, etc. ~~and~~ ~~we~~ We lived in normal bourgeois comfort. I received no pocket money when I was a child, and as a result I always had to beg my parents for money when I wanted to go to the movies, or else I filched money from telephone booths.
- (5 g) Three.
- (5 i) None.
- (5 k) Neither. They badgered me to some extent, but since I was an intellectual, a writer, ^I ~~my~~ only received minor exhortations about being a petit-bourgeois, at the Party Academy.
- (6) I got married in 1946 and was divorced in 1955.
- (6 a) She worked at Budapest Radio.
- (6 c) I have one daughter, who is four years old now.
- (11) I got along very well with my father; my mother died when I was a small child. I had political debates with my father until he died, but we were very close, good friends. Since I was 17 or 18 years of age, I have had a winking, tolerant camaraderie

with my father.

(12) Yes.

(13) Yes, of course. I had a great deal of conflict with my father. My parents wanted me to become a decent white-collar worker. Their way of life conflicted with my desire for freedom. I used to come in late, which annoyed my father. At home lunch and dinner were always at the same time; this was an eternal, unchangeable, sacred ritual. I could not take this sort of thing. After I graduated from secondary school, I often did not come home for meals in the evening. Later on my father progressed considerably; I influenced him very strongly. After 1945 our relations changed: he now acknowledged me as an authority, as an equal. I was very aggressive.

(13 a) My father was very happy about my ambition to become a writer. He used to bring books home for me to read, etc.

(14) See Question 16 c.

(15)& (15 d) Family ties have loosened since 1945, especially in the towns. In the village, life has always been more patriarchal.

(15 e) Child rearing has become more modern and free, especially in the town. Child rearing today is more sensible and hygienic. This is not to be attributed to the Communist regime, however. I believe in sending small children to kindergarten; it is very beneficial for social ^{adjustment,} ~~adaptation~~ in spite of the "pajtás" (pal) Rákosi business.

- (16) There have been changes in style. Relations between boys and girls are much freer today.
- (16 b) Today both marriage and divorce ^{are easier} than before.
- (16 c) I approve of making marriage and divorce easier. Marriage in its contemporary form is a critical business, since people are not monogamous for a long time. There is a contradiction which has never been solved: love demands monogamy, and yet men is not monogamous by nature. My first marriage was a dull, lukewarm business, although my first wife and I are still on the best of terms. The crisis in my marriage came in 1953, parallel with ~~my~~ ^{the} crisis in my political views. I fell in love then: that was the great love of my life. With her I have this problem -- I can live neither with her nor without her. The writer, the intellectual, has this eternal problem, when he is married he wants loneliness and vice versa. Here in London I feel very lonely; I want to create some security for myself.
- (16 e) f) Yes, there was open, but especially hidden prostitution. Communist morality is just another term for revolting petit-bourgeois morals. It is hypocritical. They preached an unbearable petit-bourgeois morality, with a ^{hypocritical} ~~hypocritical~~ attitude which I did not ~~even~~ encounter even in my petit-bourgeois family. Nobody in the party ~~had~~ practiced what the party preached. Everyone had a lover, with the result that the small party members who were found ~~to~~ transgressing were kicked out. From 1950 to 1953 there was

a campaign to uphold the so-called Communist morality. The same standards were not applied to the party leaders; Révai and Geró had mistresses, and Parkas had affairs with a number of women. In 1954 I said to Parkas: "Why are you calling me to account, I know who your mistresses are -- -- --." He did not like it and said: "It shouldn't be done openly; it should be done in secret." I had a great deal of trouble for being seen all over Budapest with my girl friend. Later, when I was in the midst of the writers' revolt, Rakosi once tried to bribe me. He offered me money and a trip abroad, as well as his tacit approval of my affair, saying: "I understand, after all she is a pretty girl -- -- --" etc. I refused the bribe.

- (16 h) I considered the Communist stand on illegitimate children correct; there is no such ^{thing} ~~thing~~ as an illegitimate child.
- (16 i) Women became freer since the war, and they were allowed to work as much as they wanted to. They became much more emancipated socially.
- (17) I think the standards of morality deteriorated in the past ten years, although morals under the Horthy-regime were not so exemplary either. One thing is certain, that political morality has deteriorated immeasurably. The morality of the man on the street? I am not quite sure. As for youth, Hungarian youth is no worse in this respect than English youth. It was said that their

morals, the morals of youth, ~~were~~^{were} lower, but look at the high standard of morality demonstrated during the Revolution. There were hooligans, there were young people who liked jazz and rock'n roll. Is this immoral? The Communists thought so. Sexual relations were freer, closer, more uninhibited. Friendship, love, the break-up, came more easily. But it involved pain as before. I don't condemn this; I don't ~~disapprove~~^{disapprove} of freer relations between boys and girls; ~~but~~ this is merely a reaction to social terror. See Orwell. Young people had no future, no opportunities to advance; many were condemned to lives as secretaries earning 1000 forints. As a result they tried to find an outlet for their energies along this line. Young people could not travel, could not buy things for themselves, so they went to the Liget to make love; they drank, made love, went on excursions on the Danube. It was not too different in my youth; the Római shore was legendary. In my youth, before the war and during the war, many attitudes were different, but in this sense there was a certain resemblance to the youth of today; in that a freer ~~sex~~ sex life was a form of opposition, a way of rejecting the given regime.

- (17 b) Yes, everybody stole, and everybody agreed to it. See Illyés's poem "I Speak about Heroes" in which he says: "Steal, go on, steal!"
- (18) My closest friends were writers, who were of the same social

background and the same age as I. We talked about literature, politics, women. My friends Cini (Ferenc) Karinthy, Gábor Devecseri, Somlyó, and others were a futurist-surrealist gang. I remember the war years 1940-1941; we used to play crazy pranks on people. For instance we used to put a wallet on the street with a long string attached, which we held on from an upstairs window. Then when we saw somebody ^{going} ~~pass~~ by, reach down to pick up the wallet, we slowly pulled the wallet up, with the man stupidly staring at the crazy apparition. Around the same time, we used to ring people's bells, in respectable-looking apartment houses, and when they let us in, Gabi or somebody would say: "Good evening, psst! Fradi was here," (referring to the Ferencváros soccer team, nicknamed Fradi.) Then, also around 1945, we did this sort of thing: we rang the bell in some respectable household, and said to the lady of the house, an elderly lady in this case, I remember: "We came for the sideboard; we are from Unitas, Ujpest." She would say, "but I don't know who you are, I don't know anything about it, I don't want to send my sideboard anywhere." We would say, "Sorry, we have orders to take the sideboard; we are from Unitas, Ujpest." Meanwhile Örkény asked for something to eat, and ate the lady out of house and home. Finally she agreed to have us take her sideboard away upon our insistence. Then we left. After 1945 we also used to play crazy telephone games. Cini Karinthy had a trick of imitating

things to worry about. If you try this trick again, I'll knock your block off." And the poor writer was left to rot at the border station. Then another time Cini called up a friend of ours, a party member, who had had some marital difficulties and had just gotten married the second time. Cini said: "I am Comrade XY from Party Headquarters; Comrade, I want to find out something about your marital life." Cini asked him all sorts of indiscreet questions, such as: "Comrade, did you sleep with your wife before you got married?" The man got very embarrassed and haltingly answered: "Comrade, no, no, of course, not -- --." Then Cini said: "Comrade, do you sleep with your wife now?" The man answered in great embarrassment: "Yes, yes, of course." Then Cini said: "Comrade, how often do you sleep with your wife?" The man, in great embarrassment, said: "Well, Comrade, I just don't think I ought to discuss this -- --." Then Cini said: "Comrade, the Party demands; you must answer!" And so it went. It was a riot. The party stopped the telephone jokes and the rest of it around 1948, considering it undignified and unbecoming to party members. This was the worst of thing we did with our friends and then we also had wonderful stag parties, some at Badacsony. In the old days, the early 'forties, Cini was the librarian of the Baumgarten library -- what a wonderful library that was, with the private collections of Babits, etc! Cini occasionally used to take the key and invite a girl friend to

the library for a petting party.

In the last few years after 1953 we laughed a great deal. Budapest was a wonderful town -- in no other city do people laugh so much. We laughed during the Revolution too, even ^{when} ~~when~~ things turned bad. We went to the Writers' Association and said, in hysterics: "Well, Zoli, we sure fixed this." Budapest was full of wonderful jokes. Would you like to hear the speech held by Béla Illés at the Writers' Association after the XXth Party Congress? All right, here it is. Béla Illés got up at the April party membership meeting of the Writers' Association and said: "Comrades, thirty years ago, when I was living in Moscow, suddenly the telephone rang in my little apartment. I lifted the 'phone and this is what I heard: 'Bela Samu'ovich (Interviewer's note: since the Hungarian language has no patronymic, this use of patronymic in connection with a Hungarian name is supposed to be hilariously funny) -- Bela Samu'ovich, this is Lev Davidovich. I have read your stupendous novel Carpathian Rhapsody, Bela Samu'ovich, and consider it one of the greatest creations in world literature. Bela Samu'ovich, you would do me a great honor if you were to visit me at my house tonight.' Comrades, this is what I answered to Comrade Lev Davidovich: 'Lev Davidovich, I am very honored by your invitation, but am unable to accept because the henchmen of Josip Vissarionovich

are watching my house and I am unable to leave.' Lev Davidovich answered: 'Bela Samuĥovich, fear nothing, leave your house by the back entrance tonight at ten p.m., cross the Red Square, walk down to the river, jump in, and swim upstream until you come to the second exit on the left. Swim inside and wait for further instructions.' Comrades, I agreed to follow Lev Davidovich's instructions and in the evening I crossed the Red Square in freezing cold weather, I went down to the river and jumped in. In spite of the ice floating on the river, I swam upstream with powerful strokes until I reached the second exit. I swam in as directed, and awaited instructions ----- . Comrades, only thirty years later did I discover that on that night it was not Lev Davidovich's, XX but Josip Vissarionovich's ----- which I licked out. "k This is the sort of crazy time we had in Budapest. Now you can understand why it is difficult for us here in the West, in London and New York. This air does not agree with us, ~~it is~~ It is too placid and lifeless, it does not have the exhilaration of Budapest air.

- (19, a) My father was Jewish and my mother was a Catholic, of Jewish origin. My parents were not religious and my father became even less religious with time, under my influence.
- (19 b) I left the Jewish religion in 1946 for Communist reasons. I am an atheist and am simply not interested in religion; I have no

(* Int. note:
A great many similar stories were invented about Ilĥe's, the leading Stalinist writer.)

need for God. With time, however, I became more tolerant towards religious people. In 1947 and '48 I was totally against religion and against religious persons, in a Communist sectarian manner, without any attempt to understand them. ~~EXXAM~~ I know that religion is a private affair, and there is no point in interfering with it.

- (20) The Communist rule had a very powerful effect on religious life; religious people ~~were~~ ^{were regarded with} suspicious simply because they were religious. Sometimes party members secretly attended church and got in trouble when this was discovered; they were labeled the "clerical reactionists."
- (20 b) The aim was first to use religion for their own ends, and then to annihilate it; these were two stages in one continuous process. I once talked to Rákosi about this, I think in 1954. I told him that I felt our religious policy was bad and that the Poles were doing it better. He said: "Look, what do you want with the Poles? I told Bierut that they are rightist deviationists. I told them that the way they were doing it was wrong and that they must do it my way: arrest one Church dignitary, and bribe the rest. And that's all there is to it."
- (20 c) They were corrupt. The people hated them, as well as the State Church Bureau, whose political commissar was an AVO agent.
- (20 d) In recent years there was a relaxation in this respect, but at

one time it was dangerous to attend church, especially for people in certain positions. I know of cases where people were fired for wearing a crucifix.

- (20 i) The peasants attended church regularly, as well as the old ruling class. Many workers went to church, too. The churches were not as crowded as before, in spite of the fact that there were periodical waves of mass church attendance as a political demonstration. After 1953 and '54, after the new government program, people could attend church more freely and the churches suddenly filled up.

I have anæsthetic interest in religion; I love the Middle Ages, gothic architecture, etc.

- (20 k) I don't know. I never in my life met young men who were religious. No one in my circle was religious.

- (20 l) Of course the Church had an important role in fostering resistance. The Church, by definition, by its very existence, meant resistance to communism, as well as hope. It also resisted organizationally; I know of an organization in 1955 within the Church, which attempted to overthrow the state. Its leader was sentenced to life imprisonment. I know that this organization really existed; I knew its leader. It did not plan armed resistance, but ^{aimed} to preserve the ideals of the Church against the state. The organization had meetings, the members communicated with each other under cover names, etc.

- (21) He should be a scientist, an ichthyologist in Tihany. He should

choose an abstract scientific profession, but not literature or history, because in these fields one must take a definite political stand. If he is a literary critic or something like that ~~then~~ then he can't publish, if he has some original thoughts about 19th century Hungarian literature....

- (21 b) That's a difficult question. I could say that he should enter the party, and ~~shoot off~~ ^{shoot off} his mouth, ~~and~~ but never accept any function. Then he will become a member of the Academy without any trouble, but it will be the end of his scientific career, for he will be nothing more than a party tool. Or, there is another way. He should never open his mouth on the principle that it's best to shut up and to accept things as they are. He should not enter the party, but should show an attitude of mild opposition. It is a very good thing to be a member of the non-party intelligentsia, to whom the Communists are particularly friendly and conciliatory, ^{after all, they don't} ~~have to be~~ ^{have} to be polite or friendly to the Communists who are already in their own camp. Yes, that's what ~~he~~ ^{he} thought to be, a loyal intellectual, with small oppositionist faults; that way he could get on the boards of various institutions, get the Kossuth prize, etc. He will have more freedom if he is outside the party. It is all right to have an aristocratic attitude in politics and manners. If he refuses an official invitation twice, the third time there will be a delegation to invite him to some function; then, of course, he will have to go. He can strengthen

§ his position by making comments such as: "I am not a Communist, but I am interested in what they are doing." This attitude should be built up deliberately; he should deliberately and consciously preserve his personality intact, ^{and act self-important} Zoltán Szabó and Cs. Szabó are people of this type (Interviewer's note: two Hungarian writers living in London, not recent refugees). The Communists knock themselves out to win over people like that; they are tremendous snobs and are impressed by an aloof attitude. Then the Communist leaders can say: "The success of our intellectual policy -- --", etc. They die of joy if they can succeed with people of this type. Sometimes it is necessary to become offended; it is an important ^{move} ~~move~~ in the game. At such a time the promising non-party ichthyologist should call Rákosi and say to him: "Comrade Rákosi, this is an impossible situation. The party secretary at our fish station on the Balaton is thoroughly unsuited for his role. He is an idiot and does not know how to deal with intellectuals -- --. He just does not belong here." In ten minutes the unfortunate party secretary has had it; a whole regiment of Bolsheviks has trampled over him, he practiced self-criticism and finally ended up as the assistant manager of the maintenance department of the Fűszért (Grocery) firm. Then Rákosi calls up the scientist, having first directed his secretary to look up the last three issues of the periodical "Fish and Roe"; as I said he calls up

vitéz Dr. Benő Bárczy, after memorizing three scientific phrases.

(Respondent, imitating Rákosi's voice:) "I have been studying the fishes this week. Well, how are the fishes? -----" And after a friendly conversation about fish, they both hang up highly pleased with themselves. That's how the legend is born.

(22) Best off were the leading party cadres, and worst off were some worker and peasant strata. The worst off was the poor worker, who was poorer than any peasant, and received the lowest pay, about 5-600 forints, on which one simply could not live.

(22 a) The best.

(23) There were only two classes, the ruling class, and the oppressed masses; the working class. All working classes are essentially oppressed. In addition, I suppose one could say that the workers and the peasants formed separate classes; there is also the intelligentsia, which, however, is not a class. ~~XXX~~ The old middle class exists, but not in its old form; it has been destroyed and its way of life is gone, except for inbreeding, within families.

(23 d) The old middle class and ruling class consciously and deliberately keeps a distance between itself and the peasants and workers. The working class is very anti-middle class and anti-intelligentsia. One stratum of the working class has educated itself, has become more intelligent and well-bred. ^{That} ~~XXX~~ this is the result of an officially fostered policy is beside the point. Yes, there were barriers between various classes, but during the Revolution these

barriers collapsed. Now, today, they undoubtedly are again re-established. During great national movements it has always been the case that everyone is everybody's brother, and there are no differences between trousered and non-trousered. (Interviewer's note: trousered is the Hungarian peasant's contemptuous name for a gentleman or townsman.)

- (23 e) There is greater equality today because ~~of~~ the mutual hatred of the regime brought about equality. This talk about a classless society was the Communists' way of inciting the workers against the peasants.
- (23 g) Today people are more nervous, restless, harried, suspicious; they are definitely not polite.
- (24) The Yugoslav (Serbian) minority suffered more, and perhaps the Slovaks as well, at one time. There was no serious minority problem in Hungary, ~~since~~^{after} the Germans were expelled in 1945. I am talking about national minorities.
- (24 a) No.
- (25) This is not a simple question. There were many Jews in that filthy, murderous AVO gang. A considerable percentage of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie became the wildest, convinced Communists. At the same time the Jewish petty bourgeoisie was ^{anti-}Communist from the beginning. There were deliberate anti-Semitic waves, such as the doctors' trial. The regime was anti-Semitic, for the

simple reason that the leadership consisted of Jews. They were ~~as~~ scrupulously careful to make sure that not all the leaders were Jews. This was a good thing, because the country was strongly contaminated with anti-Semitism. Until 1948 or '50 anti-Semitism was decreasing, and after that it grew.

(25 c) Yes, of course I had Jewish friends. In our circle this was not the question of a problem, ~~who was Jewish~~ and who not. In literary circles this did not raise a barrier between people.

(25 g) Before the war there was government-directed anti-Semitism in Hungary, which annihilated 400,000 Jews. People were deeply anti-Semitic. Today, perhaps, people are less anti-Semitic; I think this because the Revolution had no anti-Semitic overtones. I do not think that the lack of anti-Semitism during the Revolution was a conscious ~~thing~~ thing; to show the West that Hungarians were not anti-Semitic. The sort of anti-Semitism which starts pogroms is ~~irrational~~ ^{irrational}, and cannot be rationally controlled. The anti-Semitism in Hungary today can be understood if one realizes that the Communist leaders ~~were~~ ^{were} all Jews. Today there is an officially directed anti-Semitism in Hungary; Comrade Marosán has made anti-Semitic remarks in several of his speeches.

(25 h) I don't know. Many Jews left during the Revolution; of 180,000 refugees ~~there were~~ probably 50-60,000 ^{are} Jews. The Jews seem to be involved in a sort of process of extinction today, in Hungary. ("Kihalási izé")

(1) Yes.

(2) I entered the Communist Party in 1941, because it was an answer to our problems at the time; it was the most radical, the most anti-Fascist, and the only one which promised to improve the life of the people. As a result of my education, I was influenced ~~mainly~~ partly by Western trends and partly by the populist writers; these influences impelled me to seek a radical political solution to the problems of Hungary. By 1940, I was attracted to the Social Democratic Party, and was one of the early members of the Communist Young Workers' association, through which I later became a party member. Actually, though, I was first a member of the Social Democratic Party. My schoolfriends and my work at the Bristol Hotel also ^{dashed} ~~pushed~~ me towards a radical solution. When I worked at the Bristol Hotel, I saw how the leaders of Horthy-Hungary lived: it was a revolting, cynical, disgusting life, a foul danse macabre. I was young and idealistic, and revolted against this way of life. My sectarianism, my dogmatism, stems from this period; it taught me to be in stiff and stubborn opposition to everything these people stood for. I felt that this must be destroyed, annihilated. It was a humiliating life for me; I was always fighting with the bosses; I simply could not be servile, I could not bow and scrape. A hotel porter learns a great deal about life. It was a great relief for me when I quit this job and went to work as a journeyman

in a workshop. Here there were many Communist workers, and I needed only a step to become a Communist. I wrote about this in my novel.

The only thing I am surprised at is that all young people did not become Communists in 1939 and '40. I was impulsive, passionate, interested in politics, and I had a strong sense of justice. I needed communism ideologically and philosophically. I read a great deal of philosophy, beginning with the Greeks, and it was Marxism which finally gave the answers to all the great questions of life, organized in a system. In 1941 I read Stalin's brochure on dialectical and historical materialism; the fifth chapter of this history of the Bolshevik Party impressed me tremendously; it was a work of genius, and it suited me. In addition, I was thrilled by the romanticism of it all. It was so exciting to put up leaflets surreptitiously, to go on hikes with Communists, to know that it was dangerous. I was restless and could not stay put; I wanted to break out of my petit-bourgeois surroundings, pour épater le bourgeois. When I first entered the party, my party work consisted of writing, of going on hikes and excursions, and of agitation work. We had lectures and demonstrations. I did it all gladly. I was present at the March 15, 1942, demonstration; we ran like rabbits from the mounted police.

In 1942 I was drafted into the army; for three months

I was a regular soldier and then I was transferred to forced labor service. I was in forced labor service from 1942 to 1945, in Transylvania and the Danubian plain. During this period my party contacts were broken, because my friends were also in the army. In our company we established an independent Communist cell which was a very useful thing, because we were able to control life in our unit this way. We could exert pressure because we had a united organization. We were rotting away: we dug holes, and filled them up again. There was plenty of goldbricking and sabotage. We built airfields, etc. Some of the places we stayed in were good and some were bad. At Debrecen, for instance, was pretty good. In the fall of 1944 I was in Szokolys, working as a locksmith, still in the forced labor service. Here I was in contact with an old 1918 Communist, a member of the illegal Communist organization, who was a railroad worker. I saw that the situation was rotten, and therefore I went to Budapest in September, pretending that I had appendicitis. The situation was ripe for escape. I was in a Budapest hospital for two days, when the hospital was transferred to Papa. "I'll get out of this somehow, I figured, I'll stay here until it's all over. Then came the October 15th putsch; when I was kicked out of the hospital and sent up to Budapest without a guard. When the train got to Kelenföld at dawn, I got out and went home. I went

to my friends, who were all involved in the illegal Communist organization; I joined them in this work. Once I had to deliver some leaflets somewhere; the place was raided and I was caught. I was beaten up, thrown into the Albrecht barracks, and then sent to Transdanubia. I escaped twice, ^{but got caught} and subsequently ^{I was} handed over to the Germans. For three weeks the Germans marched us on foot through ~~Lower~~ ^{Lower} and Upper Austria; there were about 10,000 of us. We ate snails, grass, weeds, and for a few days we received canned goods. In the mountains there was snow and our clothes were completely inadequate. I was among 50 people taken out of the main group by the SS and sent ahead in a car. We were made to push a truck up a steep part of the road. Then the SS made us stand in a row and shot to death the whole group of 50, except another man and me; we jumped into a ravine and fell on snow. They shot after us, but missed. We sat in the snow for a while -- fortunately it was melting -- and when we climbed out finally, the SS were gone. So we joined the main group of prisoners. I don't know why I am talking about this, it has nothing to do with my political attitudes. Interviewer: Doesn't it? Respondent: Well, I suppose, it does. Anyway, we climbed to the peak of Eisenarz and stood there in the cold from noon until night, when we were made to run down the serpentine road, which was icy and slippery; a deadly run into the dark night.

Three SS machine-gunners were ~~shooting~~^{firing} at us. People behind me and in front of me were falling, and I ran like a crazed buffalo. At night we slept in the ice and snow. I still feel it today; I have rheumatism. On the midnight of the 20th of April we arrived at Mauthausen. First the twinkling lights* of a town came into view and then we came to the large sign saying Vernichtungslager Mauthausen. I was at Mauthausen for little over a week, ^{and} was liberated on the 6th of May, 1945. During the past year I was almost shot to death four times; now I felt that I wanted some peace. When I returned I felt that I must help cure the ills of the world with communism. I went to the party organization as soon as I got home. Here I worked on the party line, especially during the first few years. I never felt, never demanded, revenge for what happened to me; revenge is no answer to anything. I am deeply convinced that I was doing the right thing in helping the Communists. There was simply nothing else I could do.

- (2 f) (v). Until 1954. See Question 3 and Question 19, for subsequent political development, process of disillusionment from communism. Also; C, 4 and I, 26.
- (3) I'd say that my main grievances were the interference in my private life, the disagreement with the political ideas of the regime, the violation of our national pride -- this latter was a constant topic of conversation with us. My housing and food

* (Int. note: what, no blackout?)

situation was more than adequate. The terror didn't really touch me until the end, ^{until} the end of 1955; I was not afraid until then. Most depressing, especially before 1953, was the greyness, the boredom of life. My marriage was ruined because of this; of course it was our fault, too, but it is intimately connected with the dullness imposed by the regime. It is interesting that my marriage exploded in 1953. Until then I suppressed my emotional life, I was loyal to the party. Then everything exploded in politics and in my own life, and I simply didn't care. "I am allowed to do it too!" - I felt like shouting. "Me, live this way?! No!" There was somehow a close connection between the political crisis in the country and my falling in love; I would be poorer if I had not lived through it. It was a tremendous experience, the two together. The framework of our way of life exploded, and jazz was heard in the land.

- (3 b) iii, ii, v. This reminds me of the joke about a sanatorium reserved for high party members. Here, it was said, there was a sign proclaiming "Our greatest treasure consists of these one or two men." (A take-off on the regime's slogan "Our greatest treasure consists of man.")
- (3 c) iv, vi, vii, ix, x, xiii.
- (3 d) ii, iv, vi, vii, ix, xii, xiii. The peasants particularly resented the ban on the celebration of March 15.
- (3 e) i, iii, v, vi, vii, ix, xii, xiii, xv.

- (3 g) People talked to their reliable friends.
- (3 i) Yes, there were innumerable little things which annoyed people to death; incredibly idiotic things, such as the ten-minute movement, etc. Then there was something else; in Attila József's words, "Tortályos félelem," "dunning fear". Everyone was afraid of everyone else, and one look from the party secretary could cause many ^{unpleasant} ~~many~~ days.
- (3 j) One can't bear to live this way: there were many small pleasures in life. There were friends, having a good time, drink, women, etc. Then there were the jokes.
- (4) Power was in the hands of a narrow Communist clique, consisting of two or three people, although basically Rákosi was the most powerful person.
- (4 a) Experience.
- (4 b) *It was subordinate to the Party and executed its orders.*
- (4 c) The Politburo; Rákosi.
- (4 d) It had no role.
- (4 e) The regime found it necessary to play at democracy. An additional reason was that with 1800 forints M per month the regime bought itself 400 loyal members of Parliament, who had no rights, did nothing. They were called together, they sat in Parliament, they applauded, they left. In the 1950s we brought this up, inquiring why they could not have real debates in Parliament. The answer was: "This is the way the Soviet comrades did it."
- (4 f) That was the basis of the whole thing. To give you an idea of

- the size of the bureaucracy under the Communist regime it is sufficient to say that Horthy's Ministry of Industry employed 70 people, whereas the Communist regime's Ministry for Heavy and Machine Industry had 3000 employees. The state apparatus had to be supported by the workers; more than one half of the country was not employed in productive labor. The national party apparatus consisted of 7000 people; 1500 worked at the Budapest party headquarters alone.* There was very little bribery from below because it was very dangerous. This sort of thing did happen, that a small shoemaker gave money to somebody to get leather for his shop. But it was not frequent. However, there was a tremendous amount of bribery from above. By this I mean that the regime corrupted its functionaries with special privileges. The Öszöd summer resort of the Council of Ministers, for instance, on the Balaton, became a legend. I wrote an article about this, attacking these privileges of the top party members, and it was a tremendous success. It dealt with this carefully-guarded Balaton summer resort. It was a tremendous success and it was quite a scandal in the party.* Ács gave me hell for this article.
- (4 g)
- (4 h) They were chiefly workers and peasants, this at least was true. But this had nothing to do with the question of power.
- (4 i) The officers consisted chiefly of workers, peasants, and to some

* (balhé a pártban)

extent the intelligentsia. Ninety-eight percent of the officers in the army were newly-trained men.

(4 j) They were chiefly workers. A shoemaker was only allowed to be president of a locomotive factory, and a locksmith would generally be made head of a shoe factory.

(6 f) k, l, See Section G, Question 3 on this. Also; section G, qu. 19, Sect. C, qu. 4, and Sec. I, qu. 26.

(6 h) Yes.

(6 i, j) See Section I, Question 2 on this.

~~(6 k, l) See Section — Question — on this.~~

(6 m) Party work took up all my time; I did many kinds of work, I lectured, held seminars, wrote brochures, etc. I participated in party campaigns. After I received the Stalin prize, I did only representative party work as member of the Presidium of the Peace Council, etc. This was not real work. I had to go hold 25 speeches at Peace Council meetings, and so on. The audience was always lucky when I was the speaker, because my speeches were very colorful. All sorts of great anti-Communist artists, etc., had to come to the peace meetings and I always kept them interested. I did not talk the usual cliches according to the outlines of the Central Agitprop office; that was terrible jargon. I used to hold heart-rending peace meetings: people wept when I talked about the meaning of war, when I told them what Auschwitz looked like.

In the Writers' Association I was three times elected member of the party committee (party leadership) of the Writers'

Association. In 1953 I was Agitprop secretary of the Association, which involved educational and propaganda work, conferences, and seminars.

This is the sort of work I did in the party. The party started to make preparations for the June 1950 writers' congress a year in advance. The Agitprop (cultural) department of party headquarters was in charge of this work. Révai instructed the party committee (pártvezetőség) to work out, and prepare, the theses for the congress. It was around this time, in August 1950, that I got in trouble with Révai. I had just finished the Party Academy and was made editor of Csillag. I attacked an article by István Király about the congress in a confused sectarian manner, ^{from the right and left.} I attacked him as a man and literary politician. He was a louse. I was under the impression that my article, my attack, followed the party line. Then a huge envelope arrived in my office soon after, containing a confidential agenda ~~of the meeting~~, and invitation to the meeting of the Agitprop committee, which included people like Darvas, Márton Horváth, Andics, Révai, etc. About twenty of us were invited to this meeting at the Academy Street on a Monday afternoon; this preparatory meeting which was to work out plans for the writers' congress. This is where they concocted the cultural brew. Everything concerning agitation, propaganda, culture, and art was decided here. I showed up as the new editor-in-chief, as

the indispensable great man. I entered the meeting room last, being a notoriously modest person. Révai shouted: "Is Aczél here?" I quietly signalled my presence, fully aware of the fact that such a historic meeting could not be held without me. Révai screamed: "You idiot, we entrusted you with this sacred cause and this is what you do ----- . Why didn't you show your article to Horváth?" I got very angry and said: "Leave me alone ----, etc." Andics said: "How dare you talk like this to Comrade Révai!" I was scared to death. Next day there was an attack on me in Szabad Nép by Méray. After that I ~~was~~^{drew} in my horns.

Király denounced me after that; my spies reported this to me. In 1956 I beat him up for this, and he did not say anything, and did not defend himself.

Anyway, we prepared a plan for the congress, which was about a kilometre long. Révai screamed: "You are stupid, impotent grammophone records, etc." And he threw us out of his office. Then I was sent to the Soviet Union as a member of a writers' delegation to find out how these things were to be done.

Then Révai asked me to work out a new plan in accordance with the Soviet experience, including ideological problems, etc. We divided the work; I was to write about revolutionary romanticism and Illés wrote about the positive hero, etc. We ended up with a twenty-page memorandum. Géza Losonczy, a member of the committee,

asked to look at the report and said: "Are you insane? What do you want to do with this sea-monster?" Révai will be furious if you give him such a long report." So we cut the report down to half a page, and sent it to party headquarters. In three days a huge envelope arrived, containing an invitation to an ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Agitprop committee meeting. Révai asked: "What is this?" Somebody answered: "It's a program." Révai retorted: "You have a hell of a nerve to give me a menu card like this. Who is responsible for it?" Losonczy did not say a word, so I ~~Évá~~ said: "I did it." I got hell!

It is characteristic of the psychology of the thing that when Losonczy was subsequently arrested as an imperialist spy, I became convinced that he ^{had} intentionally brewed trouble between Révai and me. I believed this in spite of the fact that I never really believed the charges against him; after all he was my friend, I knew him well. After he left prison, I told him about this and he laughed and told me that he had not known X how I felt about this episode. That is how deeply we were contaminated!

When the congress was held, it turned out to be a cliché. Nexó talked nonsense, which was translated by Keszi in a milder form. Révai was witty as usual in the advocacy of his Gleichschaltung policy. I admire Révai, he was a brilliant debater and a first-rate intellect. Today he is insane, I believe. He went completely flat.

(6 e)

Interviewer asked respondent whether it is true, as some of his

acquaintances claim, that his personality and manner~~s~~ have changed since he left Hungary. They had claimed that he had been far more pompous and self-important in Hungary. Respondent:

No, that is not true. I behave exactly the same way here in London as I did at home. Nobody can say that the Stalin-prize went to my head. Interviewer: Nobody claims that. Respondent: On the contrary, I found it very difficult to swallow the Stalin-prize. I received it, a little guy, for a very mediocre novel, when there were writers who were far more deserving. I didn't think it was fair. Zolk and others told me later that X the Stalin-prize did not make me act as though I had a halo above my head. No, I was not self-important and pompous. ~~THESE~~^I was always undisciplined and direct in my manners, just the way I am today. All my subordinates liked me and had respect for me, because I was able to make quick decisions, because I could solve problems and stood up for people. At Szikra and at the Writers' Association people used to come to me with their personal problems; they trusted me. My chief problem was that I was unable to keep it a secret if I did not like someone. There used to be scandals about this. Of course, clearly, I was also a dogmatic, sectarian Communist. I went to the best tailor, wore a clean shirt every day, and never went out unshaved or ragged as some people did. The only concession I made towards casual dressing was wearing

a beret, chiefly because I hate wearing hats. I made no attempt to act or dress to resemble the proletariat, the way some Communists did.

- (7) There was a joke in Hungary that so many people have received the Kossuth prize that it was just like a mass organization. Well, I was member of this mass organization. After I received the Stalin prize in 1952, I had to become a member of the I Praesidium of the National Peace Council as well as of the Hungarian-Soviet Society. I must have been hated.
- (7 e) I had to hold speeches at meetings, etc.
- (7 g) What do you think? People were happy if they could go to peace council meetings on a Sunday morning! I was deliriously happy too, but I had to go. I used these occasions for study trips in the provinces.
- (7 l) They functioned badly, of course. They had no real function. I tell you a story to show you how much interest the people showed in the mass organizations. In 1952, after I got back from the Soviet Union, I was sent to Zalaegerszeg to hold forth on the beauties of life in the Soviet Union. This was on the same afternoon when the Hungarian-Yugoslav soccer match of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics was to be broadcast over the radio. Well, I arrived at the hall where I was supposed to speak and found that there was nobody there. As a result I listened to the broadcast too. There were two old ladies sitting in a hall which had a

capacity of a thousand.

- (7 m) The workers felt that the trade unions did not represent their interests. It was merely a bureaucratic organization, without the power to represent the workers against the employer, i.e., the state. In 1955 we got in trouble ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ when we pointed this out. The workers proclaimed it over the radio, the trade union agents maintained that they would resign if they were not allowed to protect the workers. So, as a result, the party attacked the "Social Democratic deviations in the trade unions" and the "petit-bourgeois influences which manifested themselves at the radio station."
- (8) About two percent at the time of the Revolution.
- (9) ^{Disz}~~Disz~~ was hated most by the youth which was already educated by the Communists, ^{the youth} which they tried to indoctrinate. The hatred of youth for the DISZ, for the regime, was a nicely progressing, progressively developing feeling.
- (10) Everyone felt the terror, everyone was a personal victim of it, even though he was not personally arrested. It was in the atmosphere, one had to talk in whispers and look behind one's shoulders. There were the 'phone conversations when suddenly one heard a voice, which said: "Hang up, Comrades," indicating that one's 'phone ~~had~~ had been tapped. I knew many AVO agents well. The AVO never tried to organize me or provoke me in any way.