

The Revolution started in two intellectual centers: 1) in the Hungarian Writers' Union where Communist authors fought against Stalinism, that is, in line with the general "thaw", protested within the framework of the Communist system and 2) in the Petöfi Circle, a forum for public discussions for the DISZ.

Around the beginning of July, there was an explosive "meeting" - it lasted from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. - in the Petöfi Circle, during which Communist writers, like Zoltán Zelk, Tibor Déry, Gyula Háry, Tibor Mérey and others, unexpectedly accused themselves for having unwillingly misled the people: "We were told that the people are politically ^{still} under age ~~still~~ and thus need guidance and education." This discussion continued in the columns of the Irodalmi Ujsag, the Communist writers kept shouting "Mea culpa" for having been naive in following the doctrines of the Party. Szabad Nép labelled the outburst as "base attacks against the Party" and the Party reacted by expelling the above mentioned writers.

It was always emphasized that the Party was the leading force in proletarian dictatorship, and literature and arts, too, are subordinated to the general policy of the Party. Writers stated that dogmatism had severely damaged the creative work.

The issues were primarily cultural, but in the course of the debates, the writers voiced a general disillusionment of the people. They mercilessly pointed out the sins of the system. The demands of the Revolution were in essence formulated at the assemblies of the Petöfi Circle.

One of the methods of putting Communism into practice and, at the same time, giving the people the illusion of self-government, on a minor scale, was to schedule "meetings" regularly. During the last decade, everybody was constantly "meeting". One would discuss some Marxist doctrine or, more specifically, the internal functioning of the respective agency, plant, business or school. The concluding and ~~most~~ most important business on the agenda was usually the chastising of some comrade for having failed somewhere or somehow in the course of his endeavors. These comrades came invariably from the lower echelons of the hierarchy - only exceptionally were those of the higher echelon attacked, and ~~not~~ exclusively in cases when these public criticisms or accusations were instigated by the highest members.

Criticism was labelled either constructive or destructive - the former was accepted as it served the interests of the Party, while the aim of the latter being to undermine the Party, was rejected and ~~if~~ its unfortunate exponent severely punished behind the scenes. Thus, very soon it was apparent that the

so-called public criticisms were regular stage-shows, where the "actors" performed parts which they had to memorize line by line, practically word for word. (A joke in connection with this "freedom of speech": at one meeting, Comrade Grün burst out and asked the reason for the extremely low living standards. He was patted on the shoulder for clear "thinking" and "courage" in exposing the failures. At the next meeting, Comrade Róth got up and said that, in lieu of criticism, he had only one question to ask: "Where is Grün?")

Normally, everybody would follow the so-called ~~the~~ "bicyclist pattern": trample on those below and bend over in front of those placed above.

He himself was not ~~accepted~~ accepted at the university, due to his Middle Class kader (now, in Switzerland, he is studying geology.) But although not officially a student, he identified himself with their demands, he lived their lives so to speak without having the disadvantage of it - going to school, preparing for classes, taking exams, etc. The main complaints of the students were that the obligatory courses (Marxism, Leninism, and the Russian language, gym, national defense, anti-aircraft) which had nothing to do with the chosen field of specialization-actually took more time than the respective student could devote to his major fields. There were jokes in Hungary about the impossibility of ~~guessing~~ guessing what

field a student was working in, in view of the fact that the first eight subjects he would enumerate, when asked, were common to all schools. A personal friend of his, a medical student, became sick and was forbidden to study more than two hours per day - he asked the Dean of the medical school for advice - what those two hours should be devoted to and, naturally, expected to hear: either anatomy or biology and did not believe his own ears when he was told to study the Russian language and Marxism. But in the fall of 1956, from the very beginning of the academic year, the students' meetings requested the ~~abolition~~ ^{abolition} of some of the Communistic subjects and ^{that} the teaching of the Russian language ~~to~~ be made optional.

The Minister of Education, Konyai, came to some of the meetings and permission was granted, starting from October 23, that the Russian language be taught optionally.

That day the students got practically "drunk" from the unexpected concession and decided to go to the statue of Petöfi to celebrate the victory, and to ~~that~~ ^{that} of General Bem to proclaim their solidarity with the Polish people. Some cautious voices were heard - the man in the street might join the rally and thus some political slogans might be thrown ⁱⁿ with which the students might not want to identify themselves. But the cautious voices were hissed and the demonstrations started. The ~~public~~ public did join the students who, after having expressed their sympathy for

~~for~~ Bem, decided to demonstrate their hatred toward Stalin and demolish the big monument erected in the honor of the Communist dictator.

But Stalin, even as a monument, proved to be a tough boy - he wouldn't budge - efforts were doubled, many jokes were born on the spur of the moment - everybody had a suggestion what to do with the stubborn dictator who didn't seem willing to cede his place. The students decided to call "specialists", their comrades of the DISZ, the young workers. The latter arrived from nowhere, on factory trucks, "armed" with ropes, hammers - their tools. The ropes were tied to different parts of the statue and to the truck and in the midst of rhythmic songs and obscene jokes, Stalin was pulled down. While the operation was going on, little rhymed verses were born such as: This country belongs to the Hungarians, Every Ruski (using a nickname) should go home. (Magyaroké ez a haza Minden muszka menjen haza) And slogans like "Perish Geró" and "We want Imre Nagy in the government."

As the bulk of Stalin was still holding on to his pedestal, the crowd became bored and decided to move on (~~ask~~ up to this moment, all their actions were in line with the de-Stalinization movement, as a matter of fact, they felt that they were ~~z~~ doing a big favor to the government in sparing the expense ~~z~~ of removing Stalin's statue - the police did not interfere at all with the action taken by the students and the young workers -

it was considered by everybody to be within the framework of the new Communist line.) And in front of the offices of the Szabad Nép ^{the} ~~shouted~~ ^T "Write the truth." When they started to demolish all the tremendous Red Stars which were affixed (and by now eliminated) to all public buildings - the ripping of these stars was the first overt gesture against the Soviet Union.

The causes of the hatred for the Soviet Union.

The exaggerated emphasis put onto industry and the exaggerated socialization of agriculture did not bring the results hoped for; the socialistic trade did not serve the interest of the consumers, due to the lack of free enterprise, there was no means to force industry to produce high quality goods. As the producer had monopoly, he felt free to put on the market low quality goods, in the shortest time possible. Along this same line of thought, another great economic problem in Hungary was the constant stealing, due to low living conditions.

The ^{insults} ~~insights~~ to a person's intelligence hurt more than anything else. Articles like: "Nobody wants peace more ardently than the powerful Soviet Union" were met with fantastic laughter; statistical data about how many more months an American worker has to work than a Hungarian to buy a suit, a pair of shoes, etc., were greeted with "silent roaring".

For ~~many~~ months there were no potatoes - for good reasons, the Russians had shipped them home or to China; then the market

was flooded with a type of potato~~s~~ in good old times not even a pig would have considered eating - meetings were called and it was explained that the generous Soviet Union, feeling^{sorry}/for the starving Hungarians, "condescended" to send from its own a precious supply of potatoes. "Let's thank them mentally, every-time we eat a potato, grown on the rich earth of our Great Friends." Well, one thing was attained: everybody thought of the Russians when they spit out the product of their rich soil.

Communists had different ways of being cruel - but the method described above was the most painfully felt by the majority of the population. "Let's admit openly that we live in....., let's not make believe that it is gold!" - everybody said more or less loudly.

Generally speaking, everything was a lie, every single news had a tendency. But, people, laughing bitterly, said that the Szabad Nep was the most reactionary newspaper because, every now and then, some blunders would be made. For instance, an article would point out that Hungary did not have an important economic item and at the same time admit that the best one to be found in that particular category was in America. When the news spread about the faux pas committed, one couldn't get a copy for ten times the price of the paper.

The fact is that nobody, who had any discrimination, believed any political news until it was~~not~~ confirmed by a Western radio.

Wallpapers were found in every apartment house and they were even "more in ~~a~~ line" than the newspapers - if that's possible.

The pictures of Communist heroes were somehow always more or less moist - people used an ~~m~~ awfully large amount of saliva, during the last decade in Hungary.

During the Revolution, people were under the impression that Imre Nagy knew what was happening in the country from posters - one hour after a poster appeared, the demand was granted, the government answered through posters. Individuals among themselves also communicated through posters - for instance, when the Radio Free Kossuth announced that the Russians were leaving the country, posters appeared: "The radio is lying, because Russians are still in..." (some part of Budapest was mentioned). After an hour, the Radio apologized and said that it had been misinformed, So corrections were made on the posters with pencil: "Radio Free Kossuth is not lying any more." More posters would appear inquiring about the whereabouts of Cardinal Mindszenty and the answers would be written with pencils on the posters themselves.

The simultaneous appearance of contradictory posters all signed by the Minister of the Interior produced a tremendous confusion: "after six o'clock, ~~xxx~~ nobody should be in the streets; after six o'clock the population should deliver the arms by leaving them in the entrance halls of the apartment houses, at six o'clock each door has to be locked; anyone found after six o'clock with arms will be shot on the spot," etc.

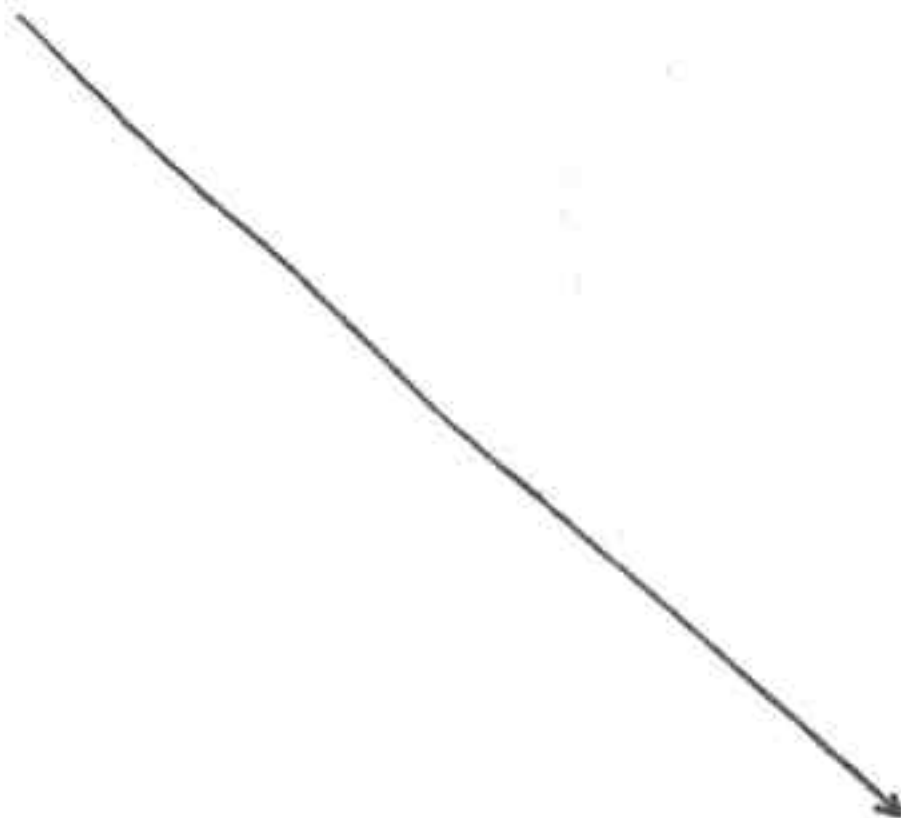
During the government of Nagy, everybody listened to Radio Free Kossuth. During those few happy days people were asking each other: "How is Radio Free Europe going to live from now on?" It did give the same news as the Hungarian radio did - that's how

people found out that the Hungarian Radio was not lying any more and, of course, it was the Hungarian radio which gave the news first.

During the Revolution people also listened to Western broadcasts in foreign languages - what they were most interested in was how the Western countries were reacting to the Revolution, what event they esteemed significant enough to tell their own citizens.

Voice of America was generally thought of as being naive - as not being clear about the situation. Furthermore, things were not timed well - they would talk about food shortage invariably when there was no food shortage - before elections, for instance.

(Note: At this point the interview with the writer's secretary - 619 II - ends, as respondent No. 619 has arrived.)



He did look like a poet - he had long, very blond hair, blue eyes (while the fact that he does look like one doesn't necessarily mean that he isn't one, I kept consoling myself). The reasons for his being late? He'll be frank. He doesn't have a penny. And as he wanted to give the "American lady" a real Hungarian treat, he went to some of his friends (by bike, by bus, ~~by~~ by train, to borrow some money. None of them had any. But all of them had some type of liquor and he sampled them all. And here ~~is~~ he is - ,drunk, or not drunk, he is at my disposal. Anyway I want him too. He is open to any type of suggestion. ^{He'll} ~~He~~ talk about what I want him to talk. No discriminations whatsoever. He'll even read from some of his "oeuvres".

And he read. There was no stopping him. Short-stories* One after the other. And one was more stereotype than the other. But the scene was not. The secretary had gone to sleep, not quietly though, he was snoring loudly. There was no doubt about it that he had heard the short stories before. The writer ^{tried} to surpass the tremendous noise. He was wildly pacing up and down, shouting at the top of his voice - "playing" the parts of the characters described. He was gentle and mild, when talking about women, rough and brutal when talking about their counterparts. But at the back of every character created, was he, the writer, the genius. ~~And after thinking about my mother~~

* Some of them have been published in Uj Hang, Csillag, Irodalmi Ujsag and Muvelt Nep.

~~the political elements were not only present in the story~~

~~stories~~

What

Why were they ~~was~~ about? ~~Why did I have to put it myself?~~

~~the question?~~ The answer is not easy at all. About an AVH colonel and his wife. One of his subordinates accuses ^{he} ~~the~~ wife of being a spy. The colonel, an unflinching man, ~~kills~~ ^{has} the woman whom he adores tortured to death. ^W When he finds out that it was a joke on the part of his subordinate, he kills himself. (Don't laugh! I did and I almost shared the fate of the colonel's wife.) The content of the second one: a functionary of the Party from Budapest wants to force an old peasant to enter a collective farm - the peasant becomes more and more ^{coward} ~~coward~~ and the functionary more and more ~~aggressive~~ aggressive; finally the peasant, instead of committing suicide (he is too healthy and too old for ^{this} ~~these~~ type of maneuvering) enters the collective farm. But, the "irony" of the story is that the father of the Party functionary is an industrial worker in Budapest and the old peasant's son forces the old industrial worker to give a tremendous amount of money for ~~a~~ a peace loan. (Don't cry! I did ~~and~~ and was told that there was no reason for it: the short-story being a chef-d'oeuvre of irony - it "clearly" showed that from one side one could not see the other, and from the other the one.) The third...all right, all right, I'll spare you. ~~(Don't ever forgive me, though!)~~ At the end of the endless session, the author looked at me - there was triumph in his eyes. "A literary work has to say something. And by God, mine

does." In Hungary, I was at the point to lose faith in my own talent. In Hungary, it was definitely no more business to possess a soul. I simply couldn't fight! But one had to live from one's techniques. These "danke-beaucoup" or "merci-vielmals" people seemed to know better - he has received a fellowship and a promise to have a novel of his published. Yes, the Swiss are doing pretty well for themselves! They are ^{mortally}~~mentally~~ boring, of course, - but as far as he is concerned, he can live from the emotions accumulated in Hungary. The little darlings will pay dividends. Finally.

"Would you mind "Ambulating Soul", give me some data about the tenement of clay which holds your treasure?" - "Oh, you want the story of my short life?" - "Short or long, let's have it." - "It couldn't be shorter - I am a mere child."

He graduated from secondary school in ~~19~~ '46, and became a ^E journalist - wrote for the Smallholders' Party paper in ~~ger~~: "Egri barazda". He was arrested as an English "spy"-one point of ~~at that time was~~ the Communist Party program, to reveal conspiracies. He was released after one month, but was unable to study any farther - for a time, he became a chauffer; then, due to his father's connections, he was accepted at the Polytechnical Institute of Sopron. But after a very short period he left his studies and Sopron, went to Budapest and became a railroad worker. Then he managed to be accepted ~~xx~~ at the Academy of Drama and Motion Picture Art and, while studying, he was hired by the radio to write scenes for the Village Radio (Falu Radio). Writing these

little scenes became his livelihood. He didn't take part in the armed Revolution, although he hated Communism and the Russians. Besides ~~that~~ hatred there is another great feeling in his great soul: fear.

The writers' revolt? Their literature is not going to redeem the world from ^a political or sociological ~~view~~ viewpoint. Literature is not here to give a practical ^{"outs"} ~~out~~. The oeuvres of Bartok, ^{of} ~~a~~ Picasso, gave theoretical solutions.

People in socialistic states have no ^{out} ~~out~~ whatsoever - this is what ^{was} ~~is~~ killing them: the complete ~~x~~ psychological insecurity - maybe tomorrow I'll be arrested and maybe tomorrow I'll commit suicide - what do I care. The hell with everything.

As far as he is concerned, the attitude "the hell with everything" still holds. Up till now he knew exactly what he should negate, but now he has no idea what he should approve. "Yes" or "No" - this is the question, ^{or} rather, when yes and when no? - ~~this is the question~~. He looked at me with blank eyes. "Do you know what my problem is? I heard it a little while ago, but I just must have lost it. It got buried in the wrinkles of my soul - I know it because I'm unhappy, but I don't know why. Please tell me the reason for my deep unhappiness. You can give me any type of answer, except a realistic one. I don't want to have anything to do with realism - by social realism they meant to build Communism - but how could people be whipped into enthusiasm about realism? Truth was not inspiring in that particular society. I'll find it. It's schizophrenia. Hungary suffers from

an acute case of schizophrenia and if the American ~~XXXXX~~ wonder-drugs do not arrive, the illness will become chronic, people have been tearing their insides up for years - they all are Pirandello figures - they themselves don't know who they are any more. That's why I keep baptizing myself with wine - but I give myself different names - John, the English spy - Peter, ^{chauffeur} the ~~makeffer~~ - Gabriel, the student at the Academy - Michael, the radio playwright^{er} - and do you know what held these different Joes together? My nodding. My head was moving simultaneously in different directions - from the inside it looked like negating, from the outside it looked like approving. No wonder I got dizzy. This dizziness does not seem to leave me. (I suggested coffee.) Naturalistic attitude. Are you Russian or American? Apparently there is not much difference. I was telling you about my soul~~t~~ being corrupt and you suggest that I drown everyone in coffee?

~~M~~ Hypertrophy of suspicion. Mark my words. I'm diagnosing now. A simple scene in Hungary, 1956: the sun is shining brightly, the air is fresh, there is a beautiful day. Two friends meet: "Good-day, what a beautiful day!" - "Isn't it?" End of scene. You, my dear, my mentor continued, have just witnessed a tragedy. An internal tragedy. Each of the two friends who have just parted asked themselves: why did he say that it was a beautiful day, when it actually was? What is behind this?

Third disease: constipated common sense. The Hungarian peasant was known to have it (I mean common sense) actually he still does, but ~~x~~ he couldn't give it free flow. Slogans were thrown in

his way. Slogans - gifted writers were silenced with them. They represented real power and people who wanted to get ahead used 90 percent of their energy in throwing them backwards and forwards to the left to the right. In Hungary, instead of flying golf balls, one could catch any time, a flying slogan. One harnessed it and one was ready for the assault - another day - another useless day. So many of them - rows of them. They were the ones which furnished the material for the Revolution - during the waiting, the silence became more and more heavy - those who didn't see clearly, started to see clearly - those who were afraid, could not bear any more their fear - the cynics became less cynical - it all summed up in: "the hell with it, at least we'll spit it out."

~~Silence and then another faint snore which goes on and on.~~

~~I did not write for the following notes.~~