

As a man who grew old in the Social Democratic Movement and the Labour Union Movement, I should like to note that I am quite disgusted with the British printers and unions. They gave me no help whatever in my trade to find an adequate situation. In our time we helped thousands of fellow printers and trade unionists, both Hungarian and foreigners. Ours is an international brotherhood which is meant to support each and every member. After I got this off my chest, I should start by saying that I am in the West by accident.

I left Hungary on the 31st of October to meet with Anna Kethly and to go with her to Vienna to make contacts with the West on behalf of the Social Democratic Party. I was also sent out to try to get some news-print. We were in Vienna on the night of the 3rd and heard there with consternation the news of the Soviet attack. We went back to Sopron in the morning of the 4th since the border was already closed at Hegyeshalom. While in Sopron, we were persuaded to go out to the West again and await developments there. Miss Kethly took a young student with her, a nice boy she either knew from before or just met in Sopron and they left for the United States the same afternoon from Vienna. Soon I was on my way to England, but my family is at home and my son has just graduated as an engineer in Miskolc. My wife and our girls stayed at home in Győr where she is working as she had before as the manager of a small store. She has worked for a long time now, else we could not have educated our children on one salary. I was the tenth of 14 children of whom seven joined my father in his trade as a carpenter. One of them lives in Toronto, Canada.

I had ^{years of} four/grade school and four years of secondary school after which I was apprenticed to a printer. I got married in 1933 and since 1938 I was called up fourteen times to the Army. The last time, in December '44, I was near Győr so I simply deserted and went home. At the time I was supply sergeant and I took the key to the store home with me. I took off the uniform and waited. When the Russians came in, they came around daily, drafting men for "Malenki Robot". Fortunately our basement, for that's where we lived, had two exits and while I always volunteered for work, I disappeared on the other exit when the Russians showed up. After Easter I met Udvaros, the ex-Social Democratic mayor of the town. We formed ^{the} a new Social Democratic Party and he persuaded me to join the police force. We weren't much use as a police for we were unarmed and the Russian soldiers still ruled the town. Under the new Social Democratic City Government I was asked to become district chief of police. I had the job exactly two years from November '45 to November '47. During the 1947 elections I gave instructions throughout my district that the blue absentee ballots shall not be accepted as valid. As a result, in my district alone ~~xxxx~~ in the entire country, the fraudulent use of the blue ballots was eliminated. A few weeks later I was called up to Budapest to account for my odd behaviour and I was requested to sign a lengthy report of my activities. Instead of trying to excuse myself, I made the report even stronger in places. I knew that as a police chief I was through. I went home and I went hunting the following day. I had to jump off a

a narrow dirt-road to permit a horse and waggon to pass. By a freak accident my shot-gun got caught on the side of the waggon, the gun went off, killing the peasant instantly. This tragic event made my departure from the police appear as an entirely non-political move. I received a two months suspended jail term for involuntary manslaughter and we moved back to Győr. Since I intentionally failed to register with Győr Social-Democratic Party, they couldn't kick me out when the time came. In my old district they refused to deal with me ^{since} if I wasn't a resident there. I went back to work in a printing shop in which by and by all the printing business in Győr was consolidated. Győri Munkás, our Social Democratic Weekly, was also suspended about this time. The fact that I quietly went back to work and didn't try to make enemies, had at least that much reward that in spite of my Social Democratic political activities, the AVH left me alone and I was never in any way harassed except that they took my apartment once on 48 hours' notice because an A.I. man desired it. The fact that I got off so easily is still a source of surprise to me.

I should like to recall some of the events leading to the liquidation of the Social Democratic Party in Győr. Mr. Hariscsak, President of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party, announced in 1948 the exclusion of the Right-Wing Social Democrats. In the Committee this meant everybody except Marosán and Szakasits. In February '48 Szakasits visited us attending celebrations for the dedication of our new Party Headquarters when he spoke of cooperation forever, fusion never^A with the Communist Party. Only a few days later he received the word and he started speaking a

a different line. During the period of fullest cooperation between the two Parties, this cooperation meant that the Communist Party dictated and we obeyed. When the expulsions took place, all who were against this arrangement, were branded as Right-Wing Social Democrats and kicked out. Mr. Istvan Medei became one of the four presidents of the Fusion Committee of the two Parties. He was County Secretary in Győr-Sopron County and in his capacity received the lists from the Communists with the names of those to be excluded from the Social Democratic Party. Medei took it on him to carry out these instructions. Later the Communists demanded the exclusion of Udvaros and Erdei. For this purpose Medei formed a pro-communistic Committee and sent it to the mayor, demanding his immediate resignation. In face of such pressure from his own party, the mayor resigned. All active Trade Unionists and active Social Democratic Party members were by and by kicked out of the Party and later kicked out from their jobs, and once they were jobless, no-one dared to hire them. The Social Democratic Party Leadership and the Catholic priesthood received the most concentrated attention of the AVO and were exposed to the strongest suppression. I am not religious but I saw myself allied with the priests. My neighbour spent four and a half years in jail, where daily 15 or 20 people were tied up in tiny bundles with a lead pipe between their limbs. At least five of the twenty were priests and their will-power was remarkable for they never said a word. Towards the end of the liquidation of the Social Democratic Party, our friend Medei too was kicked out, once he served his purpose. He had fled to the West soon thereafter and by some ruse he took over the leader-

ship of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in exile after the death of Charles Peyer. There was some relaxation in the terror after 1953 and Rakosi himself had mellowed some, though he was still a Stalinist. Imre Nagy grew in popularity, ^{partly for} ~~first~~ he was not a Jew. This was important. And second, he saw things realistically and tried to improve the situation. At least 80% of the Party stood behind him. Had he stayed in power, de facto, no revolt would have followed. By and by there was more and more freedom and the writers started writing. I think it is fair to say that the revolt was started by Imre Nagy and later by the Communist writers. These latter felt the weight of the lies and they wanted to escape from them. They looked to a Tito-type Government. This was a revolution of the Party members against the suppressing Party. The rest of the country could suffer in silence but these Communist writers had to write lies. This hurt them more than silent suffering, but they did not expect all the changes the people demanded and wanted. The Communist writers wanted a little more freedom and a little less subservience to Moscow.

My life went on comparatively quietly after '48, as I tried not to go with my head against the wall. Later I was even permitted to give courses in my field in the Trade School. They simply did not mind recognizing my competence and skills. One of the reasons for this comparative peace was due to the generally better quality of people in the printing trade. Aside from this, I was president of the Győr-Szikra Sports' Club and I also was captain of the bowling team. I had thus a perfect excuse for having no time for politics.

We always attended some sports' meeting when a seminary meeting came up. Somehow, not even the wildest Communists had a bad word for me, if for no other reason they did not want to make one more enemy for themselves.

At
During one time, two of us applied for the job of technical manager at our printing plant, which was then vacant. Since the other fellow had difficulties in getting along with people, he of course got the job. I was made estimator for our operations. This was of great benefit to all of us because by consistently over-estimating labour and material costs intentionally, it was possible for us to overfill our quotas and remain a lead plant, which meant bonuses for all. Just recently I had a letter from the present plant manager who told me that they sorely missed me.

The Germans were cruel and they were much hated ^{during} ~~axing~~ their occupation of Hungary, but the Russians were hated worse. At first many people liked them and the ~~ax~~ country was pro-Russian. ~~ax~~ For some segment of the population, like the Jews, the arrival of the Russians meant liberation. Had they not exploited the country economically, a large segment of the population would have sympathized with them, at least those who could have improved their lot under the genuine Communist regime. However, a large segment of the population loved freedom in preference to economic benefits and sooner or later would have demanded it. This love of freedom is lodged in the hearts of the Hungarian people who, forever suppressed, forever fought for liberty. Under adequate economic conditions, therefore, the Communists would not have started the revolt. Instead sooner or later the peasants, the artisans and the intellectuals would have started a revolt, perhaps without the workers. We can thank the Lord that this did not take place. The devilish part of the Soviet system is, that fine words hide the sinister truth. The Communists make no heed of spreading appealing propaganda which they would automatically discontinue once they established their rule. That their propaganda succeeds so well in the West proves only the great decline of Western ideology. Life was often horrible under the Communists, though often I preferred some of the things they did and some things they did well. They did establish a class-less society with only the top Party leadership and the AVO standing apart, while the rest of the country was uniformly miserable. Even plant directors did not have the

standard of living of a skilled worker in the West, while the rest of the population had about 10 to 30% of what the Western workers have. Undoubtedly, many things contributed to the raising of the level of worker and lowest class peasant, but the entire society as a whole had to lower its standards. In practice the ruling classes were exchanged, also the good Kaders were unjustly preferred over the other classes, but even there they overshot their marks and concentrated on exploitation of the workers. This exploitation went on in every aspect of the economy. Take the most basic and obvious example, retail stores: our neighborhood had twenty before, these were now consolidated into five stores, but the number of employees in the five stores was not increased. Thus they were exploited, working on a norm system working fast but not well. Working on norm scales resulted in absurdities at times; once quality controllers were introduced, they were also working on norm scales and they received a premium only if they did not find too many rejects. Thus all the products went through. I should not say that production was not increased. Where worker once made one item per day, he now produced twenty per day and even if ten had to be rejected, he had still multiplied his production quota. The loss of material or excess labour did not seem to matter much. It was unfortunate that increased production did not mean improved standard of living. In fact, when announcements reached us that the living standard has once more improved, this simply meant the prelude to a new Peace Loan campaign. Whatever they said, we braced ourselves for the opposite.

The revolution was started by ^{the} Communist writers with the help of the masses of youths and except for the politically compromised leaders, who didn't go on the street those days, all were with the revolution. The Red Army, located in Hungary at the time, understood the situation and during the armistice they left Budapest proper. In Győr, the Russians surrounded the Communist Party Headquarters with tanks. When people demanded their withdrawal from the city, they were extremely disciplined and withdrew. I have seen a Hungarian spit on a Russian soldier, but the Russian didn't bat an eye and they retired without violence. Another group of Hungarians went to the jail to liberate the political prisoners. They were in the process of liberating them, when some police called out started firing on the people. The police killed two people, but the prisoners were released. No AVH men appeared anywhere and by next day all was over and peace and order reigned. In spite of the insults the Russians were exposed to, they did not fire and they silently witnessed the demonstration of 30,000 people at the City Hall, shouting "we are no longer slaves"!

The Soviet troops' commander was a very sensible man who ordered dependent families to move in with the troops in the barracks. They left their homes and when on the insistence of the people, the Russians decided to quit town, troops and families left for a nearby village, called Györszentiván, where they pitched tents in the adjoining forest. Once the revolt's success seemed assured, Attila Szigeti announced that we had no quarrel with the Russians and that we urged them to come back to Győr and that they would be protected and fed by the people. The Russians took us up on

this and they came back but claiming that they had plenty of food, they refused it although they accepted fresh milk for the children. They fully sympathized with our themes and actions. The ideas of the revolt. Of course, many political views were represented but not a single word was heard during and after the revolt, advocating to return to anything that existed previously. The final demand of the Revolution was to preserve the democratic system on the basis of the 1945 election, and the political Parties of that election were being now re-organized. It is not without significance that even two or three weeks after the revolution, smallholder and peasant Parties were still active, but the Social Democratic Party was long since prohibited because they could not trust us with influence over the workers. Just like the Social Democrats, so also the old Communists had long ago refused collaboration and either left their Party or else were kicked out by Rakosi. Many of the idealistic Communists joined the Revolution. I should like to mention one. His name was Gabor Földes. He too marched around with the demonstrators, ^{but} shouting "we want freedom, long live the C P." Földes was a young man of Jewish descent who was not admitted to University study. Földes was talented and the Communist regime gave him opportunity to use his talents. He became director of the Győr ~~Party~~ ^{Theatre}. He was an ardent, idealistic Communist who gradually saw his ideals betrayed by the regime. He now joined the Revolution to rescue Communism. When news of the Magyaróvár butchery reached Győr, he organized an expedition to restore order in that neighbouring city. Once there, he was

beaten both by the AVO and later by the Hungarians when he tried to protect the AVO men from the mob ready to lynch them. He came back with a black eye but confident that he did his duty. He has since been condemned to death by the regime and I am not certain whether he was hung yet.

As a member of both, the Workers Council and the National Council in Győr, I know how we were confronted by ever greater demands of the people. They demanded arms and further concessions to freedom. All went orderly and all demands were reasonable, when on Saturday the 27th, the City National Council met. We negotiated with all the West Hungarian Missions which came to us with the various local demands. Our chairman, György Szabo, was expected and he showed up after much delay in the afternoon, together with a man called Somogyvari. As it turned out, the latter made his way in by pushing a pistol into Szabo's back. He tried to harangue us but we were busy expecting Attila Szigetti in the expectation of forming a Transdanubian Government. Somogyvari started a tirade that due to the traitorous Budapest Government, the country was bleeding and that immediate action is necessary. He made his way to the balcony and started haranguing the crowd outside. He upset the people quite a bit and he nearly started a riot with his irresponsible and inciting remarks. When we had realized what was happening, I went over and threatened to slap him in the face. He then tried to open our meeting and, unfortunately, a segment of the Council went along with him. At this point we had no choice but to call the Army which came over to our side on the day before and had Somogyvari arrested. Since the excitement has not yet subsided,

we adjourned our meeting in the City Hall and went to a different place to continue it in quiet. Within a short time, however, the people ~~quieted~~^{quieted} down and we were called back to continue our meeting. In the end we agreed that we did not need an Opposition Government and we ~~decided on~~^{decided on} cooperation with the Budapest Government as long as that Government approved ~~the~~^{the} demands we submitted. We gave Imre Nagy 24 hours to accede to our wishes or else face a Transdanubian general strike. He responded warmly and favourably to our demands.

On the day of my departure, which ^{was} the 31st of October, I met Szabo and Szigeti. We had some disturbing news, having heard of Soviet troop movements around Miskolc and near the Eastern border town of Szigetvar. We assured ourselves, however, that the Soviet troops could do nothing any more, since Imre Nagy announced our independence, withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, placing us under the neutrality and protection of the United Nations. We were certain this would prevent foreign intervention. We all felt that the armistice was a serious matter and that, as an independent nation, the UN would guarantee us. Whatever was to come politically in the future, on the 31st we thought that the Iron Curtain was lifted for good and that this at least was a permanent achievement. The disappointment on the 4th was unspeakable. As I said before, I was in Sopron on that day trying to get back to Hungary, but half of the city left the country the same day. Not just single houses, but whole street rows of them were deserted.

Re: The organization of the revolutionary authorities. Five of us were elected to the Workers' Council of the Printing Plant.

We were in charge and we were responsible for the first issue of the "Győr Worker", the revolutionary Social Democratic Newspaper, a copy of which I have, for it was sent after me to Vienna. We, in turn, elected our representative on the City Council, called Győr Newsset: ~~and~~ ^{Bisottság} ~~and~~ ^{By agreement}, the workers sent eight members to this Committee, the students, the intelligentsia and the military councils ^{four} ~~for~~ each. These twenty men had the responsibility for the city. As it turned out, this body later grew to represent the whole of Transdambia. We also had Communists in our ranks who joined as individuals and not as Party members. The Hungarian military units in the area who operated with us fully and their Commander Major Kress, who was now accused of treason, simply told the Court that he swore allegiance to the people and he did stand with the people. I have heard since that a committee sent up from Budapest to investigate individual officers' activities, left in helpless confusion after such comments. For better ^{or} ~~and~~ for worse, I have kept correspondence with my people in Hungary and ^{I was} ~~so~~ informed of more recent developments. My son wrote me from Miskolc University, from where in the meantime he has graduated with an engineering degree, that in April the Red Flag was hoisted again over the University buildings. Apparently, within half an hour all the students' dormitory windows had red rags, underwear and socks displayed. The retribution was swift and severe. Three dozen AVH men showed up within half an hour and 40 students were beaten to a pulp; the rest were reprimanded. In closing I may say that I don't expect to bring my family out

here because I am certain that I shall be home within a year or two.

Interviewer's estimate of Respondent.

Sensible, sane and sober, respondent must have courted disaster on several occasions, yet he escaped unscathed. It is perhaps remarkable, how successfully he avoided the pitfalls a man of his background was exposed to. It is, however, presumed that his good common sense and matter of fact judgment and opinions, as he offered them during the interview, lent him political immunity.

He represents the old-time conservative trade unionist and Social Democrat, who was more characterized by his faith in evolutionary, social reform than by revolutionary Marxism. His kind was accused by the Communists of "having sold out" to the ruling class of the past.