

Outline of Interview:

- 1) Family and educational background, political development, brief outline of work experience.
- 2) 1949-1950. Work in automobile and tractor part factory; fellow workers, social stratification within ^{working} ~~worker~~ class, description of Party organizationalⁱⁿ factory, moral standards of workers, etc..
- 3) M.T.I. (Hungarian news agency).
- 4) Esti Budapest
- 5) Trips abroad
- 6) Revolution and aftermath.
- 7) Comments on various Communist personalities.

Family Background etc.:

I was born in 1931 in Debrecen. My father was a liberal newspaper editor. We moved to Budapest when I was a child; in Budapest he was the director of a press syndicate from 1935 on. He wrote some articles against the Horthy regime, ^{and} had trouble with the owner of the syndicate ~~etc.~~ ^{as a result,} I was educated in Budapest schools; at home I imbibed the liberal spirit and received a half-way atheist education, with overtones of cynicism. My father, who died last year, was one of the few Budapest journalists who did not engage in dishonest deals. I attended the Berzsenyi gymnasium where, naturally, because of the racial laws, we Jews had a definite feeling of inferiority. As a result we felt closer to each other, we got together more often than others and we had a more lively cultural life. I was also a boy scout, a member of the Vörösmarty scout troop. It is interesting that most of this troop underwent the same internal changes as myself, especially the Jewish intellectuals who were members of it. After the war the Vörösmarty scout troop was a strong hold of the Communist Party. In 1945 our troop joined MADISZ, and as of 1946 it became the scout troop of the Trade Union Council. In 1947 the Boy Scout movement was discontinued. Then a part of our troop entered the Pioneer (Üttörő) Movement,

^{where}
 I worked there for a while, ^{one section} ~~also~~. ~~The corps~~ of this Scout Troop became an illegal organization, meeting on a social basis, and holding ^{conscious} ~~strong~~ literary and political debates, which were anti-regime in character. Some of the participants in these meetings were Istvan ^{Eliot} ~~Orszag~~, the writer, Miklos Szabolcsi the ^{aesthete} ~~estete~~, and others. Although they actually did nothing against the regime, the Party looked ^{askance} at their activities and when they were warned from somewhere to stop these meetings they were slowly discontinued.

During the war my family and I were persecuted in various ^{ways} ~~ways~~; first we lived in a protected house ^{and when} ~~and when~~ The Arrow Crossists wanted to take the inhabitants of this house down to the banks of the Danube to be shot, but the house bought itself with gold. Then we were taken to the Budapest ^{ghetto} ~~ghetto~~. In 1945 the Russians entered, ^{and} ~~and~~ I was thrilled at being liberated by the victorious Soviet Army. Although the Russians raped and robbed one tried to forget about this because it was so good not to be dead. Till then I had no conscious political attitude.

In 1943 I had two close friends. Both of them were members of my Scout Troop. One of them is now dead and the other one is in England. They had well defined political views. One of them said that the American Democratic system was the only acceptable

system of government. The other said that he hoped the Russians would win and that he considered himself a Bolshevik. I agreed with my other friend. In 1945 my pro-Russian friend also turned against the Soviet Union. It is interesting that of the three of us, I was the only one who became a Communist. I believed that the impulse which led me to become a Communist developed from the feeling that "finally I am free". My father had a great many friends and acquaintances in journalist circles. As a child I used to listen to my father's friends. They all wanted some sort of Democracy based on the English or American pattern. They all had a definitely Western Weltanschauung.

After the war I got food from two sources. First of all I used to sell soap and other articles on ~~the~~ Lipot Avenue. My second source of nourishment was the following: Among my father's friends there were two wholesale merchants with daughters who had received a very elegant education. Both of these girls entered the Communist Party. I happened to meet them and they asked me whether I wanted to distribute leaflets and help out at Party headquarters. As payment I would get a hot lunch with vegetables and white bread. This was very tempting and naturally I accepted the offer. The Communist Party posters were pasted on the walls with potato flour. We saved some of this flour

and used it for cooking. I was active in the Party for 2 or 3 months. At this point they told me that I was too young to work in the Party and sent me to MADISZ. Here I did not do anything to speak of. I attended meetings, I was afraid of girls and so I was not very happy at the dances MADISZ held, and I went on ^{hikes} excursions with the Scout Group, which was part of MADISZ. Our Scout Troop ~~had~~ had serious political and literary debates. In our troop there was a very strong Communist intellectual pressure. In addition to Örsi and Szabolcsi some of the members were Ferenc Zala, Gerö's later secretary who later fell from power as a result of his Zionist past, a few musicians, Andras Hajdú the young composer, some mathematicians, doctors, engineers, etc.. We had serious literary ^{discussions, we read} ~~debates, we read~~ and discussed poetry. Today 15 or 16 year olds don't do this. We read Rimbaud, Rilke, Claudelairé etc. Of the Hungarian poets we read Attila József, Kosztolányi, Babits, Árpád Tóth, Gyula Juhász.

I became a Communist on ^{the} theoretical basis. I started buying books in 1945. I began with the Party history and studied Communist ideology, which I found beautiful especially the classical part of the Marx Engels era. I liked the way it played games with natural laws. I believed that it provided a good theoretical economic

explanation of wages, prices, profits and the theory of surplus value. If one does not know much about economics, it sounds very convincing and human. In spite of this, I, as well as others, had immediate doubts in connection with the theory of surplus value. We pointed out the fact that this existed in Russia too but the answer to this was that this was not a value surplus, but production surplus which was distributed among the workers. On a purely formal and logical basis, this somehow did not seem right. After the war I saw both Americans and Russians in Hungary. Somehow, although the Americans were supposed to have been exploited, they looked a great deal ^{more prosperous than} ~~different from~~ the Russians. It was explained to us that the needed investments for heavy industry necessitated a lower living standard today but that in the future our grandchildren would enjoy the fruits of these investments. And anyway we were reminded of such benefits as social security, etc.

In addition to Marxist theory I also read some very attractive stories about ^{the} 1917 Revolution. In 1946 I became a member of the Communist Party. I had no duties in the Party. In 1947 I worked in the propaganda department of the Pioneer Movement.

In 1947 I changed to Kőlcsey gymnasium from Berzsenyi. I was expelled because of lack of discipline. The

director hated me as a Bolshi; he was a Communist too and was afraid of letting his students get involved in politics. I then went to Kemeny gymnasium and graduated in 1949.

When the World Youth Festival was held in Budapest I was an interpreter. Here we could compare the way the French and the Rumanians were dressed, for instance, and could see that the West had the higher living standards. The Western students were distrustful towards me. I felt badly about this. I think it was because of the S.Z.I.T. uniform which we wore. It looked a little like a ship captain's uniform and they must have thought that we were members of the police. I was accepted as an interpreter on the basis of having ^{passed} ~~past~~ a test in Marxism. I was sent to a 10-day interpreter's school. Here an English lady instructed us in the development of various social forms in broken Hungarian. We never did learn any English. At the Youth Festival I met a very elegantly dressed negro woman, who came from one of the English colonies. I asked her whether she worked on one of the plantations and whether she was exploited very badly. She looked at me rather strangely and answered that she was ^a white-collar worker in the British govern^kment's office. I was rather

live in those days.

For a while I worked for SZ.I.T., the Young Workers' Movement. I held some lectures and here it was discovered that I could write, ^{when} I wrote a number of SZ.I.T. brochures. They were terrible things, and discussed such fascinating subjects as why we should wear the SZ.I.T. uniform, How to fight for peace, etc..

Then I was sent to Angyalöld to work as an iron turner in the automobile and tractor parts factory. The ^{working} worker class had a great deal of influence on me but it was exactly the opposite influence from what I expected. For instance, I had an old friend there, a Social Democrat, who was an old time member of the Labor ^m Movement; He was a proud, intelligent and well-read old man, and a vigorous anti-Communist.

I became a factory worker, partly because I was told that I could not be a journalist without having some relations with the ^{working} worker class. Also, I was interested in getting to know the workers. And thirdly, these were times when a great many people were fired all over the place. I wanted to have a decent trade to fall back on.

In 1950 I was vacationing in Lillafüred when I got into a fight with a guy over a girl. I gave him hell and for some reason he liked my militant manner. It

turned out that he was the head of the M.T.I. (Hungarian News agency). He asked me what I knew and I told him I knew something about industry. As a result he gave me a job as an English translator, dealing with international economic problems. I had to translate such things as the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, etc. These were very difficult translations and in my first translation test I mixed up wages with taxes, etc.. I was immediately hired. So I learned English at state expense. I was ^{an apprentice} in the practice for a year, receiving a salary of 550 forints per month. Then I was given a job editing a daily bulletin of international economic news. Still later I became one of the eight international ^{affaires} ~~policy~~ editors of the M.T.I.. I corrected manuscripts redictated material etc.. Meanwhile I also attended and finished Budapest university. I was at the Hungarian news agency until 1955 after which I worked on the paper Esti Budapest, until the Revolution.

A month after the Germans entered Budapest, my father was interned partly because he was a liberal journalist, and partly because he was a Jew. In the same camp, where interned George ^PVarregi, Zoltan Klar, and others. My father was then taken to Germany and ^{when} he returned in August 1945, ^hHe received a job in the Ministry of of Industry and became a member of the Social Democratic

Party. At the time the Communists took over power, he was editing the Ministry's newspaper. When the Social Democratic Party united with the Communist Party, he was expelled from the Party because of his "bourgeois attitude in cultural matters". At the same time he was fired from the newspaper. He then got a job editing a textile newspaper, ^{and} He was finally pensioned and spent his time studying history; he escaped into the age of Kossuth. He died last summer.

After the war, my mother worked in the warehouse of the Hungarian photo enterprise. She was also a Social Democrat and when the two parties were united she was made *only* a candidate member due to her lack of theoretical training. At home she fought my political views. My father was a liberal bourgeois politically, but Nazism had such a strong effect on him that he said that the Russians were better. The Communists mistreated him too but he kept this view until the year before the Revolution. My mother did not have his scholarly thoroughness but she became a "class alien" in her daily life. In her complaints about prices, ^{the} standard of living, about all the little things, that were wrong.

Work at the Automobile and Tractor Parts Factory:

Here I saw that the most loyal followers of the regime were those young workers who did not like to work, who did not know how to work and preferred to accept some sort of Party function instead. As for those young workers who were good at their jobs, the Party tried to pull them in as Party secretaries and to give them other functions but they mostly refused, saying that they were not interested in ~~bla-bla~~ ^{blah-blah}. The older workers were attracted to some form of Socialism, they approved of the nationalization of industry and of land-reform. But they did not like the form the regime took: the herds^Ipirit, the labor competitions, the conferences, etc.. There were many old workers in this factory who had been prewar Communists or were very leftist Social Democrats. In 1948/49 these were rewarded and made Army officers, or given jobs in Ministries, or ^{received} other functions. Young soapbox orators took their places. My decent old Social Democrat said to me "look, here is this Pongráz (interviewer's note: mayor of Budapest, son in law of Imre Nagy). He was a a very bad turner, he was so stupid, he could not even earn enough for cold water. Well, they rewarded him but I won't say a word, its alright. After all the Horthy police beat him up - - -. But I hate these fresh young kinds who come in as Party secretaries."

At the time however, these things did not matter so much because one could make a decent living; until 1949 life was good.

A natural concomitant of factory life was that a number of cliques developed. Foremen, skilled workers, white-collar workers, workers who were trying to become middle-class; in other words, those who belonged to the lower middle-class formed cliques, they elected themselves into the factory's Party leadership and thus managed to rule the factory.

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An example of this was a foreman, who had never been a Communist before. He became a Party member and ^{the} Party secretary of the factory. He was the head of the apprentices whom he used to slap. If he had not been a member of the Party he would have been fired or put on trial for beating up the apprentices. Since he was a Party member, however, he made a big career and was made a manager in a big factory. *At my instigation a journalist wrote an article about his beating the apprentices & this was very unpleasant for him.*
The life of the young workers:

There were three social strata among the young workers: 1. The sons and daughters of worker dynasties. These had the greatest influence and were respected most among the young workers. They were also the most attractive;

they liked to work and were good workers. In Budapest there is an Angyalföld patriotism. They talk of the Petneházy Street as though it were the Champs Elysée. To walk down the Petneházy Street was a social event of sorts among these people. The members of this classical worker class were chiefly Social Democrats. But they were not really interested in politics, they were interested in two things only; in money and their motor bicycle. I was very much surprised when I found out that they lent money on interest, that they bought houses and real estate for speculation etc. There was a lively commercial life among the workers. I had imagined the classical worker with a Red Flag and fist ~~clinged~~^{clenched}; my illusions were dashed.

2. The second group of young workers were the sons of village night-watchmen and small peasants who were not accepted by the classical proletarian stratum. They lived very badly. They were unable to rent a whole room for themselves, but mostly could rent only a bed with 6 or 7 others in a room and very often with day and night shifts on the same bed. They had one or two suits; one, a sort of half Sunday-suit and what they wore daily; they went around in rags. They ate very badly; at home in the village they were used to eating well. In my opinion it was from this stratum that the

Party workers were recruited. These young men had a constant feeling of inferiority and therefore were attracted by the power offered to them by the Communists. They were more stupid and more stubborn. They had the Hungarian peasant's characteristics; ambition and desire to succeed. They had lost the ground from under their feet, they were insecure and lived in the air. They looked to those who would give them a solid basis again. They were not all this way, some succeeded at becoming skilled workers and melted into the classical proletarian stratum. But most of them did not. They were the ones who were attracted by the excursions, ^{and} social programs, ^{of the} Communist youth organization. They came from various strata of the peasantry, but especially from the poorer, less secure peasant families. The sons of Kulaks were not to be found among them.

3. The déclassé stratum. This consisted of former members of the intelligentsia, of small merchants, of aristocrats. My neighbor at work was a baron. A typical member of this stratum was a grocer who wanted to send his son to the university and therefore had to be a worker, otherwise his son would not ^{have been admitted} be accepted. This stratum kept itself completely distant from the other workers and lived in its own old surroundings, in the

environment which papa created for it. They spent their money as though it had been earned in office work and tried to preserve the family traditions. Some of them, who became enthusiastic Communists, wanted to become a part of the workers. But they were never accepted by the workers. I never was. This stratum did not drink with the workers, for instance, but spent its spare money dancing at an elegant hotel on Margitsziget. This meant a tremendous difference of standards in Budapest.

For recreation the workers fished a lot, in order to relax and to get rid of their hatred, of all the stupid talk in the factory. They also drank a great deal. The Hungarian worker became ~~addicted~~^{addicted} to alcohol far more than in the past. The number of ~~pubs~~^{pubs} increased. They were called the father's stores, because there was a series of stores selling maternity and baby supplies which were called the mother's stores. The worker got his pay on Friday and it was almost compulsory that one should go along after work to get drunk. We drank Rum or Rum mixed with beer; we had a spoon handy for this operation. We drank little wine because it was too expensive. We only drank wine after nightwork. By 10 A.M. I used to be drunk and found it difficult to find my way home. My mother used to be quite frightened to see her little son in such condition at 10 AM.

Moral standards of the workers.

The dynastic proletariat was very moral, especially the respectable old Social Democrats. They were good familyman types. The younger generation had a more difficult time of it; they married young and often found it difficult to manage financially or to solve the housing situation. As a result there were many divorces. Because of this, people found it difficult to plan for marriage and family. In 1950 the Korean war hysteria, with all the horror stories spread by the regime's propaganda organs discouraged people from founding families. People believed the Korean story. Néray did it quite well. He himself believed it.

As a result the degree of immorality was unprecedented. About 80 or 90 per cent of the women in the factory were "available". There was a great deal of immorality among students too. 14 year old girls went to the Gellérthegy with 14 year old boys. Respect for women disappeared in Hungary. I may be petty bourgeois, but I happened to look up to women, I can't regard them simply as machines. Especially in the last 2 or 3 years there were almost no women in Budapest who could not be had for money, ^{a good time} or a car, etc.. There was a great deal of prostitution. The boys who came to Budapest from the provinces were ^{fell} especially victims ^{to} of it ^(most easily) because

they had no money to court a decent girl. There was a secret prostitution ⁱⁿ Városliget, where 14/16 year old girls could be had for 10 forints. In the factory there was a great deal of immorality among the young workers. The marriage laws of the classical proletariat were at least as strict as those of the English aristocracy. A decent boy from Angyalföld could not marry a girl from Kispest, for instance. In the second group the girls who came up from the provinces became prostitutes of sorts. They had little money and almost no pleasure from life, and although they have lived among strict moral norms at home, these were soon forgotten. Legal prostitution was discontinued. These excellent damsels were socialized and were supposed to participate in industrial production. About half of them became taxi chauffeurs and provided a supplementary service ^{to their rules,} to the affairs and the other half became factory workers and earned some extra income by lowering the moral standards of the workers.

The Party leadership in the factory.

The top Party leadership in the factory consisted of a Party secretary, an organizing secretary, a propagandist, an instruction responsible, an economic responsible, the Trade Union Secretary, and the DISZ secretary.

I was the DISZ secretary. This is how it all came about.

When I became a worker in the factory, it had a SZIT organisation which had troubles with secretaries. They looked around and found me and made me SZIT secretary. You can imagine how much respect the workers had for me, since I knew nothing at all about the factory. Later on SZIT became a part of DISZ, the Communist youth organization. It was my job to organize the labor competition among the young workers. This consisted of making work offerings ^{under} ~~on the~~ Stalin's picture. That was all. Actually DISZ became a hiking club, while I was the secretary. We went on hikes with the students of a nearby girls school and had a great deal of fun. We did not talk much politics but the workers and students came nearer to each other.

The conference of the head of the factory was supposed to include the factory manager, of course. But in our factory the conference was always held at a time when he was unable to come because he was not considered reliable. The DISZ secretary was also supposed to be invited but they often did not invite me because they did not consider me reliable either. This was because they just could not understand why I became a worker. They said "there is something wrong here, after all he is a ^{gymnasium} ~~highschool~~ graduate and could have become a scribbler. So why did he become a worker?" But they

added that I was a "comrade capable of development" (fejlesztésre képes elvtárs).

The top Party organization in the factory was very active, but the lower basic Party cells did not work at all. The top Party leadership had ~~securites~~ in the factory in order that they may devote themselves to Party work. This applied to everyone but the Party secretary, who had no other function but this. The majority of the top Party leadership had jobs in the personnell department. For instance, the Assistant Party Secretary was put in the personnell department as a lecturer. The personnell department also contained many ^{former} AVOs ^{had been} who ~~were~~ fired by the AVO because they were not considered reliable enough. The middle and lower Party organizations in the factory were ^{led} ~~lead~~ by ordinary workers, who were not interested in political work and therefore these Party organizations did not function.

The factory manager was an old automobile and trade expert, an engineer. He was there because of his technical knowledge but there were constant intrigues against him. He was disliked by the workers to some extent, because the Party functionaries ^{incited} ~~incited~~ the workers against him. He was criticised for not having a good relationship with the workers and for having

lost touch with the masses. They said that he did not understand the problems of the workers and that he was a gentleman manager. He actually had his own car, a 20 year old Lancia. On the whole though, the workers were not too interested in these attacks. He was a decent scared modest little man, who was later fired and given a job in the Ministry. He was replaced by a worker kader, who was totally stupid. He did not know anything about factory management and went around in shirtsleeves and red suspenders. From then on the factory manager was replaced every half year or every year.

The Party leadership interfered with everything; with personnell matters, with norms, with the cafeteria, with the replacement of the machinery, etc. The Party leadership consisted of technicians and experts even if they were not the best. But *in spirit they soon lost touch with the workers.*

A typical character of this type was a chap who used to talk at minute meetings. He was a typical Party demagogue, earned 1500 forints ^a month for having a sinecure in the personnell department. He spent his day eating bacon from a drawer and talking to friends. At meetings he ~~held~~ ^{made} demagogic speeches, spiced with factory humor, a little in the style of Kadar. He was quite effective. These people all wore ordinary work clothes, but the

difference was that theirs was not oily. They spoke the typical Party jargon. One of the phrases of this jargon is "öntudatos munkás". Beyond this Party jargon, there was a special conference jargon. Every sentence began with "thus," "of course," and then there were ^{the} sentences which began like this "of course, there are still mistakes, but ---". Most of the Party functionaries were very stupid and inarticulate, they had no independent opinion and were unable to make a speech. As a result they cut out certain phrases from ideological brochures and knew about 300 words of political jargon. Such words were; to point out, to evaluate, to head in a certain direction, to disclose, etc. And of course everything was in the ^{language} (ólenjuro) including choestrings, the Soviet Union, and Hungary's cultural life. There was also "criticism and self-criticism" as well as "firm," "battle," "heart," and "enthusiasm." In other words, all the words which appear in military marches. In malicious Budapest circles these comrades were called "subjunctive leaders" because they talked like this "tudhassák, láthassák az elvtáveak". Hungarian Party jargon is a literal translation of the Russian Party jargon. It reached the workers through the interpreting services of our Party's great leaders. ^(NEW PARAGRAPH) ~~It~~ was merely a dependent of the Party ^{the West} ~~and~~ and executed the demands of the government. Its chief job was to raise norms and to fix or smooth over all

the dirty tricks committed with relation to wages.

In addition there were five so-called mass organizations; ^{among them} the Freedom Fighters' Organization, the M.S.Z.P., M.N.D.S.Z., and DISZ, none of which worked. Nor did the so-called Factory Triangle function, although at every occasion it was pointed out how well it worked and how much it ~~will~~ ^{would} improve in the future. The Party secretary and the Trade Union secretary stood on a common platform against the factory manager and sabotaged meetings or refused to call meetings, etc.. After the old factory manager was fired, ~~the things went~~ ^{it functioned} better.

There was a great deal of bureaucracy in the factory. There were 220 white collar workers out of 1000 employees in the factory. Nor were these white-collar workers engineers, there were only 10 - 12 engineers and technicians. The rest were scribblers, norm supervisors, or so-called mebs, that is the quality supervising department. There were a great many of these. In our factory there were 15 or 20. At this time, when I was working in the factory, they were all skilled workers, but later on the mebs were hairdressers, or trolley conductors who knew nothing about the job.

There was a very active sports life in the factory. It had the same role as everywhere in Hungary, that is it

diverted people's attention from politics. People were interested in Toto, there was a soccer team, people used to go fishing and there was a boathouse on the Danube where the workers went to row.

The workers were very ingenious in finding extra sources of income. For instance, they used the materials or machinery belonging to the factory to make articles for sale or for themselves. Plenty of people had side incomes as a result, in fact, everyone in Hungary had some sort of extra income from such a source. A friend of mine, an iron turner and philosopher, who had finished 5 gymnasias and was a sort of ~~of a~~ semi-proletarian since his father had ^{id} owned a butcher-shop. At this time one could not buy ^{like} buttons in Budapest and so my friend decided to make buttons. He used the factory machinery to make a machine which could make buttons and hired an agent to sell them all over the country. He earned about 4000 - 5000 forints a month with this trade as well as 2000 in the factory. This sort of thing was fairly typical.

Norm cheating, thefts.

There were a great many norm supervisors who were not skilled workers and the chief norm supervisor was a former police officer. That is, he ^{had been} ~~was~~ a police officer

right after the war. If ~~the one~~ ^{anyone} was a friend of his, he allowed a great deal of ~~free~~ ^{free} way with regard to norms. That is, he gave his friends more favorable norms. There was a great deal of thefts in the factory. For instance, people stole ^{"Vidia" Knives,} (vidiakés), which ~~was a~~ ^{were} very hard ~~knives~~ ^{Knives} with a hard metal tip, used in the factory. This could be sold for 80 - 100 forints on Teleky Place. The workers also stole tools, precision instruments and so on. Because of the wide spread thefts throughout the country, the regime introduced in 1954/55 a confidential decree, according to which a person could not be held responsible for thefts amounting to less than 200 forints.

M. T. I. (Hungarian News Agency):

I was hired at M.T.I. because I did not know anything. That was the time when the old guard was replaced, and the whole structure of M.T.I. was changed completely. They introduced the so-called internal political journalism. That is, they introduced industrial, cultural, and internal trade departments, and so on. In other words, the news agency's organization was brought to a common denominator with the changes in the government and the state. Around '47 or '48 they imported the most disgusting creature from the Soviet Union to carry out these changes in M.T.I. Her name was Júlia Kenyeres. She was a professional

Revolutionary who, in her youth, had dabbled in drama writing, etc. . She was extremely well educated ideologically, had attended the Party academy in Moscow, participated in the Spanish Civil War and then returned to the Soviet Union. She knew two languages well; Russian and German, and also some Hungarian and French. This was more than most Hungarian journalists knew, since part of Hungarian press folklore was that the newspapermen did not know any languages.

The role of M.T.I. was quite important as far as the newspapers were concerned. The newspapers had very limited information gathering facilities, Especially with regard to foreign policy and international politics. The newspapers milked M.T.I., which was almost the sole supplier of ~~international and~~ foreign news. The papers had no correspondents abroad, except Szabad Nép. They either worked with foreign Communist journalists, such as Peter Fryer in England, or else, they received their news from M.T.I. Nor could the papers rely on their own reporters for domestic news. If there was a reception at the opera, the newspaper's own reporter was not allowed to write the article, but had to get the news from M.T.I.. Most of the papers had no provincial reporters either. M.T.I. published daily 50 or 60 pages of deadly boredom.

In the old days, before the Communists took over the

Hungarian news agency, the five staff members, ^{handling} ~~dealing~~ with domestic politics did a more effective job than 100 today. In the old days it was their job to interview politicians and to nose out the news. Today this is impossible. Today the press is directed from above and a newspaperman can't say "I will go and interview such and such ^a minister". If the minister wants to give an interview, he calls the newspaperman and tells him, what he wants to tell him. The papers could not ask a ministry or politician what events could be expected; they were told by higher authority what to write.

At M.F.I. the structural and staff changes took place in 1950 or '51. The following departments were established:

1. Department of Internal Affairs, which consisted of the following subsections: a.) Production Section, which was divided into light and heavy industry. b.) Agricultural Section, c.) Cultural Section, d.) Information Section, which dealt with everything connected with mass organizations, the state, or Party life, e.) Sports Section.

Within these sections there was very minute specialization, for instance, there were separate reporters in charge of apartment building, the steel industry, etc. Some dealt only with internal trade, some only with foreign trade. Within the Cultural Department, there were people in charge of schools, folklore, the theater, movies, etc..

Specialization is a very good thing, but in this case it was done by stupid and uneducated people, and what they put together was not worth a cent. There were no old journalists among them, they were all young people, recruited from the factories and similar places. It was a stupid business. The Department of External Affairs included a Provincial Department, which kept in touch with headquarters by teletype. There were 20 editorial offices in the provinces which collected a tremendous amount of very poor material. The Department of Internal affairs had a staff of about 150 in Budapest and a staff of 150 to 200 in the provinces. The quality of the staff was even poorer in the provinces. It is a horrible number - so many reporters! They went to factories, Ministries and so on, collecting production data and preparing ~~pictures~~ ^{sketches} about ~~the~~ ^{the} daily plan fulfilment of the Budapest foundries, and so on.

The M.T.I. material used a vocabulary of about 300 words. The reporter simply did not know any more words and in addition the material was not allowed to have any color. It had to be dull and factual. I remember, somebody once wrote a colorful article about a folkdance festival. Comrade Kenyeres exclaimed with disgust: "But comrade X, after all, this is an article!" This became a sort of household saying at M.T.I. later on.

2. There was a Department of Foreign Affairs. This was divided into two parts. a.) the section which prepared material for publication and b.) the section which prepared material which was not to be published.

The published material included the news provided by the news agencies behind the iron curtain, plus press translations from the Western Communist newspapers, plus news from Western capitalist sources, but ^{only} adjusted accordingly. In practice this meant that the bulk of M.T.I.'s foreign affairs material came from TASS. About 40 to 50 percent consisted of TASS material. M.T.I. had few of its own foreign correspondents. The London correspondent's work was very unreliable and only very few of his articles were ever published. He had been at his job for 25 years. I don't quite know why he was kept. There was a permanent correspondent in Paris, ^{Pogue,} ~~Pres,~~ and sometimes in Berlin. And of course special correspondents were sent out to cover important events occasionally.

The following is a classical story of the incompetence of Hungarian foreign reporting.

Pivadar Matusek, the assistant editor-in-chief of Szabad Nép and a representative of Party headquarters was sent to ~~Geneva~~ ^{Geneva} to cover the conference. This, ^Iinspite of the fact that he knew only Russian and as a result he could not talk to anyone, nor could anyone talk to him.

He sadly sat in his room all day and phoned Budapest each evening, asking "well, what's new in Geneva^a". Then the foreign editor took the U.F. and other dispatches and told him what happened in Geneva that day. Every day Matuszak's articles appeared, articles which were written in Budapest.

The other section of the foreign department published confidential material, which had only a limited circulation. This confidential department prepared 3 types of material:

1. Every article, news item, or information, whose source was a Western news agency, for example the complete material of the Reuter agency. This was translated and only 12 copies were distributed. It was sent to a few members of the ~~Politburo~~^{Politburo}, including Rakosi, Gerö, Farkas, and Révai, to Szabad Nép, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.. M.T.I. kept a few copies for itself. The less confidential part of the material was used in the preparation of a daily mimeographed bulletin which was sent to about 120 high Party functionaries, ~~Politburo~~^{Politburo} members, ministers, Trade Union heads and a few experts, dealing with politics as well as to the newspapers. The papers received only this filtered version, even for internal use. And this could only be read by the reporters, dealing with foreign affairs and by the editor-in-chief; ^{only} They were allowed to read it and were required to keep

it in the safe.

2. Another confidential publication, prepared in 14 copies and distributed to members of the ~~poli-bureau~~^{Politburo} and the minister of foreign affairs contained the almost complete broadcasts of Radio Free Europe, a considerable part of the Voice of America's broadcast and such material from the Western press which dealt with the internal affairs of the Satellites and the Soviet Union. The Times and Le Monde were papers, from which such material was ^{called,} called. Even I was not allowed to read this publication, although I was one of the foreign ^{affairs} ~~policy~~ editors of M.T.I.

Part of this confidential material, especially as of 1954, was suitably rewritten and then released for the newspapers ~~HRH~~ by M.T.I. This was the sort of thing, which I did. For instance, if Dulles ^{made} held a speech, we prepared the material in such a fashion that ~~the~~ we emphasized all the positive things which Dulles said about the Russians and all the bad things, which he said about U.S. ~~internal~~ politics. Thus the meaning of the speech was distorted although the quotations remained correct.

3. The third type of confidential material was based on the foreign press and consisted of translations of colorful articles from foreign newspapers, such as the heroic deed of a miner in the ³Silesian coal basin.

M.T.I. also published ^a mimeographed newspaper for the Russian colony in Budapest. This paper was called Novaya Bengeria. In addition M.T.I. had a number of foreign broadcasts in French and for a while in English. These were extremely clever, since they broadcasted at 2 AM and gave the events of the previous day. As a result, they were of course no more interesting or usable. This was just as well since the translators did not know any French.

70 or 80 per cent of Szabad Nep's news material was supplied by M.T.I., including foreign and domestic news items. The papers merely prepared the editorials, the foreign affairs commentary, and one or two reports. Of course, this varied according to the different papers.

Szabad Ifjúság and Magyar Nemzet had more independent material while Szabad Nép and Népszava did not. Of course, ^{on} Sundays Szabad Nép was different. There was a surprise almost every Sunday: either some spy was unmasked or else, there was an article implying political ~~relations~~, etc..

The Party line was brought down to M.T.I. through the Party's press department. The press department of the ministry died out. The Party had ^{an} agitprop department and within this there was a press department. From time to time they called together the editors in chief of the

newspapers, the leading journalists, and from M.T.I. the president, Sándor Barcs, as well as comrade Kenyeres. The two intrigued against each other constantly. Barcs was a small-holder who ~~collaborated~~ collaborated with the Communists. He was Rakosi's favorite and an immoral brigand because although he did not like the regime and was extremely intelligent, he was willing to do Rakosi's dirty ^{for him} work. At this conference the press chiefs received the Party directives which they transmitted to the middle leaders. Party headquarters had a staff of instructors each of whom was assigned to a press organ; these instructors constantly supervised the newspapers to see whether they had executed the Party directives.

When they were faced with some delicate problem, such as the fact that the mining industry was lagging behind in plan fulfillment, Barcs and Kenyeres called the top Party leadership for instructions. Sometimes they called Rakosi himself. First they would usually call Zoltan Komocsy, the head of the Party's agitprop department, who usually did not dare to take responsibility for any important decision. Sometimes they called Gerö, but he too, often shirked responsibility.

When the 20th Party Congress took place M.T.I. published the TASS dispatches word for word. The Sholokhov speech attracted a great deal of attention. Kenyeres said that

she refused to publish it, ^{claiming that} since it was counter-revolutionary. She cut about 1/4 of the speech, and called the Party headquarters for instructions. Rakosi dealt with the matter personally and vetoed the publication of the speech. Irodalmi Ujsag secretly decided to publish the speech and ^{Vijda} an employee of M.T.I. smuggled it out and gave ^{it} to the editors of Irodalmi Ujsag. He received disciplinary punishment for this action.

At the time of the Beria affair, we were mobilized at the dawn but M.T.I. did not dare to publish the story until Rakosi approved it. The same happened with Z. Norman Foster's article in 1953 or '54, in which he stated that the real wages of the American worker had risen 70 per cent and explained why this meant misery for the Americans. In spite of the negative conclusion, this admission by Foster was a sensational story and we could not be silent about this. ^A Although it appeared only in one of the confidential publications of M.T.I., it still had a tremendous effect.

The Party life at M.T.I. was very ^Vlively. About 60 per cent of the staff were Party members. The Party concerned itself with intimidating the staff and with organizing the labor competition, which consisted of the following: First of all there was a constant struggle

against mistakes: against factual mistakes, against political mistakes, which could be practically anything, and against misprints. There was a premium for those who made the least mistakes, and those who made the most or the biggest mistakes, received disciplinary punishment. Secondly the labor competition included an economy campaign. We had to save on paper, electricity, carbon paper, etc.. For instance we had to write on both sides of the paper. An old woman employee was seated outside in the hall and renewed the carbon paper by holding it above a steaming teakettle. As a result, there was a tremendous stink throughout the entire building and it was impossible to read the ~~typed~~^{carbon} copies of articles. There were constant cuts in the facilities, allowed to the staff. At one point the taxi ticket was introduced. This lasted a few months. It meant that a staff member could ~~send~~^{give the driver} a taxi ticket, which was signed by him, and M.T.I. paid for the taxi drive. I never walked on foot during that time. At night one could usually meet all the staff members of M.T.I. with their girl-friends on Svábhegy, where they arrived in style by taxi. Soon this taxi ticket system was stopped.

Party instruction at M.T.I. was on a fairly high level. After all a journalist has to know Marxism better than most people. The Party also interfered in personnel

matters. The Party leadership of M.T. I. was a center of intrigues. The personnel manager of M.T.I. was Mrs. Janos Kádár, a former AVO captain. She came to M.T.I. in 1954 when Kadar was rehabilitated, ^{and} she made a very good impression on us, because she talked with hatred about the Rakosi clique and the AVO. She was not as stupid as most functionaries, and had a sense of humor, ^{which} this was rare among functionaries. She told us how she and her husband were tortured in prison. We ate this up. Her predecessor was József Kálmán, a former Jewish Taxi chauffeur. He was the worst type of functionary, who got rid of a great many people and was constantly detecting. I was interested in a girl, whose father had owned 15 holds of land years ago. There were long debates about this in the personnel department, where they thought that it was a grave anti-Party ^{action} move that I took her to the movies.

I don't know to what extent the Party organization informed on staff members, but I believe that the press department of Party headquarters asked the M.T.I. Party organization for information about the staff.

The Party meetings at M.T.I. were simply terrific. Until 1953, or the beginning of 1954, they were completely unanimous. Another characteristic of these Party meetings was, that someone was always attacked.

The Party leadership of M.T.I. consisted of people who were brought to the agency as cadres and were professional functionaries or Party secretaries. For years, the Party secretary was a young man who formerly had the same job in a chocolate factory. He was brought to M.T.I. as a worker cadre and later it turned out that he wasn't even of working class origin. He was the independent Party secretary. He started dabbling in journalism a little and then was taken to the Foreign Affairs Academy for diplomatic training. He knew about 14 words of English. He finished successfully in a year, was brought back to M.T.I. ^{and} ~~as~~ named head of the Foreign Affairs Department. This was a big position. He - Tibor Köves - knew nothing about foreign affairs, although he was a fairly intelligent person. He was sent abroad as a correspondent. Here he kept informed by calling Budapest on the phone to find out what was going on and in addition he received a per diem, for which he bought ^{consumer goods} ~~various articles~~ in Berlin, Geneva, etc. Then he was named Party secretary again. During the Revolution, when the Party members in M.T.I. fired the Party leadership, he also lost his job and was placed in some little function. During the Revolution he kept saying that he was and will always be a Communist and added that although he knew the Communist Party will be small in the future, he would still be loyal to it. After November 4th, all the old functionaries and leaders

were returned to their old positions in the news agency. Kóves refused the offer, because he said that he was asked to resign from his job by the Party rank and file. He has still not re-entered the Party and is urging everyone not to do so. He has some small position in M.T.I. The same firm stand is being taken by the Party secretary of the foreign affairs department. (Each department had its own Party cell, with its own secretary). He was a former social Democrat, who, after the Revolution also refused to re-enter the Party and is trying to dissuade everyone else from doing so.

There were a number of Party cliques at M.T.I. First there was the clique of aged ~~and~~ female comrades, hardened in the old battles of the movement. This clique ^{consisted of} contained such used up, old battle axes as Kenyeres, ^JXúlia Póll and other Moscow emigrants, who intrigued against everybody. There was another clique, consisting of young ambitious Bolsheviks, such as Kóves, the Party secretary and others. These were kaders. There was a third clique, consisting of "ideological" people. They ^{made} ~~are~~ concrete conclusions about the life of the agency through a creative application of Marxism. They made sweeping statements of principle, complete with quotations, about various mistakes in the firm. One example was Pál Gombó, a man with a shrewd and confused mind. He was a Department manager at M.T.I.. He was

constantly attacking people and these attacks were packed in ideological wrapping paper. It is interesting and characteristic how firm these theoretical people are. He was always half way in opposition; he criticized the mistakes and shortcomings, but stated that these were merely excrescences and did not reflect the essence of the regime. He was a half way progressive character and was a strong opponent of the ~~Necessite~~ ^{Muscovite} females. Today he is a supporter of Kadar.

These cliques made up only a very small part of the Party organization in M.T.I., the rest, including me, consisted of a mass of yesmen. Our role consisted of making a speech at every third Party membership meeting about the need for work competition and similar matters. I was a Party member for ten years and I never said anything of any importance at such meetings. This was true of the majority of the Party members.

I remember a meeting at which we elected the Party leadership of the news agency. This meeting lasted from 2 PM to 5 AM. I was a member of the nominating committee; we were supposed to nominate people ~~at the meeting on a~~ ^{from} ~~basis of a~~ list, which was given to us. This meeting took place in 1953 or 1954. I had to nominate an old cleaning woman. It was rather late when my turn came, and I was asleep. They ^{nudged} ~~notched~~ me awake and ^{still} ~~in a~~ half asleep

and said:
condition I got up, "comrade X is old and stupid, but I suppose she'll do". They made quite a fuss about *my* *this*, nomination.

The crowd of yesmen remained in fact until the end of 1953, or the beginning of '54. However, after the stormy membership meeting at Szabad Nep, a similar meeting took place at M.T.I. and at all the other newspapers. From this meeting it appeared that ^{the} Party membership was not as reliable as it was supposed. At M.T.I. they also invited staff members, who were not members of the Party. I can't ^{you} remember just when this meeting was, but it must have been sometime in October 1954. I ^{remember} remember this, because everyone in the corridors was waving Imre Nagy's article which was published at this time. Our Party membership meeting ^{place} took ~~the~~ day after the article was published in Szabad Nep. At this meeting, everything was discussed from ^{the} ~~this~~ fact that the supply of consumer goods was inadequate to the need for an independent Hungarian foreign policy.

These meetings were not exactly spontaneous. The ^{core} ~~corpse~~ of the movement was the group at Szabad Nep. This group had supporters at the Party Academy (pártfőiskola), where there were similar meetings, and they also had friends at all the newspapers. One of their supporters was Csatár, the editor in chief of Szabad Ifjúság. They had contacts at the Budapest radio, among them Endre Gömör, y,

the radio's foreign affairs expert, as well as Peter Földes. There was a strong movement at the newspaper Népszava. The organizers were a small group, which was supported by a wider power constellation. In other words, Meray and his group started a movement whose ^{threads} ~~directs~~ reached everywhere. Behind this movement was Imre Nagy. This is fairly obvious.

Thus the movement was not spontaneous. We got together in the journalists' club, we knew what was coming at each newspaper and who were the flag bearers of the movement. But there was also something spontaneous in this movement. It had a certain momentum, which carried the participants with it.

The following ^{of this movement} people were in the ~~unusual~~ ^{at M.T.I.:} Gombó, as well as Vajna, and Rudnyanszky, although the latter was extremely careful and cautious. This was the first membership meeting, at which I made a fairly sensible proposal. I proposed that the journalists should receive free tickets in trains, ^{and} ~~to~~ theaters, and that they should be enabled to buy books. The head of the personnel department answered, that since the book-keeper was a intellectual worker too, he also should receive free tickets and "anyway" he stated, "in our country we had ^{had} ~~had~~ a counter-revolution so that a Communist journalist did not need free tickets ^{to} ~~to~~ the theater." Then some

others got up and said that it was disgraceful that all the ministry officials had cars, but that a journalist could not afford one. I then got up and attacked the personnel manager in the most beautiful and ideological statement of my life. I said that Kálmán was a social-demagogue. (Szocialdemagóg). He shouted and said, he would not tolerate being called that and later on he went around and asked people what ~~that~~ ^{the} word meant. There was a tremendous debate about my proposal in M.T.I.'s mimeographed paper Villám. The book-keeper attacked me for speaking with the ~~the~~ "voice of the enemy". It was Kálmán's voice. There was quite a scandal about this ticket business. Kenyeres wrote ~~about this~~ an ideological article about it in Villám and ~~completely destroyed~~ ^{annihilated} us.

This movement reached the entire Hungarian press. Then there was a reaction against this, which ~~conminated~~ ^{culminated} in a great many newspapermen being fired at all the papers. At M.T.I. this was somehow avoided. Perhaps too many powerful people were involved in the movement. For instance, the people who got up at the membership meeting and demanded an independent Hungarian foreign policy, got away with it. However, the little Rudnyánszky for instance, who demanded that lemons be supplied on the baby food coupons, was for years mentioned as the enemy of our consumer goods supply system.

The counter-membership meetings at M.T.I. began in 1955. The same people, who then made the energetic demands, now attacked the rightist deviationists. They were scared, but not as scared as before. At the time of the Petöfi Circle C.C. resolution, and afterwards, in 1956, there were stormy membership meetings and conferences. In a resolution M.T.I. protested against the Central Committee resolution ~~regarding the~~ ^{against} Petöfi Circle. György Nón appeared at M-T-I. and said "non"; he was publically ~~opposed~~ ^{attacked} at the meeting. He also found it necessary to be accompanied by two detectives, when he attended the meeting. At the newspapers, the same sort of thing was going on. Esti Budapest was the only newspaper, which was not reached by this movement. At the time of the June 1956, resolution, many journalists were fired from their jobs on various papers, and from the radio. Among them were György Fazekas, Fekete, etc.. They were celebrated wherever they went. Nobody was scared anymore. They felt this was the last manifestation of a dying era. We had great faith that better things would come out of the fermentation, which was started in Hungary in 1953. We did not realize that the Revolution was in vain until the very last Saturday. The trouble is, that Imre Nagy is not a very great statesman, though he is a nice old gentleman. His advisors were mediocre journalists.

Esti Budapest.

I worked for the newspaper Esti Budapest from May 1955 to October 1956. This is how it all came about. Dénes Polgár, the foreign affairs expert of Esti Budapest, was taken to Szabad Nép when the "counter-revolutionary infiltration" began. He had no successor at Esti Budapest, and wanted to install someone in his place ~~EH~~ who was not the Esti Budapest type, ^{and} I was borrowed for two months. Esti Budapest was the newspaper of the Budapest Party Committee. ~~They may not have accepted me~~ ^{There were several objections against me} because of my origin and other reasons, but somehow I stuck there. As a result I got into the most fantastic zoo I ever saw.

The basic character of this newspaper was, that 45 people prepared a 4 page paper, which appeared daily, and which was very very bad. The editor in chief was Laszlo Biró who used to be a district Party secretary. He was a very ambitious man and through his relatives had good contacts with the higher Party organs. He was very stupid and very aggressive and kept everyone terrorized around him. ~~and~~ He brought prostitutes to the paper as editors and had a very good time. But from all the other staff members, he demanded puritan morals.

The two assistant editors in chief were first of all, the son of a provincial timber wholesaler, who went through

the greatest tortures to try to prove that he was a stupid proletarian although ^{actually} he was ^{merely} also a stupid Jew. He knew nothing about journalism. His name was Vadász; he was a Party kader and the paper's chief propagandist. The other assistant editor in chief, Karczagi, was also a functionary. In 1940, he was in a Jewish labor brigade; at this time he did not eat bacon because it was a sin, although he was starving. He became the most dogmatic Stalinist imaginable. This is characteristic, because this type always has to live among dogmas. ^{He} ~~They~~ needs either God or Marx. There were two reading editors, one was a steel worker, the other a printer. In addition there was a make-up editor, who was the sister of the Budapest Party secretary and had attended Moscow University. There were many columns and departments with their department heads and assistants. In addition there was a political secretary, who happened also to be a journalist. He spent ^{the} ~~all~~ day, preparing reports on how the paper had fulfilled its plan, ~~during the day~~ and at night he drank a great deal of rum. He was a talented journalist once.

The paper was prepared on the basis of ~~it~~ strictly followed plans and thus was able to make itself independent of daily events. Thus there was a quarter year plan; we had to decide 3 months ahead of time what the paper will deal with in the next quarter year. There was a monthly plan: every

column and department had to describe what 10 or 12 articles within the next month would contain. There was a weekly plan which had to be handed in by Thursday and had to include the ^{contents} ~~content~~ of articles for one week starting with ~~next~~ ^{the following} Tuesday. My field was foreign affairs, so you can imagine what this meant to me. I was able to make myself completely independent of international events.

Thus the firm political leadership of the paper was assured. The plans were sent to the propaganda department of the Budapest Party Committee for approval. On the one hand the ~~paper~~ paper achieved a firm political line, and on the other it avoided the sensation-seeking manner of the Western papers. In this they succeeded to such an extent, that the number of readers was reduced to a minimum and the paper was published at a great deficit.

The plan had to include the following things in the foreign affairs columns; 1. There had to be an article about the superior strength of the peace camp as against the Capitalist camp, politically, economically, etc..

1 X This was achieved through articles, which ignored entirely the relevant data relating to Hungary and quoted only the most disadvantageous facts about the West from the Western press. 2. Articles of comparison. ^{Wa} ~~They~~ had to have two such articles monthly. ~~With regard to this~~ ^{regarding this} I received a resolution on a small ~~piece~~ piece of paper, which I had

to sign. It was stamped and there were only two copies of it. After I saw it, it was locked up in the safe. I received it through the political secretary. These articles had to prove that the Albanians have a higher standard of living than the British, and the Bulgarians had a higher standard of living than the French. Every month there were bloody debates about this, during which I was accused of not being able to compare adequately. I was criticized ^{for} about this monthly.

Of course the Soviet Union had to ^{be} praised. Biro used to hold forth to the foreign staff in an atmosphere which was far from respectful. Biro looked ^{with} ~~at~~ exaltation at a picture of 15 Kazakhstan ^{id}ots and said "comrades, these are the Soviet men, whose achievements we have to attain". Well, many reached the standards of the Soviet men by pretending to be ^{id}ots. These meetings were truly comic. At the other newspapers my friends used to await me impatiently and beg ^{me} to tell them about Biro's latest sayings. They were better than Ludas Matyi's. They promised me coffee and anything I wanted, in order to hear about Biro.

The Peace articles (bêkepublicisistika) were tremendous effusions about the beauty of the Soviet Union and her peaceful character. In these effusions the ugliest adjectives were smeared with a sugar coating. This type of ~~БЕЖИИ~~ article was invented by Ehrenburg.

It was continued by Boldissar in Hungary and taken over by everybody else. This is the sort of thing I mean. Vadász was an expert at writing such articles. "Tuesday morning at 10 AM an old woman collapsed and died in a Vienna dairy. On the same day at 3 PM a Kindergarden was opened on Tétenyi Avenue." Then there came some stuff about the Soviet Union, that it was big, strong, beautiful, happy, gay. It had the best arms and the most peaceful diplomats such as comrade Molotov. Then one had to go ^{all} out ^(to) and praise the Party and its leaders. In other words there were a number of standard points of view, which had to be included in every article. These were the following: 1. the superior strength of the Soviet Union, 2. its peaceful policies, 3. its leading role in the peace camp, 4. the disagreements among the imperialist countries, 5. the unavailability of wars. This had to be included in every peace article. 6. the crisis of the colonial system. 7. the misery and poverty of the working class in the capitalist countries.

To see that all this was included the article was supervised by the following: 1. it was written by one of the editors who had a built in ^{control} checking system. 2. It was read by the department head. 3. the reading editor, 4. the daily editor who was one of the assistant editors in chief. 5. the make-up editor, 6. there was a separate control department, 7. there were always two colleagues who read the galley proofs. 8. All galley proofs had to be read

by the summit brigade, which was made up of all department heads. Then when the article was ready to print, the editor in chief said that the article had serious political mistakes and had to be thrown out. Thus 50 per cent of the already type set paper had to be thrown out daily. The printers cursed, of course. They were the only experts involved, and to some extent the typists.

The paper came on the streets before 2 PM. The deadline was at 1PM, and manuscripts had to be handed in at 9 AM. With this system the paper could be sure of not only making itself independent of general events, but also of avoiding daily sensation-seeking in the matter of the bourgeoisie press.

From 8 AM to 8 PM we worked like dogs. I could have prepared the entire foreign affairs column alone with one typist, HJK under normal circumstances.

My colleagues were the following. There was Matray, a gnomewho looked like Ghandi. In the past he was an accountant in a plywood factory. From here he was sent to Trade Union School and became a seminarium leader. It was the practice to choose two kaders from each school and Matray was chosen in this fashion. The head of the school called the Budapest Party Committee and said that he had two suitable kaders. Then the Party Committee looked at the file folder

marked "requirements" and saw that there was one comrade needed at Esti Budapest and another at the Ministry of Agriculture. Since Matray stood closer to the table, he was told "you, comrade Matry will become a journalist." Then Matry went to Esti Budapest and told Biro "I was sent by the Party". Biro did not ask whether he could write or not, he said "you will be the political secretary. Now lets see, where do we have an empty spot for you." There happen to ^{be need for a man} be a man needed in the foreign department and so ^{the foreigner} Bolgar was called in. He was scared, of course, and did not dare say anything about the new kader, who was forced on him.

Another one of my colleagues was Szatmary, a former shoemaker's apprentice, who was chosen to attend a technicum (szakerettségi.) Then he was sent to the academy of foreign languages (Idegen Nyelvek Főiskolaja) where he learned Russian, as any good kader would. He was chosen here to become a journalist, ~~HESEK~~ though he could not write a sentence. But they made a mistake about Szatmary. It turned out that he was a talented, hard headed peasant boy from Debrecen. He started to read like mad, he did not read ^{the books} but Thomas Mann and other petty bourgeois lemonade. He put his nose in the secret and confidential material and became interested in foreign affairs. It turned out that he could ^{read the material} become a journalist. As a result

he was constantly criticized and attacked and came near to being fired. He came to Esti Budapest in 1953 or 1954 and in half a year or a year not a single article of his was published in the paper. He adopted the typical cynical Budapest ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Jewish manner.

My salary at Esti Budapest was 2200 forints ^{a month,} as against the 1900 I received at M.T.I. ~~monthly.~~

The ~~crowd~~ of functionaries at Esti Budapest refused to accept any political change or even the thought of change. Esti Budapest opposed the ~~Jewish~~ ^{Road} way of Imre Nagy and supported Rakosi throughout. It was characteristic that after the big Petöfi Circle press debate one of the editors in chief who was present told us in the office next day that the tone of the press debate was simply marvellous, that our Party wanted this sort of thing and ^{rejoiced} that finally we have found the ~~right~~ correct way. Two days later when he heard of the confidential resolution against it, Vadass became the ^{wildcat} extreme critic of Petöfi Circle. These people had no convictions whatever. All they did, was defend their 3,000 forints salaries, their secretaries, telefones, automobiles and so on. The paper had 6 or 7 real journalists. They carefully hid this fact and admitted it only to each other and complained a great deal. We were too weak and it was hopeless to try anything ^{against} against the system. It is typical that Esti Budapest was the only newspaper

which sent a telegram to the Central Committee and to Rakosi, approving the resolution against the Petöfi Circle, in the summer of 1956 and promising complete support. There was only one critical comment at the meeting, ^{at} which ^{we} decided to send this telegram and this was a proposal to change dearest comrade Rakosi" to "dear comrade Rakosi," (draga to kedves). This proposal was accepted by the membership meeting.

We laughed a great deal after each Party membership meeting, my three colleagues in the foreign department and myself. Or else we were extremely angry and tore our hair. But by this time we did not take such meetings seriously.

This state of affairs did not change at Esti Budapest until Hro was fired in the ^{spring (?)} fall of 1956 and replaced by Szirmai. Then the political thaw was transmitted to Esti Budapest through the new editor in chief Szirmai and the new reading editor Istvan Szabo. They were both very aggressive. People, who did not tolerate opposition. Szabo told me "shut up, I know your father and he was a decent man. You are a filthy bastard, so don't argue with me." From that point on we became friends, because he saw that he did not have to play a role with me. I also knew who he was and was glad that there was finally someone from whom I could learn something.

Szirmai was a provincial journalist who ^{had been} was an underground Communist before the war and who was also a Zionist leader. After '45 he received a high Party function and in 1949 he became the president of the Budapest radio. He played a hard, dogmatic Stalinist there. He fell in 1951 or '52 because of his Zionist sympathies and was under arrest ~~in~~ until 1954 or '55. The line at this time was to put anti-Rakosi people in key position and this is how Szirmai got the job. This sort of thing was probably decided by the press department of the council of ministers, but especially by the agitprop department of Party headquarters, where Szabo had a powerful position and he probably felt that a man of Szirmai's political coloring ^{should} had to be given the job. These two, Szabo and Szirmai, introduced a ^{reign} reign of terror at Esti Budapest. They had outside correspondees, ^(NY) write colorful articles and published pictures of pin-up girls instead of pictures of old ^{Stachanovite} Stachanovite women. As a result, the circulation of the paper grew.

Szirmai was a double-dealer. He was friendly with the Imre Nagy wing, as well as with the Rakosi wing. For instance, he played tennis with Istvan Kovacs, with whom they were fellow-Zionists at one time. He constantly talked in both directions. He fired people from the paper and bought in his own staff. He kept the "kaders" under terror. This was during the summer of '56.

When Vadász said something, Szirmai told him "you are stupid, shut up" and Szabo added "go back to the Party apparatus". But it is characteristic that when I wrote a series of articles in June 1956 about the healthy developments in ^{Poland} ~~Polen~~, Szirmai did not dare to publish ^{it}. them. Finally Szabad Ifjusag published my articles. And when Marai wrote his poem about the life of Hungarians in emigration, Szabo wanted to address an open letter to him, calling on him to be converted, ^{politically}

Travel Abroad.

I visited Poland from May 18th to June 2nd 1956 on the invitation of a Polish evening paper which was celebrating its 10 Year Jubilee. I ^{had} ~~have~~ thought that the satellites ~~WERE~~ were on the whole all similar ^{on} ~~in~~ the inside. But I discovered that Poland and East Germany, which I visited later, were anti-Russian, anti-Ulbricht, full of Yugoslav conceptions but with a much stronger pro-Western tendency than Yugoslavia. I saw that this was possible too, that this was one possible solution. In Warsaw the Hungarian embassy was full of "counter-revolutionary" characters and the press attaché told me to poison Hungary with the Polish spirit. I ~~WERE~~ met some students in the cellar of a ^{pub} where we drank toasts to decadence, to the Hungarian populist writers and to the Polish thaw. The students ~~first~~ greeted me

at first,
 with distrust, but then a typical country boy with a big mustache said to me "do you like Saigó Heroes, do you like Kodolanyi, do you like the Polish Thaw, do you like what they have here and ^{what} you don't have in Hungary?" When I said yes, to all these questions, he said "embrace me, friend, tell them at home what's going on here."

Afterwards I went to East Germany, where I was the Budapest correspondent of a newspaper and received an invitation for a few weeks. Germany was full of the most terrible Bolsheviks with blind ^{over} eyes. But when I drank Cognac with some, they told me about their troubles, they said "the stupid Russians, they are trying to order us around." They were angry at this ^{these} barbarians ^{from the steppes}. As a result I decided that this was also not one of the peace camps solid ^{bastions}. During the summer I went to Egypt, where I finally woke up. Until then I had illusions about the liberated independent people. When I saw what the Russians did, sending Kissel to advise Kasser and how the Egyptians behaved, I was thoroughly disillusioned. I am no racist, but I got to hate the Arabs. This was cut out of my articles. I tried within the limits of possibility to write critically. But all of this was cleverly removed from my dispatches. I was in Egypt for 4 weeks. I also discovered a few things about the internal life

Our legation in Egypt appeared of the Hungarian foreign service. This was strange, ~~in~~ ^{where} Egypt. After Warsaw the Embassy was full of anti-regime people. Here in Egypt the embassy was run by 3 AVO agents. One was the porter and another was the telegraph operator who used to lecture me about my articles. The porter wore a dirty undershirt and greeted the Indonesian ^a ambassador by asking him "what's new Joe?"

The whole Kasser spirit in Egypt was very unpleasant. I talked with some Arab workers, who told me that they have earned 40 pounds monthly under the English colonialists, but now they ^{were} ~~are~~ only earning 10. They wished for the return of the British. I was very angry at the Russians for being so friendly with the Arabs. I got to hate these liberated characters in Egypt. ^I ~~It~~ got ^{very} ~~me~~ angry when they tried to run me down with a car, thinking that I was British-

I also visited West Berlin and Prague. This was on the way back from Poland, at the beginning of the summer. West Berlin was my first ^{glimpse} ~~visit~~ of the West. In Budapest they warned me that in West Berlin they were shooting on the streets and that they would try to make me spy for them. I realized that capitalism was not so terrible after all when I saw cars in the worker's district. Although I knew that the workers in the West owned cars, seeing them

was different. On the way back, I stopped in Prague^{for} for a few days and saw that that was different too. The Czechs had a higher standard of living than the Hungarians because they were dogmatic politically and were ~~scared~~^{afraid} to ~~assist~~^{assist} the Russians. I was angry that because the Czechs were Russian yesmen, they could eat bananas. I thought this was disgraceful. On the whole this whole trip contributed to my disillusionment from Communism.

The Revolution.

Three days after the Revolution began, everyone came into the editorial office and started to debate what to do now. The silly assistant editors in chief appeared and insisted that since Eszt Budapest was a Party paper and since the Party still existed they would have to call the Budapest Party Committee to find out what should be done. A few of us said that this was nonsense and told them that we probably would not cooperate with them. Two of us started to send down manuscripts to the press; ^{functionaries} they were making a Party paper and we were making a revolutionary paper. The printers said to them, "well, we won't print this nonsense". The printers had a Revolutionary Committee, which decided that ~~it refused to print~~^{against printing} Peter Kos' UN speech, because it was nonsense. However, after some argument~~s~~ they agreed to print that Peter Kos made

a speech, though they refused to print the text.

We slept in the press building on one of the doors. I got Vadass as a sleeping partner. We argued all night and I found it very difficult to sleep because the doorknob fell to my side. There was a great debate about the name of the paper; we were against keeping the name.

There were some soldiers sent out to Lujza Blaha^{Place} and around the 27th, they received a truck full of machine pistols. The people on the streets took these arms and used them to occupy the headquarters of Szabad Nep, where our offices were. While we were arguing whether the Party would have a leading role in the future ~~or~~^{or} not, the crowd came to occupy the building. The Party kaders put on their coats and disappeared. There were some elderly partisans sent to defend the Szabad Nep headquarters. They were old ~~trembling~~^{trembling} creatures in AVO boots, with pistols in their pockets. We sent them away, but they said "the Party put us here on this post, we simply can't leave." But when they saw the mob coming, they pulled off their AVO boots threw off their green partisan overalls and some tore up their partisan certificates and ran away. The armed people came from the streets. It was a great psychological moment. Szatmary, ~~Honey~~^{Naményi} and I called the printer's Revolutionary ~~Committee~~^{Council} for help. Vadass and Karczagi

disappeared, saying "comrades, we must call the Party headquarter". Szatmary and I and two big printers carrying spanners went out to meet the mob, which was shooting wildly in all directions. I am not particularly proud of this, but the fact is, that at the time I was not scared. As for the printers, this is the first time when I saw a worker behave as I thought a worker should with a pride and consciousness of his position. (öntudatosan).

There was a big crowd in the hall. I talked to the crowd saying that there are journalists here who believe in different principles, who lied for 10 years. I lied, my colleague lied; ^{but we} ~~they~~ won't do it anymore.

There were some shouts from the crowd. "Shoot them, we won't be fooled again" while others said "write what the people want". There was a big debate in the crowd. I talked to them again and said "you decide whether you want to trust us or not, we will do what you want." There appeared ~~a~~ the leader, kissed me on both cheeks and said "alright, you prepare a paper, but let it be good." I asked them to defend the headquarters and to distribute the paper. ^{The leader} ~~He~~ also asked us to print leaflets. This paper was Esti Hirlap. It appeared that same day and was written by 3 or 4 members of our former staff. It only ^{came out} ~~appeared~~ once. The majority of the former staff was kicked out. I think this was on the 27th. In the afternoon we went

home and the next day, on the 28th or 29th, we returned to Szabad Nep headquarters, which was meanwhile occupied by Dudás. We saw that they were trying to publish a paper and I told his wife, who was also his secretary, that we would like to help Dudás with the paper. He agreed to this and from then on we published Dudás' paper Függetlenség, with the help of a few former colleagues from Esti Budapest. There was one brilliant report about the cellars of AVO headquarters by the same person who ^{had} made the speech at the Party membership meeting, suggesting to change dearest comrade to dear comrade. Rakosi. I was there until the afternoon of the 3rd of November. In the first 3 days Dudás edited and wrote the paper. We took the paper from his hands and the first thing was to make a ~~retract~~ ^{retract} for Dudás' attack on Benjamin. We defended Benjamin, publishing one of his poems which showed that he too was opposed to the former regime. We made an afternoon newspaper and at night Dudás wrote another paper and published it in the morning.

Dudás was a popular tribune ^{manque}; He carried on a great fight against the Russians, ^{and} he was wounded in this fight. He was personally courageous. It is not true that he had torture chambers at his headquarters. If Dudás' people caught an ^{AVO} able officer they sent him to Kopacsy's police headquarters. Dudás interrogated them

like ~~Ma-Khno~~^{Makhno} and then sent them to the police. We published daily articles against lynchings. Former political prisoners ~~used to come~~^{came} in and asked us to say that the people should not ~~dismerge~~^{besmirch} the Revolution with atrocities. Unfortunately Dudás spoiled much with his morning edition of the paper.

Dudás wanted a big political career. He wanted to be a minister of something. He never formed a party and was very confused in his program. He wanted some sort of national revolutionary committee above classes and parties and had a program ~~of~~^{including} land reform, the nationalization of heavy industry, and a Hungary without Russian occupation. His immediate program was weapons in one hand and tools in the other. But around the 2nd of November, he started suggesting some sort of united front, which would include everyone from Communists to Fascists, in the fight against the Russians. We distrusted this program and on the 3rd, 10 of us got together and decided to leave Dudás and take the paper somewhere else and make some sort of an early afternoon Budapest newspaper along the lines of the old Az Est.

I don't know whether he robbed the national bank or not ~~as is claimed~~ but I think it highly ~~im~~^{im}probable. We received an advance of 500 forints which was made up of 20 and 10 forint pieces, obviously obtained from the sale of the newspaper.

Hence It is unlikely that we would have been paid in such small currency if he had robbed the bank.

As for the way the paper was edited during the Revolution, everyone and his grandmother brought poems, short stories and editorials for publication. There was a pathetic woman who brought her love poems every day and asked ~~to~~ whether there was any hope that they would be published. Every issue of Esti Budapest ^{had been} ~~was~~ written by 45 people in 20 hours. Here it was considerably different. People came to ~~forget Cegled~~ ^{Flüggeleinsz} and said "I was a parliament ^{ary} reporter for 20 years can you give me something to do?" ^{These} These people needed a minimum of instructions. We merely had to tell them "well, Uncle Steven, go to the parliament and bring back a story." They functioned ^a ~~sufficiently~~ at a moment's notice. We had three or four airplanes ^{by} which we used to send the papers to the provinces. We flew the paper over Cegled and Szolnok, and the planes were also used to bring news from the provinces. Dudas had ~~of~~ control over a special AVO telephone and telegraph net throughout the country. He sent people out to get news for the paper and ^{they} ~~send~~ the news over this AVO network.

As for Dudas' relations with the other revolutionary groups, at first he was rather ~~an~~ anarchistic and made separate demands for himself in order to make his name

known. As soon as he had a headquarters and the staff, however, he started talks with Maleter and the government and supposedly made an agreement with Imre Nagy. I heard some rumors, according to which Imre Nagy wanted to arrest Dudás. In my opinion Dudás did not have a long political career ahead of him. His staff consisted of a ^(heterogeneous) gang of students, college professors, street-car conductors, prostitutes, etc.. His staff was constantly ^(practicing with) ~~trying out~~ various guns at headquarters, so that it was dangerous to go out in the hall.

After the Revolution Függetlenség still appeared 4 or 5 times in typed form during November. We met [✓] mysteriously on a street corner, or else somebody would come to the apartment and give the initials of his name. These were the days of the leaflets. Every tree had a leaflet on it. But eventually this became too dangerous and so they stopped it.

I was the correspondent of a Polish newspaper Express Wieczorny from the middle of November to December.

I sent them daily dispatches, informing them that the ^{Kádár} kádár government was on the brink of ruin and that Marosan was hated. The Poles asked for this sort of thing and they published it. I could do this because the phones were not watched yet.

Eventually they started to molest me about Dudas; this was before the wave of arrests started. The Esti Budapest kaders started to send me threatening messages, but they did not dare to do anything yet, -these were confused times.

I realized that I would get in trouble, if I stayed in Hungary and so I told the Poles that I was very tired, that the climate was very bad here and immediately understanding what it was all about, they send^t me and my wife an invitation through the Polish delegation. I had a passport from the ^{last} time when I was abroad, but my wife did not receive a ^{passport} permission. There was a great deal of chaos at the passport bureau at this time and that's probably why I was allowed to leave. I left Hungary on the 10th of December and stayed in Poland for 2 months. I left Poland and arrived in Paris on the 8th of February where my wife later joined me.

Respondent's Comments on some of the Communist Writers now living in the West and on the Communist personality in General:

Many young Communists, especially those of middle-class background felt that they had to play^eact the good kader. They did this as ^{con} as actors. We felt that this was a worthy cause, not acting but simply

adjusting to the worker class. We fooled ourselves as well as others. When we realised that this was a big fraud, we participated in the fight against the regime. After 1953 and '54 it was difficult to act any further. There was some opportunism in our behaviour; for instance, although I was a convinced Communist, I was also happy to have a good job at M.T.I. and was glad to get ahead. A young man who earns a lot of money is quite satisfied with himself. We were a disgusting group; myself, Lendvai, Acsel, etc; we were disgusting careerists. For instance, at that time I did not know that M.T.I.'s ex- Paris correspondent gave his own commissions for translations to those who were fired from their jobs, in order to enable them to live. I did not find these things out until much later. I never thought ^{of} what happened to the people, who were fired to give us jobs. I myself tried to imitate the working class manners, which were so fashionable in the Party. When I made my first speech at an M.T.I. Party membership meeting, I included the illiterate subjunctive phrases, used by the Party functionaries at the factory. This had such a terrific effect at M.T.I. that they immediately elected me into the Party leadership.

About an ex-Communist writer now living in London.

X did not always behave in such a light hearted

easy going bohemian manner as he does today. I did not ~~like~~ like him in Budapest because he was so pompous. He was a solidly blinkered stStalinist in his public life and followed Communist discipline. As a result he was able to afford French cognac and could take a woman up to his apartment in the evening. In my opinion he was never a convinced Communist at all, he would sell himself to anyone if he was paid sufficiently well.

About an ex-Communist Hungarian journalist, now living in Paris:

Everyone now thinks that he is so brilliant, but in Hungary he played the part of a good kader. He was ragged and acted the fool for 8 years. You never saw such stupid eyes in your life. He had to do this because which were democratic and bourgeois of his father's political views. He had to prove that he was a good kader, and he was right because if one seemed intelligent and looked as though he ^{had} read three books, this was a suspicious matter. He used regular military camouflage to cover the fact that he is intelligent. I remember a reception at the opera where he appeared with uncombed hair, a yellow suit, and a dirty shirt open at the neck. Everybody was dressed in dark suits and they looked ^{at} him with admiration and said: "Isn't it something, now, this is a good kader!?"

About the way "kaders" were chosen for promotion at the school or ones place of work:

When I was still working at the factory, there would be a periodic visit from some terribly stupid old veterans of the movement, who came to choose kaders for promotions. I was called in and asked a variety of questions about Lenin in 1921 or 1924. One did not have to be terribly bright and with some ^{ingenuity} ~~intuity~~ could make up some double talk to satisfy these old ^{idiots} ~~ideas~~. There were usually some catchy questions, such as "what was Marx's opinion about Lenin's What is to be done?" There was a variety of answers to a question like this. The stupider ones said that they did not know. The shrewder ones made up some sort of an answer. If one was fairly intelligent, one simply said that Marx died before Lenin wrote What is to be done. At this point the old veterans would nod and would say "the comrade is vigilant". I found out later that our conversation was transmitted to the next room through a microphone and transcribed by a stenographer. By the way, I was not chosen for promotion by this kader selecting group.

Today I have no strong political convictions. I simply want to live decently and find others who want to live the same way. I have a number of petty bourgeois demands, I want to have a decent apartment, a car and a good library. I want to avoid Hungarians, and especially Communists. I have not yet recovered from the sicknesses

which were the concomitants of Communism in Hungary; from the malice, the hatred, the intrigues which belonged to one's life at home. I approve of a social system, which is somewhat like that in the Scandinavian countries: a solid economic basis, ^{and} a bourgeois democracy. But this sort of system takes a long time to develop. What I hate more than anything is the Russians and Kadar. I do not ~~hate~~ hate them because they are a bad regime, but because they cheated me. I hate them because they stole my best years, because they fooled me, because instead of reading the classics and becoming a civilized person, I went to conferences and Party meetings. What was the point of it all?

Interviewer's Comments:

Respondent is a very likable, very intelligent young man with decent instincts. He has a rather dry and cutting sense of humor, the typical boulevard humour of the Budapest Jewish intellectual. Although he is very bright, and is a good observer as well as articulate, he is not, ~~was~~ what one of my professors used to call, a "high powered intellectual". He is not a particularly analytical, intellectual or thoughtful person. He is essentially a pleasant, but not too outstanding petty bourgeois. He was extremely sincere, pleasant, and cooperative during the course of the interview. His malice, especially when talking about ex-Communist colleagues, verges on the ill-natured.