

(Education.)

I received my matura certificate in 1949 from a school of metallurgy in Budapest.

Up to 1949 one could be admitted to the Technical University only with a matura from a gymnasium. In 49, however, the principle was already established that 90% of the freshmen had to come from the working class and from the peasantry and only the remaining 10% <sup>could</sup> ~~had~~ be descendants of the other social strata.

Society was divided into the following categories: Category 1, the workers; category 2, the peasants; category 3, the state employees (for example, streetcar ~~drivers~~ <sup>drivers</sup>, salesmen and salesgirls in state-operated stores, or barbers in state-operated barber shops, they belonged already to this category and were not counted as workers); other employees belonged also to category 3. In principle the so-called "progressive" intellectuals belonged also somewhere here, but, actually, they were classified either together with the workers or more often with the category 1. Category 4, small artisans, small tradesmen without employees; category 5, this was the last category where those people belonged who counted as entirely unreliable class enemies. For instance, former landowners, kulaks, former army officers, and their sons etc. Anybody who belonged <sup>to</sup> ~~in~~ category 5 was an outcast, the pariah of the socialist society.

Since at the Technical University many have ~~participated~~

anticipated that the 90% from the categories 1 and 2 of whom most ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> only a quick "szakérttségi" (the new ~~great~~ <sup>great</sup> ~~term~~ Országh Dictionary translates szakérttségi as specialized matriculation examination) would lead to catastrophic results, as far as the quality of the technical education of the previously famous Technical University was concerned, and therefore they tried to pick the best choice of talents for the remaining 10% open places.

Already during my last year at the school of metallurgy I was several times approached and promised all kinds of advantages and extra allotments, if I would enrol to the Technical University, namely I was an excellent student and have received the star of distinction for my progress in studies. Actually, I did not intend to go to the university. Instead I wanted to help my father who, at that time, was still in a flourishing business in Baja. However, finally, I was convinced that to go to university would open up many advantages for me.

The admission examination in my case was not at all interesting, since they were actually hurling the lasso at us whom they wanted so badly, there was no question about failing this ridiculous easy examination. However, we ~~thus~~ <sup>the</sup> so much desired and still undesirable 10 %, had to awake very soon ~~we~~ <sup>to</sup> the cruel reality that we were there the hated class aliens who were only tolerated out of necessity. We had been thrown out of the so-called people's colleges after a quarter of a year and we

have not received any advantages, at the same time when those who had been good kaders have received considerable scholarships.

The best off were students with the szakérttségi. They have received ~~much~~ the most of the favours and allotments. In the factory and workshops there was a steady propaganda among the workers that they should go to the universities. Quite a few have registered. On one hand, because of the scholarships and allotments which amounted for more than their worker's salary; on the other hand thus they would be exempted from military service or rather they would receive later some military training within the curriculum of the university and also a rank of an officer. Such workers were taken then to the so-called szakérttségi colleges where in a so-called specialized matriculation course they would try to teach them in 3/4 of a year, or at the most, in one year the subjects of 8 years of gymnasium. Most of the time, all these efforts were, of course, futile.

The szakérttségi meant 2 things: no. 1 that they had been receiving all the allotments, no. 2 that they had to study the least for the examinations, namely it was forbidden to flunk people with szakérttségi. Apart from a very few really worthy men, 95% of these people have lived out of the fact for years, that they had a szakérttségi in their pockets.

The scholarship was regulated according to the salary of

the parents and the number of the children in the family. It reached 500 to 800 forints which was that time in 1949 a great amount of money.

Those who were married have received family allowance too. The amount of this varied according to the recommendation of his former working place, his kader card, etc. For any case, they could manage it better than before from their regular salary.

They have also received 1 or 2 complete suits each year which, if one considers that in Hungary a man's suit costs usually more than the man's whole monthly salary, was also a great profit.

They also received their expensive technical books needed for the studies freely. Many of them have sold these for good money the same day.

We, the class aliens, missed all this. We had to discover and realize very soon that for us there was only one possibility to get ahead and this was to study, to study very hard.

(Respondent was asked about the set-up and the curriculum of the Technical University)

During my student years in the university the curriculum of studies was changed 3 times. We had 57 hours of classes during a week and 6 hours a week was devoted to Marxism. Besides, we had to participate each day for about a half to three quarters of an hour in the so-called friendly circle of Szabad Nép where a lecturer

was reviewing current events. It was a must to be present at this activity. If somebody was missing, he would expose himself to sharp attacks and reprimands. We ~~ASK~~<sup>were</sup> at the university every day up to 7 or 8 p.m. In the place of the old professors new teachers, brought up from different high schools, have been teaching the basic disciplines, as for instance mathematics, physics, etc. with high school methods. At the end of the year, in spite of the heavy working tempo with 57 hours weekly, scandalous results were born at the examinations. Categories 1 and 2 have finished with much weaker results than students coming from category 3, 4 and X. and, what was even a greater scandal, 35 to 40% of the szakérttségi people have been dropping out (the plastic Hungarian expression for this is "lemorzslódtak"). (The "dropping out" was the greatest terror of the teachers, because for this reason many of them lost their own jobs. 90% of the teachers even later belonged not to the best 1 and 2 categories. The more they had to think it over whether they should dare to flunk somebody with a szakérttségi. In case somebody did this, the Party secretary appeared instantly and would accuse the teacher that he was acting out of malice and bad intentions against the working class and that he was not enough appreciating the fact that the working ~~EXXEXEX~~ class wants to educate an new intelligentsia out of his own ranks, therefore the teachers

should be with greater consideration if they see that the students, having only szakéretteégi suffer from certain drawbacks.)

As a result of their bad experiences during the previous year, for the school year of 1950-51, they have prepared a great reform in the curriculum. First of all, the number of classes was reduced to 40 to 44 hours weekly. In order to prevent further dropping out, on one hand, they instructed the Faculty that the Szakérettségi students have to be handled with great consideration (with other words, they cannot be flunked), on the other hand, the students with szakérettségi were warned that in case somebody would drop out, he would have to pay back his tuition, his scholarship, the different allotments, books etc.

They have organized the study-pairs. This meant that a bad kader but good student, was given to each weak student with Szakérettségi. The good student was to a certain <sup>degree</sup> responsible for the weak students, but not vice-versa. If he was able to help the student with the szakérettségi, he did not receive any thanks. But, if the latter, has failed at his examination, then the good students would get hell for it.

This year in 1950-51, besides, the easing of the program by reducing the hours, there was also a new load added, namely, they have introduced national defence training with 3-4 hours weekly and also weekly 4 hours Russian

and the note-taking from Marxist literature was also taken more seriously. This latter consisted of taking notes of about 120- 140 pages from 5 or 6 books each week and that had to be done in such a way that we had to be able to give account of the material thus collected at the seminary meetings where professors coming over ~~from~~ from the Karl Marx University of Economy presided. In the entire curriculum this was felt the most exacting and difficult by the students of the Technical University since the material handled consisted of such philosophical works which would have needed serious preliminary studies in order to be understood at all.

They have introduced far-reaching departmentalization and specialization to such an extent ~~that~~ that there had been sections created where the entire number of students consisted of 15. For example, I was in the section for motor vehicles where the total number of students was 16 only.

There had been such sections where only students coming from working families have been admitted. Foreexample, such was also the sections for motor vehicles. (Namely these small sections usually have been taken over entirely by the military after they finished their studies and therefore they had to reliable!) However, since they study results were awfully low, I was directed to that section in order to improve the standard. The entire system of education was characterized by

a complete soullessness. Only numbers counted. Often happened, and often only through some mistake, that the young students who registered for a certain faculty were directed to a completely different place and admitted to another discipline than what they would have liked to study, for what they felt they had talent and inclination. After this happened they have not been given a chance, they had to accept it or leave it. To change disciplines or faculties afterwards was out of question.

We had at the university an unbelievably thoroughly organized system of informers and spies. There were 3 offices which exercised authority over life and death of the faculty and of the students. These were the Party office, the study office, and the DISZ office. In the study office there was a "Káderes". He kept the files of every teacher and student. During the Revolution we were able to take a look into the files. The most fantastic and the least important data had been all there from everybody. One's parents, friends, their behavior, their political opinion, their unguarded words about current events etc. Just to give you an example; on the kader card of a cousin of mine there was, among others, that her father did not buy the special stamps for the benefit of the North Koreans. The "Káderes" was the most powerful man everywhere, also at our technical university because everybody's life and future depended on his whims. It is only characteristic for the system



that these people, the "káderek", were always the most primitive and ignorant men. For example, our káderek, of whom everybody was afraid, had not the slightest idea about the curriculum of studies at the university, even less about the purpose and significance of the individual disciplines and subjects.

Just to give you an example what I mean by the system of informers, I will tell you the following true story: in my small study group circle there was usually a good cooperative and trusting spirit. One morning, when the news of the death of Stalin came out, a colleague of ours, who had good káder and came to the university with szakértéségi, entered our room with the greeting: "Well, the old man kicked the bucket." ("Na, felfordult az öreg!") He was dragged away by the AVH the same night, received 3 years sentence in jail. His wife was thrown out from her job and, while she was looking half crazily after a new job, her one-month old baby died.

It was characteristic also the following event on our situation in Hungary. There was a Hungarian-Soviet basket ball match, if I correctly remember in 1954. Many university students attended it, since most of the Hungarian players had been from the university. As always, when Soviet sportsmen came to Budapest, this time also, the judge has been cheating shamelessly, so that the students began booing. The most vocal ones were arrested right on the ~~mark~~ spot by the members of the

AVH, who intermingled with the public in civilian clothes, and 6 of them have been excluded from all universities and higher institutions of learning in the entire country and 2 have been thrown in jail.

During the third great reform which was introduced gradually during the schoolyear of 1955-56, I was no more a student, but have belonged to the faculty of the Technical University.

It was finally realized that the overdone specialization and, even more, the boundless foundling of the poorly qualified students with szakérlettség, would lead to an extremely grave crisis in the replacement of engineers in a country which was rapidly and heavily industrializing. Therefore, they have introduced serious checks on the distribution of scholarships. In theory, at least, the decisive factor became the study result of the person.

The system of scholarships was reorganized in the following way: there was 180 to 200 forints basic scholarship. This was given to everybody (except to those who belonged to the X-category), if the salary of the parents together did not surpass 2000 forints. (Students belonging to the X-category had to pay tuition fee which was not any considerable amount, thus it was only so far significant, as it was done as a matter of principles). On this base of 180 to 200 forints the student above average would get a certain plus which was figured

according to a schedule set up on the basis of study results. Students below the mediocre average would ~~not~~ not receive any such plus. Then students with families, students from the country, with other words who did not have any place to live in Budapest, also students whose parents were living under very difficult circumstances, would all get certain plus according to their individual needs.

Altogether, one could reach about 600 forints at the most. This was a substantial reduction, compared to the situation in the previous years.

In addition, there was a special scholarship, the so-called Rákosi scholarship which would be given only to such students who had only one B, all other grades A and whose political behavior was above reproach. This was, however, very rare. About 3 students have received it from a class of 300.

A student paid 80 forints monthly for his quarters in a student-hotel. . For this, he would get a bed in a small room where there were usually 6 or more students together sleeping in double-decker beds. As a result, there were many tuberculous cases among the students and young teachers of the Technical University. Since I was the responsible man for education in the DISZ organization of the faculty, I can say that this, namely the matter of ~~tuberculosis~~ tuberculosis was a steady topic among us and was regarded as one of our greatest

problems. Speaking of housing of the students, I want to mention also the fact that one could not choose his own room-mates, but the students were distributed and assigned into the rooms by the management of the student hotels. Needless to say that they arranged things intentionally and tried to mix students with different social background and ideology in the rooms, in order that everybody should feel uncomfortable and under constant suspicion and check.

Lunch and dinner for a month was 180 forints at the student mensa. Since those students whose study results were below average could not afford this from their scholarships, many have been eating only once a day, especially those from the country who did not live with their parents. This fact was another steady topic at our leadership meetings in the DISZ.

Text books were surprisingly cheap, if we compare the situation in the West.

All in all, if somebody was a good student and did not belong to the X-category, he could make ends meet from his scholarship and the different allotments given him by the state.

Why did not go the student to work and make some extra-money? First of all, there was no opportunity for work. The state-operated plants, offices, etc. have not had any provision and room in their budget for employment of students and besides, the university authorities would not permit this ~~wikaw~~ either. Only those

students who were a little bit smarter and who needed more spending money, tried rather secretly to make some money going, for instance, during the night to the market halls and moving there heavy boxes and other wares, by which means they could make 20 to 30 forints during a night. About 60% of the students lived in students hotels, from those only about 2% have ever taken up some part-time jobs in order to make more money. But this was not at all a general usage and was never encouraged.

There was also a great change noticeable in 1955-56 in the faculty. Generally more competent people have occupied the leading positions at the universities. In each university the rector or president of the university became one of the most well-known professors with high reputation who had seen the West and often had an international prestige.

The szakérttségi was abolished because, as they said, there have been enough good kader workers' and peasants' children coming out from the regular schools by now, having the usual natura. But the real cause was, of course, the complete bankruptcy of the szakérttségi (actually, even now, there was still a <sup>short-cut</sup> ~~exam~~ to get a natura certificate, but these were no more taken as a basis for admission to the university; on the contrary, they were unwilling to accept such).

Social origin remained to be strictly watched and they tried

to uphold the principles, namely at least 85 to 90% of the newly admitted students should come from workers and peasants. Some concessions were given, however, to students coming from the intelligentsia.

In the curriculum there was change so far that some of the overspecialization was abolished and some of the small sections were contracted and unified. Also there was a certain ease-up in the Russian instruction, namely, if somebody has felt that he reached the desired proficiency in Russian, he could make an examination and then he did not have to go any more to Russian classes. In Marxism they have reduced substantially the amount of material to be taken notes from and rather stressed the discussion of actual current problems. For example, the discussion of the XX. Party Congress became the topic of an entire semester.

(Revolution.)

As a consequence of the XX. Party Congress and the personal changes in the Soviet Union and in Hungary, the Communist Party secretaries and the leaders of the Party seminaries, the DIZ secretaries and other functionaries whose job was the theoretical education and leadership of the masses, have lost ground from under their feet and could no more perform their directing job on seminaries and meetings, instead they were forced into a defensive position. They were asked such questions with respect to Stalin, Rákosi and the whole system, 90% of which they could not answer. It happened quite often that the chairman of the department of Marxist Studies at the University could not answer a question of a student and would put <sup>him</sup> off with the explanation that he would have to find out first the right answer from his superiors in the Party. The nature and the tone of the questions were such that a year before one would have received several years in jail for that.

In the spring of 1956 there appeared in Irodalmi Ujság and in Béke és Szabadság articles and criticisms from the pen of Communist writers which have been a great surprise for everybody, but especially they found fertile soil within the university students circles.

The great majority of the university students has been at the beginning Communists or, at least, very far on the left. They have been the spoiled children of the

system. Between 1949 and 1951, during the first years of my studies at the university, I could understand how the Soviet Union succeeded in educating a fanatical young guard which would support its system enthusiastically and unquestioningly.

The average Hungarian university student came from the slums of the working population or from the small hamlets of the poor peasants. He arrived to the university in his pristine ignorance, enraptured by the beauty of the humanitarian and equalitarian great idea of Communism and, when already at school, his time being entirely taken up by the heavy curriculum (as I told you before, we have had 57 hours a week), he lost all contact for 2-3 years with that environment where he came from, namely know the workers or the peasants. Since he had a good scholarship and received all kinds of allotments, he lived in a relatively high living standard which he was tempted to mistake for the living standard of the workers or the peasants, to which class he still professed to belong. The system took care of it that the students should not go home to their native town or village. During the school year they gave them full employment and during holidays they took them for outings, while during the summer they had to form voluntary brigades and help at the great building projects of socialism or they were inducted to the army. As time went by, however, the living standard of the



students dropped considerably, partly because of the drastic reductions in their scholarships, partly because of the devaluation of the currency and in the meantime, in spite of all, many of the students visited their homes and discovered that back home at their family and village and generally among the simple people there was not everything as fine as they were taught to believe and that there was a general great dissatisfaction everywhere. This discovery was promoted also by the fact that the obligatory production exercises were introduced. (Kötszészö termelés: gyakorlat) This meant that in the more advanced classes, usually after the 3rd and 4th year, the students were dispersed for the summer into the different plants and workshops of the country where they could see through their own eyes the real situation. In the evening of October 22nd was the great and by now famous meeting on the Technical University. This meeting was actually organized by the official authorities, although even today it is not yet clear who was actually responsible for the calling together of this meeting. (I was that time secretary of the Instruction and Extension Training Section of the Faculty DISZ organization (A tanári kar DISZ szervezetének továbbképzés és oktatásügyi titkára). Here already months before the Revolution democratic winds were blowing and independent opinions were expressed, even towards higher authorities. There were sharp critics exercised over the Soviet

educational system and also demands expressed for making possible for us study trips ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> the West and also scholarships and fellowships for Western universities. But not only in the Faculty DISZ organization were such voices heard. The secretary of the students' DISZ organization was a working boy who, however, had been on several trips in Western Europe and he stood up the most energetically for the resumption of Western ties by Hungary.

X The said great meeting was actually called in order to listen to the emissaries from the MEFESZ of Szeged. Everybody felt that there will be something happening that night. Up to this time the youth at the Technical University was entirely passive. For any kind of meetings or demonstrations you had to catch them by rope. The more it was surprising that already in the morning great masses of students were assembling and excitedly discussing the coming meeting in the afternoon. When the time arrived, the crowds were such ~~which~~ which were never before witnessed by the Technical University. The meeting started at 3 p.m. The emissaries from Szeged did not ~~show up~~ show up. As we found out, they had been just at that time in the DISZ headquarters negotiating. A delegation was sent after them to bring them over to our meeting, but they did not arrive. So the meeting started without them and began to discuss the social problem of the students. The topic was the insufficient

absence of the scholarships, the overcrowded student hotels, the bad food at the mensa, and the impossibility of travel to the West, etc. There were sharp and passionate speeches made, but exclusively around the problems touching the daily life of the students. In the meantime one emissary of the MEFESZ arrived. He told us about the events of the preceding days in Szeged, namely that the students of Szeged decided to leave the DISZ organization since the DISZ did not represent the interests of the students. He emphasized that the founding of the MEFESZ did not mean that they wanted to separate themselves ~~themselves~~ entirely from the working and the peasant youth, or from the high school students; on the other hand each of these has ~~their~~ <sup>its</sup> own special problems, therefore it is only reasonable that each should create its special organizations as it was before 1948. The words of the student from Szeged were received with strong approval by the entire meeting. Immediately it was decided that vote would be ~~ex~~ taken whether we wanted to follow the example of Szeged and leave the DISZ. At the voting which was by showing the hand, 99.5% approved the motion. Perhaps 10 or 15 students voted against the will of many, many thousands. After the vote ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> taken, speeches continued. It is only characteristic <sup>?</sup> how far the Revolutionary youth was from any taint of Fascism or rightist, ~~or~~ counter-revolutionary tendencies that when one speaker un-

Fortunately used the expression that a new "Idea of Szeged" was born, he was greeted by terrific boing and shouts of the strongest condemnations. (The Idea of Szeged in Hungarian "Szegedi Gondolat" of course, refers to the 1919 events when the white armies under the command of Admiral Horthy started out from Szeged to liberate the country from Béla Kún's Communist dictatorship. Thereafter the ideology of the conservative and rightist elements who had been at the forefront of that movement, was known as the idea of Szeged)

Speaker after speaker went up to the rostrum and addressed the meeting in outspoken and often passionate manner. Then a student stood up and began his speech by saying that many before him have <sup>spoken</sup> ~~spoken~~ already about the problem of improving the food of the student masses, but however important this question seems to be for the students, there are other, much more important questions to speak about, questions ~~which~~ which are the most painful for the whole nation. There are innocent people convicted and rotting away in the jails without anybody daring to take their side and speak up for them. Then again, there is a steady talk about the constant raising of the living standard of the population when the truth is that the living standard is lower than it was in 1946. He then proposed <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~, as the first step, the ~~UNION~~ ~~should~~ should ask for a meeting of the central Committee of the Party which should start an investigation about the living conditions and the ~~situation~~ situation

in general of the students and also about the contradictions and blunders of the present economic life of the country and, in general, it should give a positive directive for effective reforms all over.

(At the meeting there were present, although not officially invited, almost all the professors, both the older and the younger of the university, the entire Party leadership and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> leadership of the university and also the district Party leadership. All these people behaved passively during the meeting. It was characteristic of their perplexity that when during the later parts of the meeting grave political questions were drawn up, for instance, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops of the country, the students have demanded from the district Party secretary that he should take stand in the matter, the Party secretary was completely embarrassed. His words came out from his throat rather like a miserable whining of which the final sense was that he does not know himself what is the Party attitude on that matter, he has to ask first his superior.)

In the course of the following speeches the immediate problems of the students have been relegated far behind to a secondary place and one after other the demands have been born which were of national significance. These demands were formulated finally in 26 points. The individual points were formulated by different people, often one point was demanded in different way by several speakers.

In connection with <sup>the</sup> freedom of press, a second year's evening course student has asked word: "It is a sad thing" - he began - "that here in Hungary we are reading newspapers, but the news we have to get from somewhere else. For instance, we have to learn from foreign radio stations about the events which are just now taking place in Poland." - and he told the meeting about the world-shaking events going on the day before in Poland of which the great majority of the meeting, myself included, there have heard ~~frankly~~ first time.

The entire crowd remained for a moment silent and dumb-founded, but then a tremendous cheer broke out which lasted for several minutes in sympathy with the Poles. Thereafter somebody proposed and the crowd accepted a motion that the next day the students together with the students of the other universities would go first to the Polish Embassy and then to the statue of General Bem and will lay a wreath upon it, showing in this way its sympathy with the Poles.

In the meantime, the number of the points steadily grew. Finally they were summarized and set up in an order, making a list out of them and a resolution was brought that this would be mimeographed and sent out to the factories for the workers and at the same the representatives of the factory workers would be invited for a great meeting which would have taken place on Wednesday afternoon at the courtyard of the Technical University.

There was also decided that the daily newspaper Magyar

News which incidentally has sent a reporter to the meeting, would be requested that it should print the entire list of demands, formulated by the meeting, in its edition next day. A delegation was sent also to the radio station with the request that the radio should broadcast the demands in its 8 p.m. news. However, they succeeded only in so far that the radio has mentioned in its news broadcast that the students of the Technical university have held a great meeting of 10 000 (actually there could not be more than 3000 to 4000 people in the great hall, since there was no more room for more) on which ~~was~~ they have brought resolutions supporting the independence of the country and asking for protection of the interests of the students etc. With other words, the radio has said only generalities about the meeting. The meeting lasted from 3 p.m. to 12.30 in the morning. Most people in the crowd have been standing all this time, since there were not enough seats. When it finally dissolved, it was only after <sup>a</sup> decision ~~was taken~~ <sup>that</sup> the points will be mimeographed the same night and distributed all over the city and that everybody will be at the demonstration starting 2 p.m. next day. The students have mimeographed the demands during the rest of the night in the central student hotel and then they have carried it not only to the plants and factories within the city limits, but even to 100 up to 150 kilometers distances from Budapest. They did not have ~~any~~ any money for such travels, they just stopped the taxi cabs

and the milk trucks and other vehicles they could find on the streets. They showed to the drivers their pamphlets and thereupon the drivers left any other business for later time. They took the students along first wherever they wanted to go.

Next morning, on October 23rd, the gates of the university were closed. Everywhere there were planted student guards and only with student legitimation could you pass them. The reason for this was that we were afraid of rightist provocation.

The night before, on the 22nd, around 11 o'clock when the meeting was still in process, I left from there and went over to the Party offices of the university. I found there, among other prominent men, Losonczy and Deputy Minister Orbán and Colonel Merián. The latter was the chairman of the military defence department at the Technical University. There was a most interesting discussion in progress during which at one point the Polish events came up. Upon this Colonel Merián had stated categorically that in his opinion it was a shame that even he did not hear anything about it and now he does not even know whether it is true, what the student has said about it or not. Whereupon Losonczy assured him that, in fact, everything was true what the speaker has said during the meeting. At this discussion came up the matter that it could happen that ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ undesirable elements <sup>would</sup> join the demonstration next day and things could get out of hand and therefore it was decided that the students should



go in rows of 10 holding each others' arms, letting nobody in from the sidewalks, and carrying no signboards, neither shouting any slogans.

At the Technical University there was a fully equipped workshop for mimeographing lecture notes and there, on the 23rd, pamphlets with the demands were made in a tremendous quantity. When the students have run out of the paper supplies, the faculties and departments have given their official stationeries for use for manufacturing the pamphlets. The points by now were contracted and reduced to the number of 16 and to these was added an invitation for the great meeting planned for the next day, Wednesday afternoon.

Around 10 a.m. the radio announced that the Minister of Interior has prohibited all demonstrations and assemblies. In spite of this, around noon students already started to assemble on the courtyard of the university for the great parade.

At 1.30 p.m. a delegation was sent to the Ministry of Interior which has demanded - quoting the authority of the constitution - that the ban on the demonstration should be revoked.

there.  
In the meantime, ~~they~~ were already arriving delegations from the different industrial plants to the university. The MÁVAG Works, the GANZ Plant, etc. The Pestvidéki Gépgyár which has manufactured the jet-fighter-planes, has sent by 2 buses a delegation of 100 workers. On the courtyard of the university there was already set up

a speakers' stand and loudspeakers were installed for the meeting which was planned for the next day. Now, during the waiting period for the start of the demonstration, the speakers of the different delegations from the factories have taken the stand and told the students of their loyal support of the demands formulated by the students the night before and printed on the pamphlets. The Petofi Officers' Academy (formerly Stalin Academy) was also represented by a numerous delegation. Its speaker has expressed their loyalty with the cause of the students. Finally, after 2 p.m. the student delegation returned from the Ministry of Interior with Iászló Fekete, Deputy Minister of Interior ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ accompanying them. He has given the permission for the march in the name of the Minister of Interior and then expressed in his own name ~~xxx~~ too his good will and his sympathy with the students. By this time there were already about 15 000 people assembled on the courtyard of the Technical University. This tremendous crowd formed in no time an orderly marching line. 2 national banners were brought from somewhere which did not have the Communist emblem on them, only the Hungarian tricolor. These were carried at the head of the marchers and so the parade started out towards the statue of Bem.

On the way the streetcars, buses, trucks, and all other vehicles have stopped. The students went up to them and had given them pamphlets. Generally the busdrivers or

the streetcar controllers took one, read it aloud to the passengers upon which the passengers left the vehicles and joined the marchers. On the route of the demonstration the ~~houses~~ houses have displayed everywhere the Hungarian flag and on the loud demands of the marchers they have cut out of all of them the Communist emblems.

By the time we reached Bem Square the crowd swelled on to such an extent that most of the people could not get anymore into the small square, but filled up all the neighbouring streets, squares and even the bridges of the Danube. I myself, could get only to about 600 to 700 meters distance of the statue.

On the square the demands were read aloud, then Bessenyei has ~~recited~~ recited the "Talpra Magyar" national song written by Petöfi and after him Peter Veress spoke. Then the crowd started out towards the Parliament. On the way, we passed the Red Star Printing Establishment. ~~There~~ This was the printing shop of the military. ~~and~~ the printers, hanging out in the windows, asked pamphlets from us. We had no more left, but finally somebody found one and threw it up to the window. One printer caught it and disappeared with it inside the building. Within 10 minutes the printers appeared again at the windows throwing down big bundles of freshly made new pamphlets.

The crowd reaching Parliament Square demanded the ~~the~~ abdication of Gerö and the instalment of Imre Nagy as the new prime-minister. What happened there before the Parliament that evening is sufficiently well known from many

accounts. Therefore I think I can pass it over and proceed with my story.

Around the time the dark set in, I left Parliament Square and went to the home of my fiancée who lived near the radio studios. When we heard the news that a great crowd has assembled before the studio, my fiancée and I went over there. Just when we arrived a delegation had entered the building with the demands of the demonstrators. That part of the street which was immediately near to the radio building, was closed off by the AVH. They have sent also a police cruise-car and also firemen among the crowd in order that in case of necessity they should disperse people by way of water hoses. However, the policemen have shown to the people their empty cartridge-boxes, ~~since~~ since they have not received any ammunition. Somebody from the crowd cut through the fire-hose of the fire brigade and amongst great hilarity and cheers people were dragging out from the car the harmless rubber hose.

The AVH has thrown teargas bombs and shock-causing bombs into the crowd which were thrown back at them by the people. A truck was burnt down. They amused themselves this way up to a quarter to nine (I just looked at my watch in about a minute before the real thing started, so I know the exact time) when somebody standing near to the entrance shouted that Szakasits is here. Thereupon the crowd began to cheer, not because they liked Szakasits but because they cheered now everybody who

has been in jail for any reason during the Bakosi regime. Apparently the AVH <sup>guards were</sup> ~~guard~~ ~~men~~ frightened by this sudden noise, because they immediately started to shoot with their sub-machine guns for about 1 1/2 minutes. There were about 100 to 130 AVH men guarding the building. In the first minute I thought that they were shooting in the air just to scare people away, but from the terrific scramble and screams I had to realize immediately that they were shooting into the crowd. Instantly many people fell wounded or dead and I tried to take my fiancée under the protection of a doorway nearby. My fiancée collapsed before we reached the door and, as I dragged her in, I saw that her hair was full of blood. I discovered that she had been shot in her head. Under the same doorway there was already another woman shot at her eye who died within a few seconds and a 15 years old boy shot in the stomach.

The street suddenly became empty, people withdrew into the neighbouring streets or under the doorways since the lamps of the streets were also shot down, the only light was the green glare of the smoke bombs. One could see only through the haze and fog and in that ghastly green light the heads lying around and the wounded staggering towards shelters and to hear screams, groaning and moaning from everywhere. It was a picture from Dante's Hell.

I phoned immediately from the house for ambulance and since the great Rókus Hospital was the next block 2

ambulance cars appeared in no time at the corner, but the AVO did not let them in. It took about 20 more minutes till the ambulance was allowed to enter the street. Finally when they arrived we were hardly able to put all the wounded on them. We had to pack these unfortunate people just like herrings up on the big ambulance cars and for instance, my seriously wounded fiancée who lay there unconsciously, got a place only next to the driver with 3 other seriously wounded people. I myself, climbed on the fender, because I did not want to part from her. The ambulance had to turn before the radio where the AVH men stood in groups and discussed amongst roaring laughter their heroic deed. I almost fell off from the fender from nausea!

This first massacre took place exactly at a quarter to nine, as I told above, therefore the statement in the so-called white book, <sup>published</sup> ~~written~~ by the present Hungarian government, according to which the first shot was fired at 12.30 after midnight, is a sheer lie.

After midnight my fiancée underwent a successful operation, so around 1 o'clock I left the hospital and returned to the radio station which was only about 100 meters distance away. There I found serious fighting going on. Cadets from the Kossuth Academy, from the Rákocsy Military School and soldiers from the Bem Barracks have been fighting against the AVH. At the beginning civilians did not fight yet, since they did not have arms. Soon, however, all kinds of people, especially working people, have

beer ~~walking~~ assembling running from the Stalin statue which was just raised and also from Parliament Square and from many other points of the city towards the Radio Station.

Finally tanks arrived from the officers' training school of the Tatabánya armoured division which have given the coup de grace to the AVH of the Radio Station. Around 8.30 a.m. everything was quiet. With the exception of 20 or 22 captured AVH men, all others were killed. I saw around 130 dead bodies in AVH uniform lying under the doorways of the Radio Station where they had been finally assembled.

In a few hours the Russian armoured cars and tanks had been appearing on the streets of Budapest. However, they could rule only on the ~~wide~~ wide avenues and boulevards, because in the minute they dared to enter the ~~small~~ small, narrow streets, they had been finished off; usually they were burnt.

During the next 2 days I was just about strolling around and ~~hanging~~ hanging out with a small little group. Nobody knew what would happen. There were more serious forces in the Kilian Barracks and in the Bem Barracks and also on Széna Square in Buda, but besides these, there were only small groups formed spontaneously by people, usually friends and acquaintances who tried to hurt the Russians and the AVH where they could and who were helped everywhere by the population.

On October 25th was the great massacre at Parliament Square. Many Russian tanks joined us in the fight against the AVH. Alone at the National Museum 8 Russian tanks have taken our side, ~~xxxx~~ <sup>of</sup> which 3 or 4 accompanied the demonstrators to the Parliament Square and sided with them shooting at the AVH and the attacking other Russian tanks. Around October 28th and 29th ~~was~~ the organization of the University National Guard battalions <sup>was</sup> started. 3 such battalions were born with about 1200 - 1300 men. In addition, the last year <sup>class</sup> of our students of the Technical University who just have been on summer military training in the country, have returned to the school, bringing along their entire equipment, about 12 tanks, several anti-aircraft-guns, radio signal cars etc. Since there were no more serious fights that time, the duty of the National Guard would have been to uphold orders in cooperation with the police force.

I was with my company on guard duty at the modern, new police headquarters on Engels Square (formerly Elizabeth Square).

On Engels Square was the high command of the National Guard battalions, under which belonged both the students' battalions and the workers' battalions. The entire National Guard stood under the command of Colonel Marián and police major Kopácsy. At the Engels Square's headquarters you could see to come and go almost all the important persons of the Revolution: Király, Kéthly, etc.



(Colonel Marián, the chairman of the Military Defence Department of the Universities, was a young man of about 30-31 years of age. Since his 16th year he was active in the working class movements and had been a convinced and sincere Communist up to the time of his study tour in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1955)

At the headquarters on Engels Square besides the police there were ~~also~~ sailors of the river forces and, as I mentioned already, workers and students forming the National guard. In the cellars there were about 1200 AVH men kept, most of whom sought asylum voluntarily at our headquarters, because of fear from the popular mood. Many of the workers have demanded that we should finish them off, but the students, as everywhere else, also at this place showed the greatest moderation and humanism. During our long debates we came always to the conclusion that the guilty ones should be brought before the court, but that the Communist Party should be left free to work further.

During the night of November 3rd one of our patrols has captured the commander of the Soviet armoured ring around Budapest. He apparently came to the city on a reconnaissance mission, but when he was questioned, he maintained that the only reason why they have been taking positions around Budapest was in order to secure the peaceful evacuation of the workers of the Soviet companies. He behaved very friendly, he even drank a toast with us to

the future of Hungary. Then the Parliament was rang up from us for instructions what we should do with this Russian. The answer was that he should be delivered immediately to the Soviet Embassy. They informed us also that the negotiations between the Russian high command and Maléter were running smoothly and with the best prospect. Actually, all important questions were settled already. There remained only the discussions about the practical ways of the impending withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary and some unimportant petty matters like, for instance, the Russians were insisting out of prestige that the destroyed Soviet monument should be re-erected.

The Russian officer was taken to the Soviet Embassy and we went to sleep peacefully and happily. About 3 a.m. the sentry ~~XXX~~ woke me up with the news that on the square there are 2 Russian tanks moving around. I got up, went out, looked at them and then thinking that they were looking for the officer I just mentioned above I did not bother further.

At 4a.m. I was awakened by the roaring sound of a tremendous canonade and explosions. At the headquarters there was a tremendous confusion. They tried to phone to the Ministry of Home Defence, to Parliament, but nowhere could they find out anything else but the fact that General Maléter has gone during the night to the Russians for the negotiations, but since several hours no news of

him arrived and now apparently the Russians have launched a general attack.

We had been left in a state of desperate ignorance and doubts up to about 6 a.m. Then Colonel Marián took a truck and with the river guard and part of the National Guard he crossed the Danube towards the Technical University because from the red sky and the direction of the cannonades it seemed to us that there was the greatest fight. He told us that within an hour he would send us via radio instructions. Since shortly after he left, the Russians have occupied all the bridges I received orders that with a patrol of 8 men I should go on a reconnaissance tour in order to find out whether there is any of the bridges still free for passage. The banks of the Danube were already everywhere occupied by the Russians and they shot at us from their tanks and armoured cars. When we tried to return to headquarters on Engels Square we discovered that our way back was already cut off, so that we chose to go instead into the faculty of law of the Eötvös Lóránd (formerly Pázmány) University on University Square. Already next day the university buildings had been surrounded by the Russians and we had several casualties until finally we succeeded in breaking through a wall and through that hole to escape first to the Central Seminary of the Catholic Priests and from there through the Veress Pálné Street XXX to wherever one could.

The unexplicable shameful fact that November 4th found

the defence forces in Budapest entirely unprepared and confused, <sup>can be</sup> explained only by the treachery of the officers of the army above the rank of captain. I want to mention only a few examples from the many.

The university student National Guard battalions which had about 1200 or 1300 young men equipped with excellent arms, thus representing a serious force, has been sent away on leave Saturday, November 3rd, so that only about 150 of them remained at the Technical University.

The armoured forces of Budapest have been concentrated on a courtyard of the barracks behind the Agrarian University from where ~~exit~~ <sup>exit</sup> was only possible through a narrow doorway. The first tank trying to get out from this trap was set on fire by the Russians and thus all the others have been captured inside being put out of action on this simple way.

Only after the Revolution we have learnt that the great ammunition depot at Budakeszi was full of bazookas which were so badly and desperately needed against the Soviet tanks when we had to fight them with the miserable Molotov-cocktails. Our officers have been silent about this fact. At the same time, they have given to the armoured division of Esztergom only splinter-shells which were of no use whatsoever against the tanks. Such cases of sabotage with the arms and the ammunition had been wide-spread all over the country. Bela Király, the commander of Budapest, came from the prison, or rather



As I already mentioned the national guard battalions have been organized under the leadership of colonel Marica and police major Kopscoy. In each student battalion there was a student commander who was elected by the battalion by acclamation. He was given a professional army officer as adviser. 90% of these latter have disappeared already on the first day.

The battalions were divided into companies. On the universities the ~~XXXXXX~~<sup>chiefs of staff</sup> consisted of the lecturing officers of the universities' military home defence chairs. I was a commander of the first company of the Technical University and as such, I was the deputy commander of our battalion. Since the commander of the battalion disappeared, I became automatically the commander. My military ~~XXXXXX~~<sup>adviser</sup>, a captain, disappeared too in about half a day after the commander.

On November 5th, at the faculty of law, when we had to fight there against the attacking Soviet forces, the army officers who had been with us offered a deal, namely, that they would go over to the house opposite of us and would counter attack the Russians from ~~XXXXXX~~<sup>the rear</sup>. They did go over and then disappeared and we had to take up the fight alone.

In my opinion the greatest calamity during our revolution was that ~~XXXXXX~~<sup>we</sup> did not have any qualified leaders, ~~XXXXXX~~ neither on the political field, nor on the military.

Besides, it was a sad symptom <sup>that</sup> ~~XXXXX~~ the Revolution seemed to offer good opportunity to all kinds of swindlers, charlatans and careerists to raise their heads.

As a post-script I would like to add that I have observed Russian military cars on October 28. and October 29., when they were making a ~~survey~~ <sup>survey</sup> and drawing up a military map at different points of Budapest. I was wondering what was this for, if they want ~~to withdraw~~ <sup>ed withdraw</sup> from Hungary. Later of course, I understood. I am convinced that even that time the Russians were already preparing for a concentrated attack on Budapest in the near future.

