

ITEM No. 08255/53

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HUNGARY

COMMUNICATIONS (0505)

Railways.

SOURCE TRIESTE: A young boy from BACSBOKOD who escaped in August 1952.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: until 30 August 1952.

EVAL.COMMENT: This is a below standard report and the question may be raised whether it was worthwhile to interview subsource upon a subject on which his knowledge cannot be more than that of a travelling boy.

The distinction between passenger cars with hard and soft seats has been in vigor for years.

The so much emphasized difference of the use of the words "munkas" and "melos" has not such a great importance as subsource believes.

The delays in train traffic are widely known. The particular case of a "cancelled" train may very likely be a mistake of subsource. Plenty of trains circulate only on workdays and not on Sundays.

The border control is widely known in a much more detailed way.

The reported kind of "understanding" between female controllers and schoolboys is inaccurate. Members of the middle classes are generally not selected for jobs with the railways. There are very few exceptions, and subsource just had the opportunity of meeting such an employee, but it would be rather erroneous to generalize from such a statement.

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The railway carriages in use in present-day Hungary are those of the last regime and mostly bear the sign "MAV" (Magyar államvasutak: Hungarian State Railways.)

(Over)

Although they are old they are still in quite a good state.

But there was a very characteristic innovation: the old distinction of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes disappeared and was replaced by another specification; i.e., the former 3rd class carriages, freight and cattle cars which are now being used for passengers are marked with "fapado" (supplied with wooden benches,) and the former 2nd class carriages bear an enamel plate with the word "parnas" (supplied with upholstery.) There is a 50 per cent difference in the fees for these two types of carriages. The passengers of the cars with wooden benches are the so-called "melos", which means the real hardworking people in the jargon of PEST, i.e., the peasants and all workers who are being exploited by the present regime. The passengers of the carriages with upholstered seats are the "munkasok", i.e. the "workers", not the real ones, however, but Party and Trade Union officials and favorites, AVH agents; in short all those persons who are subjugating the Hungarian people. The latter themselves made this fine distinction between the words "melos" and "munkas." As the Party made such abuse of the word "munkas", the real workers consider it a personal insult to be called by that name, which has lost its real sense, and prefer being called "melos".

Trains are frequently late under the new Hungarian Railway Management. This was particularly the case in 1952. Sometimes trains do not leave at all although they appear on the timetables. For example, one Sunday our source had to travel from BAJA to KATYMAR, but could not find the express train (a type of diesel train.) As no workers were due to travel on that train on a Sunday, the management had simply cancelled it for that day without giving the people any prior warning.

When travelling from BAJA to the frontier, passengers are repeatedly requested to present their special passes issued by the Commune of the Provincial Council (Megyeri Tanacs) to persons wishing to enter the frontier zone.

(Over)

The tract from BAJA to the border is 52 km long. Between BAJA and BACSALMAS checks are carried out once, between BACSALMAS and KATYMAR several times, in view of the vicinity of the "off limits" zone. The special passes are called "hatarsavi belepő", and they are checked by AVH agents.

The following is quite a common case: in July, 1952 two peasant women travelling from BAJA to BACSBOKOD were discussing the problems of the high cost of living, etc., when suddenly some ten AVH agents and their officer entered the compartment. Being carried away by exasperation, one of the women pointed at the officer and said "its the fault of these people that we're ruined." Instead of arresting her, the officer calmly replied: "its not our fault, but be quiet" and all of them left the compartment.

The school children who like our source, travelled daily back and forth between their native villages and BAJA to go to school at the latter town, had special training in evading ticket controls. This was made easier for them by the considerable number of women-controllers on the Hungarian railways. This female personnel mainly came from the middle classes and were very understanding with regard to the students, who mostly did not belong to the working classes (isztalyidegen) either. There was therefore a kind of solidarity of interests between these women and the students. Sometimes these women even warned the students of the arrival of the head controllers, but this only happened on rather short runs.

End.