

Hungary & Eastern Europe - Sixty Years Ago A Press Review by a Hungarian Refugee

JAILED, DIED, FIRED, HANGED The Fate of Cardinal Mindszenty's Betrayers 1955. 12. 1-15.

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A Broken Crucifix Is Restored in Communist Hungary



This photograph from Budapest was published Oct. 1 in The New York Times. The caption called attention to broken crucifix.



The New York Times (by Jack Raymond)
A more recent photograph outside the same church. Floral offerings are still in view—and the crucifix has been repaired.

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The New York Times (by Jack Raymond)

A BRIDGE TO THE WAR YEARS: Budapest's only remaining unrepaired span—known as the Elizabeth Bridge—is shown here. There were seven bridges across the Danube before the war. Now there are eight, not counting the damaged Elizabeth Bridge.

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RED BLOC VISITOR TOLD OF CHANGES

Citizens in 4 Counties Cite
Better Economic Status
and Less Police Activity

By JACK RAYMOND

Special to The New York Times.

BERLIN, Dec. 1—Life behind the Iron Curtain has been changing lately, according to many persons living there. Economic conditions have been improving, and infringements by the police have been lessening.

Wherever this correspondent went recently in Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, people said something like this:

"Until about a year ago, the secret police were very active, and government propaganda persistently warned against anti-state activities. Now things are more relaxed, and we do not hear so often of cases where people are picked up for questioning.

"Economically things are a little better, too. We do not earn much more money, but there are more things in the stores, although the prices are high."

The character of state control appears to be changing. While the police are still very much in existence, they are called upon less and less to maintain the security of the Communist regimes.

More dependence is placed now on the effectiveness of the political dictatorship: a one-party system, all organizations in every field of endeavor guided by that party, all press and radio prohibited from challenging the fundamental policies or the regime.

At the same time, a wide variety of criticism of individuals is permitted. In Rumania, for example, leading ministers of the Government have been sharply assailed in the press. In Poland, some of the foibles of Communist policy have been ridiculed.

Contrast Is Noted

Until a few years ago, virtually every inhabitant of these Communist states was called upon to declare himself, not necessarily as Communist but in a variety of ways.

There would be meetings to attend in the district where a man lived. There would be organizations to join. There would be contributions to make in the form of volunteer work or in money. There would be questions to answer about neighbors and even relatives.

In that way, the regimes, through a police network, would not only maintain active watch against possible resistance but would also bring the attention of the people to the existence of

They turned on radios and drew the blinds when they did receive a stranger. They hesitated especially to visit United States diplomatic mission buildings.

For their part, diplomats in these countries feared to maintain personal contacts with citizens so that they would not embarrass them or get them into trouble.

At this time, however, it appears that the regimes are content to run their countries without testing the loyalty of each individual. All they ask now is that there be no active resistance. There does not appear to be any.

"Never Talked" to Strangers

So it is possible for many citizens to carry on their daily lives and activities without running into the Government except in the form of certain organizational drives, such as membership in the societies of friendship with the Soviet Union.

"Listen," said a man I met in a restaurant in Prague. "Nobody has bothered me in five years, and one of the reasons was that I never talked to anyone I did not know, Czech or foreigner.

"I get up in the morning, do my job, eke out enough money for my meals, mind my own business and sleep without fear. So, good-by."

In Budapest, a truck driver said he earned 2,800 forints a month for a forty-eight-hour week. The official rate of exchange is 11.5 to a dollar, but that is not an accurate evaluation.

The truck driver's salary, however, is quite high, compared with other salaries which average about half that in many instances.

"I have a wife and three children," said the truck driver. "We are extremely lucky because we have three rooms since my mother died and no one else has had to move in with us. For the first time in a year I have been making ends meet without working at extra jobs—never mind what extra jobs."

In all these countries, the Governments appeared to have slowed down their anti-church propaganda.

It appears that the satellite regimes have accomplished what they considered their main task against the Catholic Church. They have prevented the leading churchmen from carrying out their functions.

As for the religious devotions of the people, the regimes have ceased inciting hoodlums to molest churchgoers. Most of the authoritative sources in these regimes are quite content to let people go to church as long as no dynamic priests appear among them.



The fate of Cardinal Mindszenty's betrayers

When the Communists condemned Cardinal Mindszenty to life in prison they created a martyr and brought upon themselves the anger of all Christianity.

By **LASZLO SZAMOSFALVI**

AS TOLD TO HELEN MAMAS ZOTOS



Janos Kadar



Kalman Kiczko



Vilmos Olti



Laszlo Rajk

The strange story of men caught in the web of their own treachery

In two previous articles Laszlo Szamosfalvi, Cardinal Mindszenty's nephew, lifted—for the first time—the veil of secrecy behind which the Communists have kept the Hungarian churchman for almost seven years. He was able to do this because of his personal experience with Communism, with the help of the Hungarian Underground and "indiscreet" Red agents, and a diary kept by one of the Cardinal's fellow prisoners. The most revealing of the information came from letters written by the Cardinal's aged mother, the only friendly visitor he has had since his shameful life sentence for "treason and espionage." As this article was written there was no indication that the Cardinal would be given his freedom.

The irony of Communism is that it destroys itself. Those who push it along its sinister course very often are trapped in the web of their own treachery.

In my country we believe "God writes straight with crooked lines." We are a religious people, and, in trying hours, take hope in knowing that from suffering will come good, and from evil, punishment for the evil-doer.

So it was that in the aftermath of my uncle's imprisonment in 1949, the Communist conspiracy boomeranged, and God turned His wrath upon Cardinal Mindszenty's persecutors.

By imprisoning our Primate, Hungary's Reds virtually elevated him to sainthood. Instead of destroying him and the faith of our people, which was their design, they created a hero and a martyr and brought upon themselves the anger

of all Christianity. As Mindszenty had prophesied, a "dead" Cardinal was worth more to the cause of freedom than a live one, and before an aroused world he became, in the Communists' blood-stained hands, a liability of fantastic dimensions.

God's vengeance swiftly swept over the Communist party and they saw, too late, the dreadful mistake they had made. In doubt and panic, crucifier turned against crucifier to strike down all who could be blamed. Of some 31 "respectable" Communists entrusted with my uncle's arrest and conviction, only three remain at "liberty" in Hungary today. Two successfully escaped to the West. Twenty-six met a violent fate.

Trapped in the web first were the three Ministers of Interior who served before, during and after my uncle's "trial." Minister Laszlo Rajk, who sealed the Cardinal's doom years ahead of the courtroom scene, was hanged as a traitor in 1949. Janos Kadar, his successor, who grilled my uncle at the "trial," was imprisoned until recently. Sandor Zold, who inherited the ministry after "successfully conducting" an anti-Mindszenty "scare wave," became so hysterical through fear that he shot himself and his family.

Justice Minister Istvan Riesz had served faithfully in his post six years before colleagues conveniently discovered that he was an "American spy." His sentence before another mock court was 25 years, but in his cell vengeful prisoners terminated it promptly by beating him to death.

In 1947 I spent six months at 60 Andrássy Street, headquarters of the

THE FATE OF CARDINAL MINDSZENTY'S BETRAYERS

(Continued from preceding page)

Cardinal Mindszenty and his secretary (standing) look on while a court attendant exhibits the container in which, the Communists insisted, letters were found proving that the Cardinal was a "traitor".



him a release conditional on his leaving Hungary. The Cardinal asked his captors how many other Catholic priests were still imprisoned. When they told him some 623 he declared, "Then I shall be the last to think about leaving."

Later they modified their terms and offered to free him on condition that he: 1) renounce the Vatican and authority of the Pope; 2) abdicate as Primate and go into village exile as an ordinary priest; 3) not resume his "anti-state activities"; 4) not issue any uncensored statements concerning his imprisonment; and 5) personally express desire for clemency.

These had long been the aims of the Communist anti-church drive. They were in fact the very alternatives offered to Mindszenty before his imprisonment. Even in jail he turned them down, refusing to compromise with Communism. "I have my own conditions—not those you put before me," he told them on many occasions.

The Communists never really wanted to imprison my uncle. They would have much preferred to exile him or kill him "accidentally."

I myself intercepted a top-secret paper drawn up by the Communist hierarchy proposing his murder by a fake accident in September, 1948. Only three copies of this document existed. Party boss Rakosi's plan was simple—an army motor truck was to "accidentally" collide with a car carrying my uncle on the road near his palace.

Frantically, I dashed from Budapest to Esztergom to alert the Cardinal. His only comment to me on this, the last time I saw him, as I remember, was: "A dead Mindszenty will be more useful to the Hungarian nation than 100 live Rakosis."

Although the Reds wished so desperately to be rid of him, they were afraid, when the test came, to have him die their prisoner. During periods of long illness they gave him the very best care.

For three years following the Cardinal's "trial," he was mentally not himself. He suffered from the tortures of his brainwashing and was physically and spiritually exhausted. He suffered an attack of pneumonia and underwent a thyroid operation.

During these years I ran missions of mercy for my imprisoned uncle from the free world. Three times I crossed the borders of Hungary from Austria to visit my aunt, the Cardinal's mother, in Csehimindszent and to bring her wonder drugs—antibiotics and penicillin—that she could carry to the Cardinal. Each time I made my way safely in and out again—at the risk of my life.

Apart from my uncle's blackout concerning the "trial," today he is in good physical health and has complete use of his mental faculties.

Throughout his lifetime Mindszenty has been an unyielding foe of Communism and a patriot. There never was any doubt in his mind as to his eventual arrest, imprisonment and perhaps death at the hands of his foes. Even the Pope cautioned him when he bestowed the Red Hat upon him in 1946: "You may be the first whose red blood will stain the blood-red of the Cardinal's cap."

He could have escaped but would not. Time and again, when it was suggested that he leave Hungary, he shook his head and said, "I must stay home with my people. We are in a period of storms and disturbances but the Hungarian Church has outlasted the storms of centuries. She is under the protective wing of God."

A curtain of silence has again been lowered over Mindszenty since the false news of his release. It covers a great Communist dilemma. Who can predict how the Reds will extricate themselves from their own conspiracy? Knowing that my uncle, too, remains "under the protective wing of God" it is my hope that God will swiftly "write straight these crooked lines."

In court Mindszenty had the last word. He ended his final plea for justice with a prayer. It would seem fitting to give him the same last word here. "God give us peace in these days, not merely in the future but in these days," he said. "I ask this peace for my Church, the love of which is constantly with me, for the Hungarian state to which I have shown my obedience, and for my own soul."

The case of Mindszenty is not closed.

THE END



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Hungarians to Visit U. S.

VIENNA, Dec. 6 (Reuters)—
Communist Hungary has accepted an invitation to send experts to the United States to study corn growing, the Budapest radio announced today. It said a three-man delegation would leave soon.

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REWARD FOR REFUGEES

Hungary Said to Offer \$365
for Any Austria Returns

VIENNA, Dec. 9 (Reuters)—Communist Hungary is offering a 4,000-forint reward (about \$365) for the handing back of any Hungarian refugees who flee to Austria, the Vienna newspaper Neuer Kurier said today.

According to the paper, the offer was made known orally among the border population. The Hungarians, it was said, are even prepared to "collect" the fugitives from Austrian soil.

The paper added that border guards had been strengthened and minefields increased. A six-foot-high barbed wire entanglement, rigged with mines, runs along the frontier, with another arrangement of wire behind it.

In wooded areas, stretches along the frontier have been cleared of trees and bushes, and the entire frontier is lined by control towers with searchlights.

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EXILES MAP U. N. APPEAL

East European Group Here Urges Free Elections

Refugees from of nine Eastern European countries under Soviet domination prepared yesterday an appeal to the United Nations to aid in restoring the right of self-determination to their peoples.

At a meeting in the Carnegie Endowment Building, 345 East Forty-sixth Street, the Assembly of Captive European Nations approved a measure that seeks to provide for free elections in their homelands.

Participants at the sessions centered their attention on conditions in their native lands under Communist regimes. Concern of the delegates about the restrictions there found expression in a series of resolutions, each related to items on the agenda of the current United Nations General Assembly session.

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Four Flee Hungary in Home-Made Armored Car

VIENNA, Dec. 14 (INS)—Austrian police reported today that four Hungarian workers, depressed by the "economic misery of their Red homeland, literally crashed through the Iron Curtain a few days ago in a home-made armored car.

The four, who braved a hail of bullets in their flight, sought asylum and are now safe in free Austria. They attached heavy iron plates on the bottom and sides of a truck and ripped through a barbed wire

fence near the Austrian frontier, crossed a field and then struck the main barricade. Suddenly a mine exploded, blowing off a rear wheel. Red searchlights then picked out

the escapees and border guards opened with rifles and machine guns.

But the Hungarians jumped into the icy Pinka River and swam to freedom.