

Disillusionment among the writers can be roughly divided in three types:

Among the idealists, the period falls between 1949 and 1952. Most of the idealistic Communists were cured by 1953. But all of them were cured at the latest, by October 1956.

The second group would be the dumb ones. These were generally enlightened by 1953, but due to their mental deficiency the process was slower than with the first group. I do not think that any of them kept serving the régime after the 1956 Revolt.

Then, there is the third group, where one cannot really speak of disillusionment, for these are the cynics, and they had no conviction to lose. The few who came away, like Méray, are cynics and still going strong.

Aside from these three major groups, there was a small group of elite writers, the great names in Hungarian literature, who did not have to join the Party and still could keep writing. They did not have the same strict Party responsibilities and they could easier flout Socialistic realism and the other Communist trappings. Illyes is perhaps the most representative in this group.

The change in writers' attitudes was a result of government propaganda and government policies. Until 1949, the Communists enjoyed wide-spread genuine

support from a considerable segment of the population. Once they consolidated power in the years 1948-49 and the opposition was eliminated, simultaneously the terror was perfected; and by 1952, the terror has replaced popular support on which the government could rely. One of the strangest aspects of these developments was that the Party chiefs gave one the impression of not realizing the degree of popular hostility confronting them, although they did realize the effectiveness of the terror. On occasion, the leaders manifested complete ignorance concerning true popular feelings. I do feel that they were poorly informed, as they never received a realistic report on the country. Only in the light of such complete ignorance can I explain the actions of a Rákosi, who would dare to come out in June of last year with a list of 400 to be liquidated; only so can I understand a Gerö to have dared to give the speech he gave on October 23rd.

The propaganda machinery was not controlled uniformly after the 20th Party Congress. The various chiefs and editors lost their lead, switched back and forth between different patterns with each following his own policy. No longer were there political conceptions, there were only daily tactical turns and twists. The work was conducted on a day-by-day basis and journalists used their sixth sense. The Party leadership could not accept the alternative, which was Imre Nagy,

but had no moral basis to stand on its own right. A similar trend is taking place now under Kádár. Politics are still developed step by step on a tactical basis, but people are now intimidated. As the régime now says, "we must not equate treason with honest mistakes in the past", and of course, this means Nagy, the traitor, and Rákosi, the honest blunderer. This is how Revai described last year's developments at the June Party Conference. The strange reputation of Kádár was built on his having been jailed and Gerö was responsible for building up Kádár, so he could step into his present position. I am quite sure that Kádár's sense of justice was offended by the Rákosi-Gerö machinations and I felt that he did speak his real views last November. Once he called in the Russians, however, he cut off his road of independent judgment and he is serving the Russians to-day as their puppet. Going back some years, we find that ever since Imre Nagy became premier in 1953, Rákosi had to fight for his life and his political survival. It was actually Imre Nagy's Party loyalty which rescued him, for he refused to attack the Party to avoid a Party division. Throughout 1953-54-55 the Russians availed themselves of Imre Nagy's loyalty and took the tactical step of protecting Rákosi with Nagy's popularity. Imre Nagy was never free of the sense of obligation towards the Russians and he had a deep loyalty to the

Party. He was thus easily controlled by both, at least until October 24th, when a new policy committee was formed. Throughout the past several years, Imre Nagy had the benefit of Geza Losonci's advice. I consider Losonci an extraordinary, talented person, who in spite of his several jail terms and advanced stage of tuberculosis, has been responsible for Imre Nagy's policies.

Propaganda and its role during the Revolution.

Propaganda before 1953 can be characterized as one completely distrusted. It was a simple affair, where everything that was condemned, was liked, and everything that was praised, was automatically suspect and disliked. The very vacillations after 1953 tended to give the news media a little more credence. Since there was no censorship in the Nazi sense of the word, the propaganda channels were not as well defined. Of course, there was the Agit Prop Division with Bela Szalai in charge, who was also Secretary of the Central Committee. He was succeeded by Lajos Acs. Below these people was the director of Agit Prop in charge of operations. On the same level were policy-makers at universities, schools, for the press, and in the arts. A typical individual of this type would be Erzsebet Andics. This woman was in charge of all history. She controlled appointments

in every ~~branch~~ branch of history teaching and she controlled historic ~~interpretations~~ interpretations from grade school to the universities and the academy. If anyone came in conflict with her, he was not only fired from his job, but he could not find employment as a historian anywhere in the country. The Agit Prop people then had their press division, and this is where radios and ~~newspapers~~ newspapers got their guidance from. These were the people who were in direct contact with the president of the radio, e.g. Valeria Benke. She was responsible that ideas and news will receive the "Hungarian interpretation" and, like everywhere, the Communist chiefs supervised editorial policy. Besides this, of course, Party representatives, editors, and the entire top echelon was subject to Party discipline. Miss Benke was a grade school teacher in the past and she became the first president of the MNDSZ. Afterwards she was general secretary of the Peace Council. From there she was sent to the Radio as president. She is still vice-president and still fully reliable. She has no experience or any sort of competence in broadcasting, journalism, or a related field. Her right-hand man in controlling radio policy and propaganda, the head of the ~~Radio~~ <sup>Radio</sup> Agit Prop, is Janos Nemes. He is a boy of Jewish descent, who was not permitted to study under the old régime and became a fine-mechanic, drafted into<sup>a</sup>/work battalion, he was

captured and he returned from Russian prison in 1948. He went to work at Party central headquarters as editor of Agit Prop pamphlets. These were issued monthly to explain Party measures and policies to a more or less confidential audience. He is not a writer, rather a political editor in chief. In fact, he never wrote anything, but once, on a visit to East Germany, he made some taped interviews. They were so horrible, that they were hidden and nobody was permitted to listen to them. He was a clever and smart fellow, but not a journalist. He was sent to Russia for a 2-year Party school. Comparable to our set-up, the newspaper Szabad Nép also had its Party supervisors. These two men, called Kukucska and Matusek, made up the editorial board. They were very cautious and if they did not trust or understand a story, they sent it in to the Party Central Committee Secretariate to get their opinion. In a case like that, the story was taken out of that issue and, if later approved, printed several days later. This is how it happened that in a country of "high social morality", like Hungary, no crime took face, at least, no one ever mentioned them in the ~~newspaper~~ newspapers. Accidents were also taboo. Distribution and control of foreign news was more centralized. The MTI Hungarian news agency had a foreign press-service division. They subscribed to all the international wire services and got all foreign papers.

From this news source they prepared daily excerpts in mimeographed form, which they distributed to editors in chief and other politically reliable personnel of the top. They had a similar mimeographed sheet on East European news. The news of the Western world were, of course, strictly confidential and they came out in two editions: The Red Stripe and the Black Stripe Edition. At the Radio, Miss Benke got a copy of both and then she passed them on to Mr. Nemes. They were the only two people who had access to Western news in the condensation and after it was edited by MTI. The impact of these mimeographed news sheets was very small. For our two political supervisors, named above, they represented Western lies. The rest of us never got to see them, except if we were called in to their office to read one story in order to prepare a rebuttal or a correction. On these occasions we were not permitted to look at the whole pamphlet and we never saw these except in these two people's company.

#### Operations during the Revolution.

It is my impression that the Radio was prepared for the Revolution. I was in the building on the 23rd, but it was not until later in the evening, that we realized that fighting broke out ~~in~~ outside. Our telephone communication was disrupted and we could only call Party headquarters and police headquarters. Both of

these agencies assured us that some troublesome counter-revolutionary hords were being unruly, but that order is being restored. At first, we had no reason not to believe this. But that this was not a minor disturbance became clear very soon. We asked for help from the police and I remember that the police chief spoke in a very strange way. At the time we did not understand, but by the following day we did. We were in the building all night and by early following morning on the 24th the AVH withdrew and the counter-revolutionaries came in the building. They turned out to be some of the ~~friends~~<sup>students</sup>, I talked to on the 22nd at the Technological University, some young working girls, and various other such "counter-revolutionaries". They were ~~awfully~~<sup>awfully</sup> nice to us and gave us cigarettes, since we ran out. The political lines were never very clearly drawn in the Revolution. We knew where Gerö stood, but even though Benke joined him in Party headquarters, and together with Nemes they decided that this was a counter-revolution, still later on she wavered.

Beginning with the 24th, two announcers, Szepesi, the sports news caster and Kalmar, together with half a dozen others locked themselves up in the studio in Parliament, from where they broadcast whatever Party headquarters told them. At Party headquarters Benke and Nemes kept making policy, who with the aid of

some technicians, ran Radio Kossuth according to Gerö's wishes. Kalmar, by the way, was the Party secretary in the Radio. They also had with them a brand-new announcer, who was apparently out to make himself a name.

Once the new Nagy government was ~~far~~ formed, Tildy was put in charge of propaganda, since Losonci was needed to handle political affairs. They two were in Parliament building and, finally, on the 29th we, the radio staff, <sup>who</sup> were not operating, held a protest meeting against the Benke policy. The following day, on the 30th, Tildy released Benke from her duties and appointed Szell as her successor. At this time we took over the studios in Parliament and operated a "Radio Free Kossuth" from there till the 4th. We started our own revolutionary editorial board in close co-operation with the Nagy government, who had offices just above us. We broadcast practically everything, all the workers' council messages and there were at least 40 political parties and organisations, who asked us to be announced and propagandized over the Radio. We complied with everyone's wishes and now I am not certain, whether it was the wisest thing to do, because the many programmes resulted only in public confusion and there was ample room for misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Concerning news, we had perfect coverage. We got phone calls from every part of the country concerning

Russian troop movements and political developments on the local level. As such, we acted as a news clearing house for the government, for we were much better informed than they. The whole country was thrilled having a Free Kossuth Radio and individuals<sup>did</sup>/their utmost to keep in touch with us and keep the country informed. Thus, we had a good overall view of political developments in the country and apart from some developments in Győr, there were no reactionary activities anywhere. I mentioned Győr as an exception, because as the first major town coming from Vienna, several Western reactionary returnees appeared there. Further they did not dare to come and they tried to agitate in Győr. But even in that town the political control was in the hands of Attila Szigeti and other reliable and democratic progressive elements. There were thus no native Hungarian reactionary elements audible, except these returnees from the West. But even these were made harmless in Győr. There were no reactionary activities in Budapest either and there was no anti-Semitism. I was surprised, however, to have seen in Parliament some people who have ~~been~~ donned their old Horthy uniforms.

On ~~the~~ November 4th we were stunned and there was no broadcasting at all. On November 5th, broadcasting started from Szolnok on the Kossuth wave length. Finally, on the 7th broadcasting started again from

the Parliament. An ex-journalist, called Gacs, became the new boss, running the show for four days. But on November 11th, we had a big meeting and the employees threatened to go out on a strike. They in turn, were threatened by Gacs. We did walk out, but 8 people volunteered to keep the Radio going. This is a tremendous load for two shifts, but they actually only played music and sent short messages. On November 30th, we were threatened with dismissal, unless we returned to work and we went back. There was still no broadcasting, except on an ad hoc improvised basis. Since then, many from the old staff were fired and three of us decided finally, in the middle of December, to escape to the West. We wanted to stay alive. A number of honest people, however, stayed home and many are still supporting the régime, not by choice, but because they see no alternative and thus they wait for the next opportunity to try again. The Party leadership is not so united to-day, and some perhaps still believe and try for a revision. I fell, it is better to have a Benke, who at least had some principles, instead of a scoundrel, who had but opportunism to guide him. Things will not stay as they are, because I cannot imagine people like a friend of mine, named [REDACTED], who was since kicked out from the Radio, to stay in silence and go to work as a helper.

The size of the administrative apparatus is at least ten times larger than under Horthy. Now that the crop

collection agencies were dissolved, then thousand collection agents became unemployed, and this was just one arm among a hundred. The all important criteria for political reliability makes the job situation even more complex. There is a great shortage of skilled and reliable workers, while at the same time, all are worried of being unreliable. Many, therefore, are willing to do anything to keep their jobs. A lot of people think like the Kőbánya worker, whom I had once interviewed on one of my taped interview expeditions. Off the record, he admitted to me that he used eight various innovations on his job, which assured him very good pay, but he was not going to register these, lest his norm and work quota will be raised.

In closing I should perhaps say that we placed great significance on visits by Soviet VIPs to Hungary. Whenever Mikoyan came, this usually meant liberalization; when Suslov came, he always strengthened the Rákosi wing. When Suslov arrived in early 1956, liberalism ended that very day. So, when Konev showed up in Budapest on a secret trip on December 6th, we knew that the Soviet army was going to keep Kádár to strict accounting. We have seen Konev on that day in Parliament and his trip contributed toward our decision to leave the country. As it turned out, we were not mistaken.

INTERVIEWER'S ESTIMATE OF RESPONDENT

Through personal contact and also through conversation with others, respondent created the impression of having been a reliable, if not very important member, of the Radio staff. He worked mainly as an interviewer on outside jobs and as a lector of scripts. It should be noted that the entire interview, aside from short periods of time, took place in the presence of wife in respondent's home. Frankly, respondent gave the impression, as a typical border-line case, between decency, idealism, and opportunism - in serving the régime.