

A Repatriate's Story

The Budapest broadcast for Hungarians in Western Europe on 15th May included the first of a series of talks by Andras Varkony, a former contributor to 'Szabad Ifjusag', who recently returned to Hungary from Austria, whence he had fled in November. Varkony said that personal experience had taught him that his decision to leave the country had been "hasty and prompted by irresponsibility, and led only to homesickness and a bad conscience". He had "joined the ranks of those who wanted a democracy that would prevent a repetition of past mistakes", but like many others, he had not realised that "I was influenced by principles diametrically opposed to our aspirations". By the end of October, "when they were hanging people in Republic Square and committing murders all over the town", he had realised his mistake. "I saw that it was the Soviet Army that saved the people's democratic regime - my regime - not to say my life."

When he fled the country, believing that he would thus leave his problem behind, he had tried to reach a relative of his abroad, but "I could have obtained a visa only if I had put myself at the disposal of Radio Free Europe and broadcast for them - that is, committed treason". After many vicissitudes in Austria and Italy, he had "realised the superiority of the people's democracy - its humaneness and humanitarianism. Some things that are natural at home are revolutionary over there, as for instance the right to work, equal pay for equal work, and so on." He had also witnessed the exploitation of workers and extremes of wealth and poverty in Italy. He added: "I don't say that everything abroad is bad; in many ways they are ahead of us. But there is something in the air there that makes it heavy even for those who are better off than we are at home - something stifling, unbearable. Our journey, believe it or not, has taught us to appreciate the people's democracy."