

NOTE: For description of Army education, especially training of officers see A-type Interview with respondent under Section "S" Question (1).

The role of the Hungarian People's Army in the Revolution and in the War of Independence.

II Preconditions, making a revolutionary development within the Army possible.

In order to examine the process of disintegration in the Hungarian Army we have to return to 1948, the time when the Communist Party started the re-organization of the Army.

It is only natural that the new Army had to be based on the fundament of the old Army. At the start, when the Army had no importance yet - Communists have not taken over yet the power - they did not care much about it. Such men have been put in charge of the Army, who did not know much about military matters and did not cause much trouble. (Péter Veres). The Officer Corps was still composed almost exclusively of former officers. The Party needed them until a new Officer Corps could be raised.

After 1948, when ^{power} ~~war~~ was securely in their hands, the Communists started vigorously the re-organization of the Army. The direction of this was entrusted to Mihály Farkas, who has been a Colonel in the Red Army of the Soviet Union.

First of all, the older, reliable Party members have been brought in to the Army who received high commissions after a two, three

weeks long training. The overriding consideration was political reliability. Parallel with this, the training of young officers was started.

The first graduation of new officers in mass was during the summer of 1949. After this, a new crop of officers was manufactured almost every month. The regular school for training of officers was first one year, but in 1951, two years' courses have been introduced and finally 1953, already three years' courses had been also established.

In the measure, as the number of the newly commissioned officers grew, the former officers had been pushed out of the Army under different pretexts. Naturally, the change in quality was apparent throughout the Army. The new officers have been poorly qualified. Their training and the discipline was at a very low level. Very soon the enlisted men, who had a mature or other educational training, have been deriding their ignorant officers.

The Army, of course, had to be in step with the policy of the Party and the Government.

What were the causes of the general dissatisfaction within the Army ?

1). Soviet fetishism.

Perhaps even parricide constituted less of a crime than if somebody would have dared to say, that the arms received from the Soviet Union, were not good. However, this was the truth. In 1948, the Soviets have delivered us such

arms
~~arms~~, and that for dear money, which have been used probably already in the Czarist Army. We had to praise these weapons then unceasingly. (However, the Soviet Army used quite different weapons against us during our Revolution, such, which they never have shown us before.) The great celebrations connected with the reception of the Soviet arms could be regarded as veritable fun-fairs, when each soldier had to take the oath on these/scrap-iron things.

I had several friends who had been qualified arms engineers, and, seeing this impossible situation, have constructed new weapons, but when they showed their plans to the chief of staff, these were rejected as unsuitable. However, half a year after, such a friend of mine has seen the gun planned by him in a Soviet Military Newspaper, but of course not under his name, but with the signature of a glorious Soviet engineer.

Soviet fetishism was obligatory on all territories of life. The plan of living had been drawn up exactly according to the Soviet system, and so were all our regulations. Even our order of day and our meals were exact copies of that of the Russians. For example, they have given us, Hungarians, soup for breakfast and afterwards black coffee. Our lunch has been set for 3 p.m. They have disregarded entirely the Hungarian traditions also in the matter of the military uniforms. With a few changes at the start, soon they had

copied exactly the Russian uniforms and ranks. For example, in 1956, they introduced blue pants for the officers. The Quartermaster General, Lieutenant-Colonel Varga, regarded this as such a great deed of his that he proclaimed that he will be given a statue by future generations for this. On the other hand, among the officers, the current joke was that soon they would look like the Christmas trees. The generals have not been better off either. For example, in their fancy uniforms, which they received on April 4th 1955, according to a Soviet leader, if I remember correctly Voroshilov, they looked just like the animal tazers in a circus. The enlisted men had to wear summer and winter the Russian type ugly uniforms. The beautiful Hungarian soldiers have been turned to scarecrows.

Above all, the system of Soviet advisers at every level of the Army has been the greatest guarantee of Soviet domination and our enforced deference to them was the greatest contribution to the Soviet fetishism.

2). The material conditions.

All aspects of the civilian life have had their influence on the Army too. The gravest was, that the Army men had to see at home at his parents and at his brothers or sisters, their depressing economic situation. At the same time, the peasant boy in the Army had to listen during the political lectures to the fairy-tales about the high living standard of the kholhoses and the flourishing of peasant economy. The same applied also to the

children of workers and of intellectuals. They all had to discover the contradictions between the words and the deeds. These boys began to ponder spontaneously on the fact that they were told during the political lectures that the German Army in the past and at present the Western Armies, had no fighting spirit because their soldiers do not know why should they fight, but then, what for should a Hungarian soldier fight, for all that misery should he give his life?

The provision of the Army was no good either. Neither clothing nor food was satisfactory. Especially bad was the situation with the rifle units and the technical units, where they received first-class, that means the weakest provision. At the same time they had to perform heavy physical work. In 1956, a medical group has proved scientifically that the food was far from satisfactory in the Army and this finding was published by them in the Army's Medical Review. Thereupon they had been branded by Lieutenant-General N6grádi as spies of the Imperialists and have received grave Party disciplinary punishments.

The salary of the officers was not satisfactory either. A platoon-commander received generally 1100 to 1200 forints for his work which took up his time everyday the entire day. There have been among them young men with five, six children, apartment rent took up about 200 to 250 forints, then peace loan, Party dues, income taxes, cigarettes, newspapers etc.

so that they have been living in virtual misery. This situation did not change even in 1955 after the new pay-regulation. It seemed ridiculous that ~~that~~ after the much heralded new regulation their salaries were raised only with say 40 or 50 forints. There were even people whose salary actually diminished. For example, the salary of the assistant nurses in the hospitals had been diminished from 800 to 900 forints to 650 forints. However, they did not forget to explain to them that by this act, their standard of living has been raised. Of course, on the other hand, the standard of living of the generals was raised by pay increase. For example, the salary of Major-General Hegyi was raised with about 200 forints.

The atmosphere was very much depressed also by the fact that many officers and soldiers could see the carousing by the generals. These latter, who came to high positions from workers and peasant families, have been living in greater comfort than their predecessors used to, not to mention that they have looked down with contempt on their former colleagues. In their quest for luxury and extravagance, they went already to fantastic extents. For example, in the high officers rest-home in Anna-völgy, where they had everything they could ask for, they requested for their pleasure a parrot, a pony and chimpanzee in addition; while people were standing in queues before the stores for days for meat, they have taken home under their overcoats, not only meat, but also rice, lemons etc.

in great quantities from the store-rooms of the Ministry of Defence. The same was done, of course, by the Party functionaries who had their separate Party mess-rooms and PX, where they could get everything under the sun for reduced prices.

Corruption was not an un-known thing either. The Party Committee at the military supplies punished more severely a woman affair than a million forints loss. There is the example of Colonel Kocsis, who was the department head of the clothing depot. He had stolen 1 1/2 million forints. He was dismissed from the Army, but became the managing director of a factory. At the same time his subordinate, apparently encouraged by the example of his superior, has also stolen some 250,000 forints, received six years in prison.

During the mass deportations from Budapest, the furniture of the people deported, have been distributed among the members of the AVH, the Party functionaries and high officers of the Army. The generals have sold their own furniture to the Army for good money and instead received the best furniture for nothing. Besides, they received free living quarters in the best residential districts and in the cottages of the Buda hills, which were taken away from the deportees and they were given superintendents paid by the Army. With their office cars, they have transported their children to the Kindergarten and made weekend and vacation trips with their families and friends (I could tell about these things for days without end)

3). The excessive pre-occupation with Politics.

They attributed the greatest importance to political education. It was needed in order to create such men who would face peril and death, without thinking, blindly. For this end they have created a tremendous political machinery, which has extended its operation to all fields of the military.

The main goal of their policy was to raise people who would be loyal to the Party. In the beginning, Party activities within the Army had been quite satisfactory. Later, however, both the Party and the DISZ have lost their initial impetus and were kept alive only with difficulty. The men did not like to go to meetings, I myself tried to avoid them at every occasion. Only the blind could not see that there was a tremendous discrepancy between the speeches sounded at the meetings and real life, with other words, even those who have participated in the Party or DISZ activities, have done it rather because of their daily bread than out of inner conviction. Instead of reverence, the people had only fear toward the political activists.

Young people have been educated to hate men, not to love. There was ^{no field} ~~no field~~ where the Imperialists wouldn't have been mentioned. Soldiers were told to see behind the target Tito as the watch-dog or an American soldier and shoot at them. This spirit was permeating all walks of life. If somebody has thrown away his cigarette buds or his shirt

was not buttoned, he was right away an agent of Imperialists, a spy for the Wall Street, or a comrade of Tito etc.

A total warfare was carried out against religious morals.

Soldiers who were caught to have entered a church, have been punished and even dismissed from the Army. It was absolutely forbidden for members of the Army to have a church wedding.

The question of political reliability was treated with such mad suspicion, that not even all the political instructors have been regarded as reliable.

Those people who have worked honestly, could not get ahead.

New commissions and promotions were effected on the basis of more efficient boot-licking or "Socialist Connections".

4) Mistrust and Terror.

This was the hobby of the Army. Perhaps there is no other place in the whole world where so much propoganda is made and so many slogans are written on boards, in order to remind the people of watchfulness and keeping the secrets as it was in the Hungarian Army. The result was, that nobody trusted anybody, everybody saw an informer in the other. I myself was in the greatest peril three times because I trusted some friends who have denounced me. In this atmosphere, everybody could be denounced as spy of the Imperialists.

The watch-dogs were the so-called "elharító" officers, who have been members of the AVI and were attached to the Army by the Ministry of Interior. They stood even over the commander,

of whom prepared their records and controlled his Cadre Card.

These fellows had been commissioned also to purge the Army from the former officers under different pretexts. First, they did away with the former generals, later also with the lower ranks. The main accusation in each case was that they have been spies, but there were even more interesting cases. In 1951 or '52, at the Tata Armoured Division Officer School, there was some food poisoning. The supply officer and the doctor have been hanged as Imperialist agents. (They have been rehabilitated in 1956).

There were still men in the Military Courts, who would tell openly their opinion. These have been purged under similar pretexts or with the accusation of destructive behaviour.

In addition, ^{there} ~~they~~ have been also things which violated human dignity. For example, they have shorn the heads of the enlisted men. In order to get married, one needed a permit. The possibility of studies was limited for the members of the Army. For example, they did not let us go to the Technical University for three years. The officers could not bear arms except on duty. They could not go to recreation and amusement then and there, when and where they could have liked to. They have interfered all the time in one's private affairs etc. etc.

All these things have prepared a fertile soil for the ideas of the Revolution in the souls of the soldiers. The soldier has

felt that those demands, formulated by the revolutionary youth, could answer also his burning problems.

II. The place of the Army and its participation in the Revolution.

The Revolution broke out without any preparation and then it spread like wild-fire, carrying along all honest people of the country with no regard of race, sex, religion or political affiliation.

With the Army, however, things did not go so smoothly.

First of all, the majority of the officers have been obdurate Stalinists. Besides, for a while, they succeeded in isolating the military from the population.

Already, in the demonstration on October 23rd, some soldiers could be found, but this was not very significant. In the Central Committee's Meeting that night, Bata has still trusted the Army so much that he demanded their deployment against the people. It was not his fault that this order was not given that night.

The changing sides by the Army was begun by the events taking place at the two Military Academies. The Zrínyi and the Petöfi Academies had been the first to join the Revolution. Among the incidents of the latter, a great indignation was caused by the incident, when fleeing AVH men have fired on their officers who have been asking for identification. Both sides lost several men (the fallen AVH men are now proclaimed as heroes and the official story is that we have attacked them and killed them).

After this and similar incidents, events have taken place in

rapid succession and unit after unit of the Army have disobeyed orders of their former officers and sided with the people. Most soldiers have felt that their needs and demands were the same/what formulated ~~was~~ by the people who started the Revolution. The crimes of the Rakosi-Gorb gang were already coming to the light. Even those, who have been members of the Party, have left it with the feeling of terrible nausea.

The soldiers discovered also that the leaders of the Army have not been soldiers, but common bums from the roadside (utsseli csavargók), who, besides being ignorant in military affairs, had been also malignant. Just to give you an example: Bata, the Minister of Defence has sent the cadets of the Petöfi Academy to the Radio Station, in order to relieve the AVH embattled inside the studio. Since he knew that the people had surrounded the studio and that reinforcement could be smuggled in only by misleading the population, he gave orders that the cadets should approach the building with the Hungarian National flag, singing the Kossuth March. Thus the people should have believed that they were on their side, but when the cadets should have reached the entrance, they should have gone into the building and help the AVH. However, Bata forgot to notify the AVH in the studio. Thus, when the cadets arrived with the National Flag, the AVH started to shoot at them. The result was that at this Academy, whose cadets had been Communists without exception, the Communist ideology crumbled. The cadets of the Petöfi Academy

were the first to create a Soldiers' Council and formulate their demands which they have sent to the Government.

This time I was in the Dudai Nagy Antal barracks with the instructions to win over to the side of the Revolution the anti-aircraft units, which represented a great fire-power. However, I did not succeed in this endeavour, since I was betrayed by my officer colleagues and was delivered to the political department of the Division into custody.

Lieutenant-General Bazai, seeing that the soldiers are deserting the Army and going over to the Revolution, gave order to form Soldiers' Councils. His intention was to use these in the service of the Party. However, he did not succeed in this, because ^{we} ~~they~~ managed to take the lead out of his hands.

The first Soldiers' Councils sprang up quite spontaneously. These became the basis of the Revolution. The Army had given out its weapons to the people. The soldiers were burning of the desire to fight for the freedom of the country. For example, the Soldiers' Council of Ollep (High Command of the National Airforce and Air Defence) has published its ultimatum to the Russians, threatening them with opening fire in case they would not leave Budapest. (Unfortunately, when it came to a show-down, they were afraid of the consequences).

In the Soldiers' Councils, usually those were elected who were well liked by the soldiers. However, in many cases, the former leaders have been elected into the Council too.

The Military Council of the Army has been formed under interesting circumstances during the night from October 30th

to 31st 1956. Minister of Defence was already Károly Janse, who has not been a bit better than his predecessors. The President of the Soldiers' Councils already in existence, and us, who have been active on the side of the Revolution, have been participating in the meeting. Just to give illustrate, what kind of a free atmosphere was at this night session, it is enough to say that around the Ministry of Defence have been Russian tanks standing and we have been deprived from our arms before entering the building. It was a dangerous game indeed.

First Lt. General Váradi has expounded those directives which have been elaborated by the Ministry, which did not contain any positive ^{propositions} code. There were only weak generalities. Then we have formulated our demands, which were then accepted unanimously (for the list of these demands of the Army see the Radio Broadcast on October 31st 1956, contained in Radio Free Europe's ^{Edition} ~~edition~~ on the Hungarian Revolution).

Here we have committed a great error. While we have been pre-occupied with the formulation of our demands, we left the others to elect the revolutionary council upstairs. As it turned out, most members elected have been the former leaders in the previous system; too many generals and ^{few} ~~many~~ subordinate officers. We had to pay dearly for our carelessness in this matter, because these people became later the traitors of the Revolution who have sabotaged our efforts to use the Hungarian Army against the invading Russians.

On October 31st at 11 a.m. we have elected the National Defence Committee (Hosztali Karhatalmi Bizottsag) in the Millia Barracks, which had as its duty the organization of the National Guard and the restoration of public order.

This was a tremendous job, since almost every minute new units of the National Guard were formed. Until November 3rd we succeeded in recruiting all armed groups into the framework of the National Guard.

The National Defence Committee had several meetings. Of these, the most important was held on November 3rd. It began at 10 a.m. The commanders of all armed units and groups have been participating in this. We succeeded in achieving a certain unity and uniform command among all these widely differing groups. There was a great enthusiasm for the mobilisation and deployment of all forces against a possible Russian attack.

Unfortunately, we could not prepare for this any more, since the Russians, with the help of the traitors of the Ministry of Defence, have occupied the capital already next morning on November 4th in a treacherous manner and thus the life and death struggle for the freedom of the country began unprepared. The attack was unexpected and the Army was not mobilized. The soldiers were sleeping in their beds instead of having been alerted. On our advice, Maléter decided to bring up to Budapest the second and third Divisions, however, Imre Nagy did not want to hear about this. This was confirmed also by the

aid of Malóter, First Lt. Zs. Szabó, who was captured with him together at the Főköly Airfield. (The story, as I heard from Zs. Szabó himself, was shortly the following: on November 3rd at 9.45 p.m., the Russian/Hungarian negotiations had been resumed. Malóter and his mission were talking first with a few Russian officers until a whole galaxy of generals came in, led by a Four-Star Army general. They all took their place and sat down. Then the Army general stood up and announced "Gentlemen, you are the prisoners of the Soviet Army". Malóter turned red, stood up from his place, and said only this "so, this is how we stand". After this, he was taken to the Ungvár Prison, where his hair was shorn off and other signs of Soviet kindness were shown toward him. He was brought back to Budapest at the end of December, where he was kept in the prison at Fő-utca; from there he was still sending us hopeful instructions.)

Besides, the organized participation during the Revolution, you could find in every fighting group simple soldiers and officers.

III. The treacherous attack and its effects.

As I mentioned before, in the fights of November 4th, the Army did not participate in an organized manner. Certain units, broken away from each other and without unified command, have fought against the Russians, but it was rather more important that the soldiers have joined the spontaneous fighting groups at different places of the capital and of the country.

The Russians have occupied the Army barracks and let the Hungarian soldiers disperse. In many cases, they have attacked barracks, where the soldiers had been sleeping and did not show the least resistance, for example the Artillery Barracks at Záhony.

After November 4th, a terror was introduced, which had no parallel before. At the same time, when people were murdered by hundreds, the Kossuth Radio has given nothing but gay dance music. It is only characteristic for the baseness of the present regime that the first record, which they have played on November 4th, after they re-captured the Radio, was the "gallows aria" from Mozart's "Abduction from the Seraglio".

It is characteristic of the high officers and generals of the regime, that the same people, who had most smilingly joined the Revolution, became again the greatest Russophiles; just like a hungry pack of wolves, they are again fighting over the best posts with each other. Before the investigating committees, they deny everything in the most despicable cowardly way. Why does

not take upon himself the responsibility, for example, Lt. General Váradi, who has signed the order, authorizing the distribution of arms among the population? Instead they push everything on the backs of the subordinate officers and kick them all the time. These unfortunate small men are brought before court-martial for the sole fact already that they might have been members of the Soldiers' Councils.

After the defeat of the Revolution, the officers had to sign a declaration, which included the denial of the Revolution and the recognition of the necessity of the Soviet intervention. Many officers have refused to sign this declaration, which resulted in their instant dismissal from the Army. According to estimates, about one third of the Army has been discharged this way.

The Kádár regime has organized the so-called Karhatalmi Alakulatok, i.e. Forces of Arms Units. Essentially, these are fulfilling the role of the former AVH (To-day, however, there is again a new political police already). These units were composed of officers, former AVH men and Party functionaries. (Among them were quite a few people who participated in the Revolution, but were not known to have done so). Within the new officer corps and in these special units, the atmosphere is very bad, since the more honest men are ashamed of their job and are doing it only because of the need to make a living for themselves and their families. However, there are quite a few careerists and these are the most dangerous beasts. Another cause for the bad mood in these units

is the distrust toward each other and also the fear of a coming popular judgment and at last, but not least, it is a result of the work of our people planted among their ranks.

After November 4th, all the Russian advisers, who had been chased away during the Revolution, returned. The Kádár regime, in order to blind the people, have dismissed the most compromised leaders, but this only meant that, for instance, Jansa became the director of the Free Port of Caspal and Lajos Tóth, former chief of staff and his colleagues have now high positions in the Party. Within short time, however, most of the leaders of the AVH and of the Army have been restored again to their former positions.

In my opinion, the future of the Hungarian Army has been already decided. On one hand they remember the truth of last October. They are burning with the desire of revenge for their fallen comrades and with hatred, both against Kádár and against the Russians. Even the most reliable people are not as reliable as someone might think, since even those have to realize sooner or later that they are standing in the service of the hangers on of their Nation.

In my opinion, the Hungarian Army and the Police Force, including the new Karhatalmi Units to-day are in a state of shakiness and unreliability. It is most likely that a quick process of disintegration would take place in the event of any new wind of liberalization or Revolution. This process

of demagoguery could be promoted by clever propaganda from abroad. If this propaganda would be directed by people who know what they are talking about, who would be able to point the weakness of the leadership of these organizations and thus open the eyes of those who are still following them blindly in their darkness.

NOTE: For the organizational setup of the Party and also of the political Party organizations within the Army, see the attached Tables.