

NO. 513 "B-5" AND "B-6" FACESHEET AND RATING NN p. 1

July 1957  
London

1. L 13
2. [REDACTED]
3. London
4. 28
5. M
6. Hungarian
7. None
8. Jewish
9. S
10. O
11. Teacher
12. Student
13. ---
14. Upper middle
15. No
16. No
17. No
18. No
19. Budapest and Szeged (Degree from latter)
20. Budapest, Szeged
21. Budapest
22. Budapest
23. ---
24. December 10, 1956
25. London
26. No
27. ---
28. ---
29. ---
  
31. 9
32. 8
33. 9
34. 7-8

My father was general manager of a large textile plant in Győr. He was a textile engineer by profession and after the war he got that job as general manager. In 1947 He went to Moscow with a Hungarian trade delegation as its technical advisor. It is interesting to hear him describe the negotiations: In their typical fashion the Russians negotiated on the theory of exhaustion and kept the Hungarian delegation awake at all hours working them over with plenty of vodka and heavy food. My father thought it was simply a refined version of GPU tactics to wear down the negotiators. Actually the Hungarians had no choice at that point anyway for they desperately needed cotton and other raw materials to keep the textile mills going and so had to accept the Russian terms and the Russian rates of exchange.

Right after the war during my years in gymnasium I joined the Communist Party, but in 1949 when I was 20 I talked about being disgusted and disappointed and ready to resign. Instead they kicked me out as undesirable. Ever since then my university studies were made very difficult for me. I was finally admitted and studied for 2 years on the faculty for Hungarian and English literature. When this was discontinued I went to work for a couple of years as a helper in a textile mill, until I was readmitted to the university on the faculty for journalism. There I was kicked out again just before

graduation in 54. I went to work again and was finally admitted to the university of Szeged in the spring of 55 to finish up my studies there. By the time my admission came through and I could actually go, the semester was almost over. I was there only for a couple of months before graduation. I studied there Hungarian literature and got my degree in that. The following year I moved back home to my mother in Budapest, my father having died in 1951, and I got a job teaching grade school in a village outside of Budapest. I commuted from the city out there to teach.

My own interests were always literary and political. I have published several poems and children's books. I was very much concerned with Marxism throughout the past 12 years and followed domestic developments rather closely. I should like to describe the status of Marxism in Hungary before last year. Marxism is a compulsory subject on every university faculty in the country. A chair was set up on every faculty to teach it but you could not major in it and no one specialized in it, except at the Lenin Institute in Budapest. I think the most significant fact of the Marxist chairs was that they concerned themselves with Marxism very little. I think it is no exaggeration to say that Marxism is unknown in its essence even by its instructors. The average Marxist professor and instructor taught Marxism in its daily application of the theory

and its practical effects, but they refused to consider it as an abstract science. It was first and foremost a practical guide to the daily political scene. As a result of emphasizing the practical the average teacher of Marxism, seminary instructor, or Party philosopher, never read more than perhaps the first volume of Das Kapital, parts of Anti-Dühring, and of course the Manifesto which they knew almost by heart. They also read Lenin Materialism and Empiricism sections and several other compulsory <sup>exerpts.</sup> and all recommended ~~xxxxxx~~ The courses these people were called upon to teach covered one semester each of Marxist philosophy, Marxist economics, Marxist history, and politics. The required material consisting primarily of directives and lead theories was usually imparted in the students by having the entire material memorized. The technique and the attitudes which were involved are familiar to anyone who was exposed to the study of catechisms. The purity of the faith and dogma were maintained with similar jealousy and zeal and as a result sociology as a science was rejected together with mathematical statistics both for being unscientific. Marxism was taught on the basis of Russian theory and interpretation of the philosopher. The countless number of pamphlets and popularized interpretations take the place <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ the classics themselves. It was emphasized, in fact, that the need to solve burning problems of daily life do not permit abstract philosophizing and it is the former that Marxism is concerned with. This

was the pattern and the content of every weekly seminary meeting and Communist lecture. This pattern was considerably revised, however, after 1953. Thereafter the standard lecture and seminary also tried to include a critical stand on some topics. With the risk of some oversimplification one could say that before 1953 Marxism consisted primarily of the history of the Soviet Communist Party.

The serious student of Marxism could use the libraries on his own, <sup>no</sup> for Marxist professor (or course on Marxism) would expect him to make use of Marxist literature.

Or, besides finding his way through the library shelves, he could attend the lectures of Lukacs where many people sat in like I, who were otherwise not interested in aesthetics particularly, nor enrolled in the faculty of philosophy. There were perhaps 2 more men: Fogarasi, who was teaching philosophy or Tamas Nagy, the economics professor. It is a simple paradox of the system that these three creative Marxist thinkers had nothing to do with the centrally directed Marxist chairs at Budapest or elsewhere on the universities. Marxism as known to the average university student was a standard overall course, a process which everyone at the university had to undergo. The professors in charge of Marxist teaching and the few real Marxist thinkers cordially hated and mutually despised each other.

At the one place where Marxism was not a compulsory course, but a Major field of study was the Lenin Institute

and even there the students were primarily learning the turns and twists of Party history with the proper interpretations rather than basic Marxist philosophy. You could learn Russian there though, in fact, it was the best place to learn it in Hungary. Admission to the Institute was easiest of all institutes of higher learning and as a result many people went there who were rejected everywhere else. On the other hand, of course, several competent people also went there, wishing to major in Russian language and literature.

Once the process of Destalinization started, some of the younger men in the Party also started urging to review the role of Lenin and that of his theories. For some Communists last fall the Revolt was one in the purest Leninist manner.

The Marxist professors tried to put their philosophy on the intellectual basis of the 19th century and then adapted their theories to day-to-day requirements and changes. As a result Marxist youth was critical with the Party, frequently respected Western intellectual achievements, yet was aware of basic differences between the West and themselves. For one, Hungarian art has been historically and traditionally duty-bound to embrace politics. There never was time for the Western art for art's sake to develop. Life was too urgent.

Practical Communist politics as practised by the Communist

leadership and Marxist ideology came in frequent conflict on account of definitions. The Party leaders felt and often expressed the feeling that Socialism cannot be realized in a small single state and it could only become possible through closest cooperation with the USSR. If then, the theory ran, the Soviet Union is the strongest bulwark of socialism then we must aid and support this bulwark with everything we have got. Thus best patriotism can be shown by faithfulness to Russia and the best proletarian ~~xxxxxx~~ internationalism also is marked by faithfulness to Russia. In the end, however, the <sup>Paradox</sup> ~~paradox~~ was reversed by propaganda and one only heard about infinite Russian good will which, by aiding us with goods and giving us leadership, helped us on the road to socialism.

The role played by Russia in Hungary was also explained by another theory: According to this Hungary was almost never independent, and until Russia liberated her from German colonization, she was under foreign suppression. Now Russian protection is necessary against the threat of Western imperialism but this help can only be received and expected if fullest cooperation is given the Russians and if ~~the~~ we follow their lead. In spite of these theories after 1953 some voices were heard that we had been aping the Russians too much and that there is not much virtue in simply copying the great friend. In spite of these theoretical discussions it



was not fully obvious to what extent the Party was subject to Moscow's control; this had only become clear since the Revolution. Another problem in the development of Hungarian Marxism was the person of Rakosi. I think that he simply equated Hungarian interests with those of the proletarian international and anything benefiting the latter would ultimately benefit the former. At the same time I was always of the opinion that the Hungarian Communist leadership had always distrusted Hungary as a country of unregenerated Fascists. In spite of their initial popularity in the forties I don't think that the Communists, the lead, ever trusted the Hungarians or had any contact with the people; it seems that they have never tried to gain the allegiance or sympathy of the Hungarians.

The general relaxation after 1953 also meant greater objectivity in propaganda and this refers to foreign and domestic matters as well. There was a rolling adjustment of propaganda with reality and the inside and outside controls of one's mind and conversation were somewhat relaxed. There has been a strenuous readjustment in the valuation of Western ~~Hungary~~ culture in Hungary using the German concepts of the term. (Western civilization meant to us politeness on a trolley and the use of litter baskets for trash.) It involved a certain human behavior together with technical accommodations. As far as Western culture is concerned



its tradition was always alive in Hungary. We were very definitely not under the influence of Russian or Indian or any other culture and we know that we belong to the West culturally. A gigantic campaign was undertaken in <sup>the</sup> late forties to characterize Western culture by identifying it with cowboy films and the various versions of rock-and-roll. At the same time all Western writers were taboo with a handful exceptions. The result was disastrous for the Communists. The very prohibition of Western culture created the mirage and the desirability of the forbidden. Suddenly the masses developed huge intellectual <sup>appetites</sup> ~~appetites~~ and their interests embraced everything imported from the West in preference to anything Eastern. Where they happily accept Western imports of cultural junk like the Readers Digest they scornfully reject their Soviet and Eastern European counterparts even at a time when they cannot help but be aware of the burning domestic issues.

To a large extent these facts contributed heavily to the suspicions of the Communist leadership. As a political realist Khrushchev was aware of the weaknesses of the Soviet position in Hungary, but never mindful or respectful of Hungarian emotions and Hungarian desires. Rakosi and Gerö relied fully on the totalitarian methods of control and suppression considering them adequate now as they have been in the past.

The June 1953 program of Imre Nagy was unexpected by Rakosi and company and they considered it a stab in the back from a trusted friend. Rakosi was especially upset and he attacked Nagy for this, for not preparing the ground for the ~~stab~~ he undertook. Usually any Party decision or new policy line was introduced gradually in a series of articles in the papers with the utilization of the propaganda machinery well in advance. The suddenness with which the Nagy program broke on the scene created a rift in the Party which has not yet healed. To understand the reaction and position of Rakosi one must know that the sense of power and the idealism are 2 inseparable branches of the same thing for the average politician. This becomes even simpler for the Communist politician because he can hide his excesses behind revolutionary idealism. This idealism accepts the inevitable shedding <sup>of</sup> ~~back~~ blood as part of the revolutionary process. No doubt that the wielders of power under this system had <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ mentality which ranged from complete cynicism to fanatical stupidity. For those who were beginning to see more clearly this enlightenment could range from seeing partial mistakes committed all the way to full rejection of the regime and its philosophy. A lot of people were fooled by the successes of 1945 to 1948. At that time the Communist Party was not only the most ruthless but through its methods also the most effective. At that time they

exploited the most popular moves of the government for themselves identifying these with key Communists while at the same time they enjoyed the full support of the Red Army. They urged on the people, they coaxed and cajoled and they caught the imagination of youth.

(Interviewer's estimate of respondent.)

Respondent gives the impression of a poetic, disorganized person with a very keen sense of observation. Although, through connections and influence he could complete his university education in spite of handicaps, he is not a practical type of person who would have benefited from the regime's opportunism. Somewhat diffident he viewed the political and cultural scene from his personal world.

Note: Entirely reliable information on respondent indicates that he was an extreme Communist fanatic until very recently. Practically hysterical, he created serious difficulties for people close to him, and people did not dare to talk to him frankly until 1955. Instead of being critical of the Party he supposedly agreed with its expulsion of himself, considering himself unworthy of membership, accepting this as penance well deserved.