

I was born in 1932, went through grade school, Polgari, (secondary school), and I graduated from secondary school with a commercial matura in 1950. I applied for admission to the Academy of Theatre Arts in Budapest, graduated from there in 1954, and then worked for two years as a director and actress at the Pécs Theatre, and I just started a new contract as an actress at the Győr Theatre when the Revolution broke out.

I am the only child of a working class couple. My father was a delivery man, delivering soda water, who after the war switched to bread deliveries, and is working now as Stakhanovite deliverer. You become a Stakhanovite in his line of work, if you deliver the bread while it is still warm. He is making something like 1200 fts. My mother was a weaver, who often had to support me as a child, whenever my father was called up for military service. The unfortunate man was called up continually, ever since 1938, for one thing or another. My parents are Lutherans and I am a Marxist. How I came to this way should be explained: Due to parental influence, I presume, I and the kids I knew and went to school with had no love for Communism. My parents are still telling me that we lived better under the old régime and I never ceased having arguments with them on this. I remember back in

1947-48, the entire school was on many occasions dragged out to the City Theatre, where we were shown Communist propaganda movies. On several occasions it came to near riots because we ~~we~~ strenuously objected to this Communist propaganda. Approximately three years later, I was an ardent Communist to the great consternation of my parents. Somewhere by 1955, I was completely cured of the Communism practiced in Hungary, although I still consider myself a Marxist.

My parents are completely overjoyed, however, in view of the great career their daughter has made. I am of course glad myself, although I knew as a little girl already that I wanted to be an actress. One of the most difficult schools to get into, was the Academy for Theatre Art. On the whole, I think, the number of applicants to actual admissions was 10 : 1. There were several faculties: Actresses' and actors' class perhaps was most desired, and like myself, people who had little less confidence aimed at directors' classes, movie scenario, script writer, playwright, dancing, or a number of other faculties. The competition was keen, since this was the only such school in the country and it was kept on an extremely high standard. There were 200 applicants for the 4-year course in directing, and 22 of us were in the end accepted. There were many admission tests. There were two extensive written

tests and a number of those who passed these were selected for a three day residence at the school. This was a very good idea, for it gave the school a better chance to look us over, while we could sit in on the various classes and get an idea of what was going on. During the three days, of course, we were closely observed for political reliability as well as to general impression made. Some of the applicants may have been so talented that they were accepted, even if politically they were not altogether clear. Once we were accepted, our difficulties were not yet over. We had quite stiff examinations both annually and semi-annually. Our class dwindled in size, and five of us were left in the last year from the 22 originally starting. Actually we numbered nine, because we had four transfers, who joined us from other divisions of the Academy. Of the nine, seven of us got diplomas. The eighth became one of the best-known film stars in Hungary, and by doing some make-believe directing, she was lately also awarded her diploma. Two of us graduated with a "red diploma". This was a special honour which we received for having had superior grades in all courses throughout the four years. As the talented child of a worker kader family, an active student of Marxism, I had good chances to succeed. Also, ever since I attended the academy, I was

entirely self-supporting through part-time jobs and scholarships. In the very first year, I taught speech classes to school children and I coached an amateur acting group in a factory. I also got a scholarship of 240 fts. a month the first year; this was raised to 460 fts. the second year, and during my third year I was offered a job to teach in an amateur theatre school paying 850 fts. a month. This was an offer I could not turn down. As it developed I came to pass on the information in the evening that I had picked up during the day at the Academy. Already during secondary school, and also at the Academy during the first years, I taught seminary classes as well. I am extremely well-versed in Marxism and I know exactly how they interpret it in Hungary. In the last year at the Academy I was offered a Rákosi scholarship, which meant 850 fts. per month without any obligation to work. This was only open to last year students.

The standards of the Academy were extremely high, just how high they were I have realized after I attended school at the Bristol Acting School, here in England, which is considered the top school in its field. We had a very thorough theoretic training. Our literature courses were the same as those at the philosophy faculty of the University of Budapest. The courses in music matched those of the Academy of Music. The

courses on politics were also on the level of those at the university. I would think, it is fair to say that the courses in our department were generally on a higher level than those of the actors. And actually many actors have had lower educational standards in secondary school than we did. The overall standards of the Academy were very high in theory and somewhat lower in the practical training. We kept continually objecting to the over-emphasis of politics as well as the rest of the theoretical training. Our daily schedule ran from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on theoretical subjects and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. we had practical training. But if we were doing something interesting, we frequently stayed over, at times till 10 or 11 p.m. Practical training inevitably suffered from the fact that the very best actors were unwilling to take the time to teach us. So, our practical instruction was in the hands of adequate and conscientious actors, but people without outstanding talent or without success on the stage. Another factor which contributed to the limitation of standards on the faculty were the numerous professorial assistants. These young people, who were usually protégés of a professor, worked very hard and arduously, but still they could not adequately replace the professor, whose classes they were giving. Much of the faculty work was carried on by them.

During the fourth year of school each of us got a practical problem to solve. It usually meant having the complete charge of direction of a play in a small town theatre. I had received for my assignments a play by Trenov, entitled the "Gymnasiast:", which was to be produced <sup>in</sup> Miskolc. I had full responsibility for this play. It is one of the best Soviet plays written and it deals with young students during the 1905 Revolution. It was very difficult to produce, for lots of revolutionary activities are going on in it all the time. We were short for extras and the ones we had kept going round and round to create the impression of a mass. There are scores of scenes and we did not have a revolving stage, so we had to set up the scenes one behind ~~the~~ another and rely on curtains. In the final scene we had 112 persons on the stage. Fortunately the MTH helped us out with extras. This is some sort of a worker supply organisation.

The worst part of the Academy was the educational section, which controlled students and faculty personnel. Its director was a stupid, extremist sort of woman, who was in charge of political control of the faculty and the school in general. She was genuinely and generally disliked, but she wielded great power because, usual as this is among actors and theatre people, much envy and jealousy existed. Political denunciation was one easy way to undermine a man's artistic

career. Already before our graduation, the Educational Ministry has called me in and inquired about my professional plans. I told them that I either would like to go as a director to a small town theatre, or else to work as an assistant director at the Budapest National Theatre. They inquired, if I would consider an opening at the Pécs theatre and they ~~then~~ talked me out of my plans to stay in Budapest. Actually they were very diplomatic and urged me not to be satisfied with an assistantship in Budapest when I could work independently in Pécs. I went home, thought it over and, in the end, took their advice and took the job offered in Pécs. Some of the people, of course, get assigned to the job and are not given an alternative, especially if they are not very diplomatic about it. I do not have to emphasize that the most significant achievement of the régime, as far as I was concerned, was that every graduate of the Academy was assured of professional employment.

So after my graduation, I went to Pécs and got the job as one of the directors with 1400 fts. a month. This was my base pay and I was paid additionally for any appearances I had as an actress. I spent two very pleasant years in Pécs. Fortunately, the number of propaganda plays we were forced to put on have been drastically reduced, and we were having more and more good plays including Western ones by 1956. By last

year I felt that I wanted to take a knock at acting on a full-time basis. I shopped around and signed a contract with the Győr theatre for 1850 fts a month as an actress and in addition I had the opportunity to give acting and speech classes<sup>and</sup> /do some directing on the side. While in Pécs we had to go to Party meetings, but we had a well-meaning Party secretary in the theatre and there was no fuss and no undue excitement about politics.

In contrast, as soon as I arrived in Győr, political ramblings were heard. When the Revolution broke out, our theatre took over the operations of the Győr radio for the Revolutionary Council. Four of us did the announcing, broadcasting for a large part of the country, while Radio Kossuth was still in the hands of the Gerő government. The Győr Radio was under the direction of Gabor Földes, who was the director of the Győr theatre. Földes was an ardent Communist who saw his ideals betrayed by the régime. Throughout the Revolt, and already before, he emphasized that he was a Communist and he wanted a truly Communistic régime for the country. He has now been condemned, I think, for having organized the Győr expedition to Magyar-ovar to clean up the AVH excesses there. I could not sit still in Győr either, and I took several trips to Budapest to see if my family was all-right. At times I went with Western journalists, who kept



persuading me to go out West, and whom I in turn kept persuading that now is the time to stay in a free and democratic Hungary, a country we had to build. In the first few days of the Revolt there were no trains and even once they started moving, there were no conductors to collect the fares. While in Győr, I did not feel too comfortable during the Revolution for the simple reason that I found a room in the house of the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Győr County Council. During the Revolt, the family disappeared and I lived in steady fear when revolutionary units would demand their whereabouts from me. Of course, I had no idea, but I was quite perturbed when I found an automatic in one of the desk drawers in my room. I was at a loss as to what to do with it, but I certainly did not want to have it found in my room. I finally decided to nail the drawer into the desk.

One morning I got up late after a hard day and went over to the theatre. Somehow I did not realize that there were no people on the streets. Suddenly I saw Russians everywhere. I talked them into letting me through, and after much delaying, one even led me into the theatre. The rest of the company was also getting together there and we were informed that Földes and two of his friends, who were also announcing on the radio,

were arrested by the AVH. In the afternoon they were let go and we talked over the situation with them. Pöldes was very casual and thought that his arrest was a mistake, but he had no intentions of leaving the country. Several of us, however, had made up our minds and we decided to meet next morning at the bus of one of the plants which was going to the border area. By the time we got there, there were hundreds of people waiting for the bus. So, instead, we made different arrangements and got on a truck that was sent out to pick up a motor-cycle left on the border by a dissident. I had my beautiful, new 2000fts. overcoat on me and some hand luggage. I was certain that, if I did not leave, I would be next on the list of the AVH, since we were the group who made the revolutionary broadcasts from Győr. If I come to think of it now, I think, the main reason for my leaving was that they did not let us travel to Western

By being a talented person of good kader background, who eagerly accepted Marxism, respondent was, by the definition of the term, the perfect kader. In recognition of her situation the régime went way out of its way to encourage and accommodate her. It would be most unexpected, if this favouring would not have left its mark on respondent. Respondent seems well aware of the régime's shortcomings and she understands them as an intellectual fact. However, she has personally experienced all the benefits of the régime, which more than counteracts the logical comprehension of the régime's shortcomings. Particularly is this the case with someone without extreme intellectual and moral sensitivity.