

Self-confessed US Spy's Story

Statement Extorted by Free Europe Radio

MTI and the home service (19.00) on 28th May carried reports on a Press conference at the Ministry of the Interior at which Ferenc Venyegai, a Hungarian citizen, spoke of the circumstances in which he had been "induced to become an agent for the US espionage service". Having fled the country on 26th October 1955, he had gone to Austria. His flight had been motivated by "family reasons" only. Faced with the discontinuation of the dole on which he lived, he had turned to "Caritas", which, however, would help him only on condition that he first made a statement for Radio Free Europe. After days of "interrogation, threats and maltreatment", he had consented to sign a statement but not to read it on the radio. After he had signed, representatives of Free Europe Radio obtained the Austrian papers he needed to prolong his stay in the country. Having refused to help the son of a certain Andor Papp, a former Zalaegerszeg Sub-Prefect, to escape from Hungary, he was eventually reduced to seeking refuge in a "public shelter". There, he had met a Hungarian, "Joska", who had taken him to Salzburg to meet Ferenc Farkas and Sandor Keszthelyi, two Hungarian agents in the US espionage service CIC. The latter had passed him on to the so-called "German Centre for Scientific Research" - a US military espionage bureau, which had bought Venyegai's clothes and Hungarian papers "on the pretext of wanting to send them to a US museum".

Spy Course in Nuremberg

He had been questioned for a long time by a Hungarian-speaking US officer, whose headquarters were in Berchtesgaden and who had promised him US immigration papers if he first returned to Hungary "to prove himself". He had subsequently attended a US espionage course at a villa in the Alserstrasse in Nuremberg. The officer in charge had spoken Hungarian well. Venyegai's mission would have been to collect military information in Hungary, which was all the easier since Venyegai himself was an officer of the reserve. At the end of September 1956 the course had been suddenly interrupted and not resumed until mid-November. The US instructor had told him that he had been very busy as a result of the October events in Hungary.

"Tortured"

At the end of December, Venyegai had been taken to Vienna where he had been given detailed orders to establish precisely the position, strength and armaments of Hungarian and Soviet troops occupying the former sector between Osepeg and Szentgotthard. Returning to Austria after accomplishing his mission, he had been put under the orders of a certain Dr. Pocker, also an American, in Munich. Here the US interrogators would not believe that he had fulfilled his mission and "tortured" him to make him confess that he had not in fact been to Hungary but had obtained his information from refugees and had communicated with the Hungarian authorities. Eventually, the Americans had sent him back to Hungary, where, "completely demoralised by the treatment he had received", he had given himself up on 17th March. He concluded: "The Hungarian authorities examined my case and took my frankness into consideration. They have not maltreated me. I know that I have grievously sinned against my country and my people. My adventures taught me a lesson I shall not forget as long as I live."