

NO. 614

"B-5-10" INTERVIEW

JLB

p. 1

August, 1957
Zurich

1. SLE-1
2. [REDACTED]
3. Klosbach Strasse 107, Zurich
4. 29
5. F
6. Hungarian
7. Roman Catholic
8. Jewish
9. Single
- 10.
11. Secretary
12. Typographer
- 13.
14. Upper Middle Class
- 15.
16. No
- 17.
18. No
19. Four semesters in Philosophy at the Peter Patmany University, Budapest.
20. Budapest
21. Budapest
22. Budapest
23. None
24. November 20, 1956
25. Austria (4 days), Switzerland
26. No
- 27.
28. BBC
- 29.
31. "10" - Rapport was excellent and did not vary at all, though the subject discussed could have easily produced awkwardness - Respondent was "recruited" by the AVH to be an informer!
32. "10" - No!
33. Respondent started out by flatly refusing to be interviewed, but once she had consented, her cooperativeness was "10" plus.
34. Not at all.

~~She~~^I was brought up by ~~her~~^{my} father, a follower of the Bajcsi-Zsilinszky line, to be a cosmopolitan. In addition, ~~she~~^I was kicked for 20 years. Why should ~~she~~^I be a patriot? Actually, ~~she is~~^{I am} still being kicked by ~~her~~^{my} ex-countrymen. Dénes Horváth and Tibor Kismarjai-Kiss accused ~~her~~^{me}, while ~~she~~^I was working at the Hungarian newspaper Hiradó ~~for~~^{of} having a ~~J~~^Judaic-Bolshevik attitude. As you may notice, she said, the terminology does remind one of Arrow Cross times, doesn't it? Actually, my two accusers, behind whom stood all the Hungarians of Switzerland, were ~~a~~ Arrow Cross Party members. Kismarjai-Kiss had been excluded from the ~~the~~^{Hungarian} ~~Association~~^{Bar Association} because of his membership in the Arrow Cross Party. And yet, I never to think what the outcome of ^a similar ~~and~~ accusation would have been in the United States of America. Luckily, the Swiss police are excellent and cold headed. Quiet inquiries were made, among those Swiss, who gave a ~~favorable~~ favorable opinion of me. I was my landlord. He told the police that if she was a spy, then he would ~~register at her school~~^{go to school to her}. (has kém, akkor iskolába fogl horra jární).

No, she had never been a patriot. The Hungarians prevented her from becoming one. She does remember the Nazi times. She was a teenager, and she had one desire: live. That's when the first time she opposed her mother. Her grandmother was old, and her mother did not want to expose her to hiding, to wander around

in unknown places. (Her father was in a forced labor camp at the time.) She very strongly felt that if they didn't go into hiding, they would be picked up, dragged away and killed. She urged her mother to leave the luxurious villa in which they were living and also leave her grandmother. Her mother looked at her-^kterribly frightened. If the Gestapo had come to pick them up, he^r mother couldn't have had a more frightened look. "You simply cannot ask me to leave my old mother!" - "Yes, I can." (If a couple of months ago, somebody had told her that she would ask her mother to practically ^{kill} her grandmother, she would have laughed - it would have been so impossible. And yet, she will never forget the tone of her own voice when she practically ordered her mother to kill that old woman who, at the moment, seemed nothing more than a burden. She did feel like a criminal and yet she was perfectly aware of the fact that if she did not chose to kill, she would be killed herself. That is what the Hungarian Nazis made of her. She suddenly realized the strength of the circumstances and she suddenly realized her own weakness, when confronted with overwhelming odds.)

I became a Communist Party member in 1945. But as I was not 18 years old yet, proven Communists ~~and~~ had to vouch for me. It was Hilda Gobbi and Tamás Major who did it. (When Respondent mentioned the name of Hilda Gobbi - a very famous actress and equally famous for being a homosexual and liking very young girls - I looked ^{up}. She noticed my look ^{and said,} without embarrassment: You seem to

know much about Hilda Gobbi. Yes, she liked me and - spoiled me. I was very athletic looking, even more so then now, strong as an ox and had an insatiable curiosity in every field. Gobbi satisfied my intellectual curiosity - she introduced me to Thomas Mann, among others - and my sensual curiosity as well.)

When I told my father about my Party membership, in the tone of: ^[to Laffie] épater le bourgeois, he did something he had not done before or since, for that matter. He slapped me. Those two slaps worked. Not immediately, but slowly and constantly. As the years went by, I felt smaller and less smart. Intellectually, I liked to think of myself as being socialistically minded - I was all for raising the living standards of the proletarians. But I ~~also~~ had to discover that I was ^a terrible snob: while I wanted the proletarians to live under more human ^d conditions, I strongly felt that they should be kept: ^[at a certain distance] "drei Schritt vom Leib". (Since in Switzerland, I've been in good friendship with the Countess of Esterhazy and, to my great amazement, I had to discover that I was a ~~much~~ much bigger snob than she was. I suppose this shows the humanitarianism of the real ~~aristocracy~~ aristocracy and the ~~real~~ snobbism of the ^{upper} ~~higher~~ middle class.)

Coming back to 1945, she immediately became feverishly active in the Party center of the fourth district. It was indeed an extremely pleasant ^s pastime to go to the Party headquarters of the fourth district. The headquarters were on the Stefania Street and

this fact stamped the nature of the activities of the members - almost exclusively intellectuals. French movies were shown, Western authors discussed and pingpong tournaments were staged. If a proletarian dared show up, nobody noticed him. No proletarian came back for the second ~~time~~ time. This "club life" went on until 1947 and slowly the intellectuals disappeared and the profile of the Party became more and more proletarian. I graduated from secondary school in '46, and due to the insistence of Hilda Gobbi, registered at the ^{of Dramatic Arts} Academy. I attended the courses more or less regularly and was ousted at the end of the year, due to my complete lack of acting ability. The influence of my father became stronger and that of Gobbi diminished. "You are reading Proust, Nietzsche, Huxley, the idealist philosophers and you still say: 'Heraus mit uns!'" he used to tell me.

At the Academy I ~~didn't~~ didn't even bother to register at the Party organization and never attended any meetings. "I hate them," I used to declare nonchalantly. And as my intellectual horizon widened, my adherence to the Middle Class was fortified. And the days of Party revision came and I was asked to practice self-criticism. I acknowledged, laughingly, that I was not mature enough and the proletarians who at that time were at the head of the Party organization did not oust me. The Party secretary used to wash our windows, in the good old times, in our villa. He was extremely flattered that my fate depended on his decision and

he tried to induce me to sleep with him. For a couple of weeks, I led him on - it was exciting to play with fire - and then I dropped him. And he dropped me: I was "degraded" to become a Party candidate. But I was not a "fresh" Party candidate, I was reassigned to being a Party candidate, which was, as I found out later, a bad position to be in. From time to time I was called into Party headquarters and lectured - those were the times when I got completely fed up with Communist ideology and its supporters. The policies advocated in 1953, had nothing in common with those of 1945.

Meanwhile, I attended courses in literature and ~~in~~ history of art at the University of Budapest. My status was that of a so-called "free student" (szabad hallgato), I did not have to pass exams, but prepared for my Ph.D. This "free studentship" was ~~abolished~~ ^{abolished} in '49 (two years after my attending various courses at the Faculty of Philosophy) and I decided not to continue as a regular student. The latter status would have implied passing exams, and I did not possess the necessary discipline to prepare for them. So, I learned short-hand and typing, and was employed by the Library of the School of Economics and, after six ~~xxx~~ months, was transferred to the Central Planning Board; after a couple of months, I was transferred to the Ministry of Internal Trade and worked there, as a secretary, from 1950 to 1953; I was transferred to an agricultural planning institution, called "Agroterv" and, after a couple of

weeks, gave my resignation. Leaving one's employment ~~place~~ voluntarily was considered a great crime and it was the Labor Reserve ^{who} took care of me. I was assigned to the Hungarian-Soviet Society's Secretariat of Budapest and was given administrative work. I had previously learned, while working for the Ministry of Domestic Trade, the printing and publishing trade. ~~and~~ Actually my official status was that of a secretary but I worked in the publishing offices of technical books - and I was trained to become an expert in typography. As some of the leaders of the publishing company "Magvető" knew of my qualifications, they asked for me and thus I was assigned to become technical secretary, actually technical editor, of the publishing house of the Writers Union: "the Magvető".

And, during all these years ('49-'56) I was an outstanding athlete (élsportoló) in rowing^g and skiing.

And during all these years, I did not stop shooting my mouth off. I used to say, for instance: "I wonder when my maid, Kati, will be assigned to become chief of a division in our ministry,"

(at the time, I was working at the Ministry of Internal Trade). Whenever I attended Party meetings, I started to snore loudly - when awakened, I said that I was overworked and needed sleep. On the 15th of March, I made a point of going to a Party meeting and made a point of sayingⁿ loudly that the 15th of March should ~~be~~ be celebrated. (I couldn't care less for the 15th of March - after

all, it was "their" holiday, but I hated Communism just as much as I hated Hungarian nationalism - and I wanted to ridicule one ^{by} with the other.) And I invariably became sick whenever the demonstrations of the 4th of April and the 1st of May would come up. And at Easter and at Pent^hcost she, who does not believe in any religion, would invariably go to church. But, as an outstanding athlete, I figure that I was "untouchable".

In October of 1952, Mrs. József Szarka, a police detective came to my office and asked me to go ^{with} ~~with~~ her to the police ^{as a witness} /in some type of traffic accident. Not suspecting foul play, I went with her to police headquarters. The minute I stepped into the room, a very antipathetic looking man asked me whether I knew why I was called in and locked the door with a key. I ~~answ~~ answered that it must be a mistake, because I don't recall ever witnessing and accident - "Think harder." - "I did not steal and I cheated only when absolutely necessary, so I really don't ~~know~~ know." - "You are the prisoner of the AVH." - "I don't understand. Aren't these police headquarters?" - "There are many things you don't understand, yet." - "And k now you'd better enumerate your crimes." - I figured out in a split second that I would acknowledge all my past "sins", the ones which were public^{ally} knowⁿ, so to speak. I told him about my going to the church "in spite of", about my not attending public demonstrations, about my snoring during Party meetings, etc. I talked for one hour. At that moment, the "hangman"

came in - a brutal looking character, all shoulders, all hands, made to beat up people. And at that moment I realized that I had a terrific advantage over these two animals. I was smarter. And although outwardly I was hysterically crying, I became very calm. I was left alone for about fifteen minutes and I did not look into the papers on the desk, knowing that they had means to watch me from outside. I never concentrated so intensely in my life. I figured out in advance all my reactions. I knew that if they did beat me, I simply could not stand it, I would spill out everything. So, I concluded the main thing was not to be beaten and gain time. They came back with a proposal: if I consented to bring them reports about the political attitude of my sport companions, I and my parents would not be interned ^t~~in~~ Kistarcsa, as they had solemnly promised me before. I was told who my liason man would be, where I would meet ^ehim every second Thursday and about whom specifically I would regularly have to give reports. I signed the agreement and was taken home in an AVH car.

My parents were asleep. I woke up my mother and told her the story. I told her: "Don't faint, at the end I will have to take poison, so please try to figure out a way of my getting the right amount of poison." - "Why would you prefer poison?" - "I have no gun, I'm not going to jump in the Danube, because I'm too good a swimmer and I'm afraid I would swim. So the only way for me to ~~die~~ die is to take poison." - "I suppose you are right," my mother

acknowledged. October, 1952 - a conversation in Budapest between a mother and daughter.

The next day I went into my office and continued my work a little bit aghast and a little bit exhausted. In the afternoon I went skiing and told the story of the preceding day to an almost unknown police officer who had been a lieutenant during the previous regime. It was a coincidence that it was he who was in the skiing lounge - I suppose I would have told the story to any man or woman I would have found - I got no solace from my mother and I did not want to talk to my father as he had a heart condition. This sudden confession practically threw me into the arms of this police officer. I became his mistress that very day - he was the first man in my life. The fact that he was married, didn't matter at all, at the time. It mattered very much later when I fell in love with him. But that particular evening I only wanted a man to put his ~~xxxx~~ arms around me, I wanted protection.

The next day I looked up my good friends: Mr. and Mrs. Gábor Lóránt, musicians (at the moment he is a member of the Hungarian Philharmonia in Baden-Baden), who both have the wisdom of Hindu philosophers and the desire to help of the ~~x~~ early Christians. We figured out, together with my newly acquired friend, I will have to suddenly become sick - I will have to feign a sickness of the nervous system. This simulation will have to be done very carefully because it would be easy for the AVH to have me transported

to their own hospital and checked. My three good friends []]stalked the matter over carefully with a physician and it was finally decided that I should have a sport accident. During skiing, I was supposed to fall, hit my head and suffer a concussion of the brain. I went to the physician's office and during two consecutive afternoons he ~~taught~~ ^{to} taught me what the symptoms would have to be. It was decided ^{to} "act" the most advanced stage of a concussion of the brain as I was unable to vomit upon command. But I was very gifted in ~~acting~~ acting fainting and unconsciousness, especially since I was told that I was allowed to periodically open me eyes and try to say something. Actually the physician recommended that I play the unconsciousness with open eyes; then I was taught to ~~produce~~ produce the proper reflexes - these were to be produced at a later stage of the game. I was instructed to control my knees, lift my hands at a proper angle, ~~and~~ and give vent to hysterical outbursts - cry as much as possible. Then I was told not to ^{remember} ~~remember~~ anything five hours ^t ~~preceding~~ preceding the accident and the day the accident ~~was~~ was supposed to occur I was to take a pill which lowered my blood pressure.

Three weeks had gone by since I was taken to the AVH and I had given one report in the meantime (I described in it at great length the tonsillitis ~~of~~ the child of the person I was supposed to observe, had) and was threatened by ^{my} ~~the~~ liaison man that if I did not produce by next Thursday a real report, my parents and I

would be taken into a forced labor camp.

The report was due on Thursday and it was Tuesday, the day of the "accident". Together with a girl-friend of mine, (the only proletarian I've ever had anything to do with - actually, I suppose I played the part Hilda Gobbi had played in mine - it was I who introduced her to Thomas Mann, etc.) to whom I divulged the projected accident, we went skiing. Unfortunately, it started raining when we arrived at the top of the Svábhegy. We decided not to go ahead with our plan because it might have jeopardized the veracity of the accident and, in addition, would have put the trainer in a very embarrassing position - he would have been responsible for our venturing out in ~~a~~ dangerous weather. My girl friend and I decided to play the scene in different surroundings - we went to our gym in the city and while my girl friend distracted the attention of the girls, I climbed up on the wall bars and made a candle and fell on my head - I consciously made the fall resound and, as an excellent athlete, I knew exactly how to produce a make-believe fall. I slid down on the wall bars but made ~~xx~~ sure to arrive on the floor with a big bang. All the girls surrounded me terribly frightened. And this was the moment when I almost lost out. Those girls were my companions in rowing and they were frightened. I suddenly forgot all about my predicament and wanted to console them. I got on my feet and - met the eyes of my girl friend, she ordered me to continue the scene with

such authority in her eyes that I suddenly grabbed my head, screamed and fell down for good for the second time. The scene could not have been played better. She has ^a ^cthe concussion of the brain, was the verdict, which spread in one second - let's call an ambulance. The trainer came in and addressed my girl friend: "There is no need for an ambulance, I will call a taxi and you ^{can} take her home." - "I will not take her home, I'm afraid she will die en route." Finally an ambulance was called and I was taken ~~into~~ to the emergency room of the Rokus Hospital. There I decided to regain consciousness for a couple of minutes and said: "Comrade Balazs, (my boss) why are you dressed up in white and may I go for my skiing ~~train~~ training?" Her girl friend told the story of the accident - everything was taken down the way she dictated it. Then her girl friend went to her mother and asked her to visit her daughter. Her mother had not been told previously of the plot, they wanted her to put on a good show. And by God, she did. Finally, I took pity on her and when the doctors left my room I told her the truth. "For God's sake, in that case take that ice bag off your healthy head, you'll get meningitis."

I and ~~she~~ ^I cried. ~~She~~ ^I cried for three days in a row - finally ~~she~~ ^I was allowed to - so many things had accumulated during the years. And as physically ~~she~~ ^I was strong as an ox, it would have been strange indeed if ~~she~~ ^I would ~~have~~ ^{had} bellowed ^{wed.} But now I was permitted to cry, actually I was given orders by the physician

to cry - those three days were the happiest times of my life. I was subjected to all types of examinations. One week ^{later} I was ^{didn't} sent home in an ambulance. As my condition ~~did~~ seem to improve, after a couple of days I was taken to the sport clinic and it was established that I had a brain concussion! Maybe the physicians were well-intentioned, or maybe those who look for ^{something} ~~something~~ necessarily find it. Anyhow, I was in the sport clinic for four weeks. In the bathroom, I did as many exercises as I could. I didn't want my muscles to get soft, - I was not allowed to read. My mother brought me a different book every day but the nurses did not know that the one book I was occasionally holding in my hands was always a different one.

At the end of January, I went back ~~into~~ my office and suddenly developed ~~an~~ agoraphobia. My girl friend, the proletarian, arranged that the Trade Union should send me during the month of ^[famous mountain resort place] February for a three-week vacation to the Galyateto. My boy friend, the police officer, by some strange coincidence was sent to the same place. We had three delightful weeks and when I came home, my fainting spells disappeared but the hysterical condition remained. I would cry ^{at any} ~~on the spur of the~~ moment.

At the beginning of March, in the streetcar, a man told me: "You have duties to fulfill, you must call Mr. Ferenczy at such and such time." I called up and was told to go to a certain bus

station, was greeted there by a man I had not met before. "Why didn't you report earlier? From now on I will be your liason man." - "Maybe you didn't know that I was, and still am, sick." - "You have been working for a couple of weeks. You should have called the AVH. Are you always crying like this? We thought that you were completely healthy. Report next week."

From then on I had to report once every two weeks for three months. We met in front of the Basil^[Basilica]ka, in the Szent Istvan Tér, in the Liebner House. There was a vacant apartment in which the liason man, allegedly called "Ferenczy", was waiting for me and my reports. But he was not satisfied - I never wrote anything which would not have been public knowledge. The minute he raised his voice I started to cry and the AVH was terribly afraid of hysterical women.

In July of 1953, I wrote a report about myself in which I acknowledged that I had sinned against the People's Democracy and tried to make good but ^{was} unfortunately no more in the physical condition to do so. Actually, the fact that I have a commitment which I am unable to fulfill weighs on ~~me~~ my conscience and I'm terribly afraid I will spill my secret to the first man I will meet.

And I received my relief in two weeks. Mr. Ferenczy asked me to swear - orally - that I would always respect the People's Democracy and the AVH and will never reveal my relationship with

the latter. If I broke my oath, I would be courtmartialed and treated as a spy.

No, I do not miss Hungary - either the Nazi-Hungary or the Communist one. And yet, there is a nostalgia in me which haunts me in my dreams. I dream that I am in Hungary and will never again see the land where I have finally been free: Switzerland. Yes, in my dreams, I am terribly homesick for - Switzerland. In a way it is ^a perverse dream - nostalgia is being turned inside out, it does not have the right direction, I admit. It seems to follow the pattern of my ~~x~~ life. I did not start out to propose to my mother to leave her old mother behind and save me and herself. I did not start out to be an AVH informer - even if my "informership" did not hurt anybody but me, and I did not start out to hate the country in which I was born and raised, and love a foreign one. I actually don't even know, and yet, I'll always be homesick for Switzerland, whether on Swiss soil or somewhere else, because this was the country where I ~~first~~ experienced what it meant to be protected. It was the Swiss police which protected me against my own countrymen's accusations.

You have noticed the difference in my voice when I speak German and Hungarian, she ~~con~~^{tinued}. I have noticed it myself and I have been thinking about it. The conclusion I came to: my German voice represents the person I would have loved to be and was not allowed to become on Hungarian soil, my Hungarian voice

represents the person the Nazi and Communist Hungary made of me. In Switzerland I am permitted to be myself, while in Hungary I had to assume gruesome and distasteful parts. Switzerland is my home.