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ML

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Vienna

1. V-7
- 2.
- 3.
4. 32
5. M
6. Hungarian
7. Roman Catholic
8. Roman Catholic
9. Divorced
10. 1
11. Aerodynamics, engineer
- 12.
- 13.
14. Middle class
15. No
16. Till '43, Austria, Germany
- 17.
- 18.
19. Gymnasium (grad.) and engineer^{ing} training from father
20. Budapest
21. Budapest
22. Pest
23. Smallholder
24. November 22, 1956
25. Vienna
26. U.S.
- 27.
28. No
- 29.
31. "7"
32. "8"
33. "5"
34. None

My father is an engineer, and is one of the pioneers of the aircraft industry, having invented one of the earliest models of the helicopter. Before the war he was working on his helicopter ~~in~~ inventions with the support of various governments including France and England. He brought his inventions to such a perfection that the United States War Department showed a great interest in it for war use. My father's invention stimulated the Allies' interest in the helicopter. ^{He proceeded} ~~During~~ Sikorsky with his invention of a steadily ~~a~~ flying helicopter. During the war he switched to shipbuilding, having invented a ship with a propeller exposed to the air. (Ship looks as though it were equipped with a helicopter propeller.) This ship is capable of pulling a cargo boat. Such boats have existed for 50 or 60 years for sports purposes, but have never been able to achieve such power.

I attended a parochial school in Austria. At the end of the war, during the Russian ~~seige~~ ^{siege} I was in Transylvania. I don't like war so I managed to get out of it. My father had a contract with the English Air Ministry and so when the Russians arrived he hoisted the British flag. This was regarded with suspicion by the Russians who ~~x~~ took us to the Russian secret police as English spies. This was in Sárköz. We were locked up with Mongolian deserters. I liked the Russian commander; he was a very admirable person, an intelligent engineer. He was later stationed in Hungary and we became good friends. He said that Communism would not be forced

on the Hungarians.

After the ~~seige~~ ^{seige} in 1945, my father had a shipbuilding plant in Budapest. Here we built the first ships with a helicopter air screw. I never attended the university but learned engineering from my father, working in my father's factory. The factory consisted of 40 employees, including 10 or 12 engineers. We sold several of these boats to the Yugoslav government, but for various reasons the transaction eventually collapsed. The factory existed until 1947, when the ~~mx~~ wave of nationalizations began. My father got a job as a research engineer with the Enterprise for the Execution of ~~New~~ ^{New} Inventions. He worked here from 1949, until 1951 or '52. (I have no memory for dates.) Under the Communist regime an engineer couldn't get a patent for a new invention. Thus, good engineers had to work for nothing; they had to work like dogs to make 2,000 to 2,500 forints. There were a great many new inventions in Hungary during this period, which were sent to this enterprise to be examined and if they were found worthwhile, experiments were carried out with them. The inventor often received as little as 500 to ~~500~~ 600 forints for each invention, and the right to the invention belonged to the state. Why did they continue to invent things, and why did they give them ~~x~~ to the state? First of all because they needed the money, and even this small sum was important to them, and partly ~~because~~ ^{because} they received personal publicity for their inventions and their vanity didn't allow

them to suppress them. It is very difficult to resist personal recognition for one's work. Around 1950 or 1952, I worked out a grain-^{sowing}~~planting~~ machine with the help of an agronomist. This machine would have effected considerable grain savings to the state. This machine was never used. For such a patent one could get approximately 1,000 forints. If the state wanted the invention for its own use, then the engineer, ~~the~~ the inventor, would receive a small sum in payment, but if the state didn't need it, it would allow it to be sold abroad ^{with} ~~the~~ the state itself acting as the agent of sale. In such a case the engineer would be employed in the factory where the machine was produced, or else he would get a minimal sum in return for his work. The foreign sale of the invention was handled through the Office of Inventions, and the state received the profits from the invention.

In 1947, my family consisted only of my father and myself. My sister was already married. Before he got his job he was working on a jet plane invention as well as a mining machine involving a centrifuge. One of the problems was the difficulty of getting foreign technical literature. We ~~lived~~ lived on the ~~profits~~ profits of our third experimental boat of 1947, and on the money we made from selling the machinery and equipment from my father's factory.

I got a job at ~~the~~ the Institute of Printing Research where I worked until 1952, or '53. We made some very interesting ~~ex-~~ ^{non-electric} experiments here. We made a ^{non-electric} vari-type machine out of a typewriter.

The ~~Instink~~ Institute had a staff of about 120. ~~Someones~~ A press w^{as} established to ^{test} ~~the~~ the new^{ly} invented machine, with 15 or 20 typesetters and typists, and two technicians. The Russians found out about our invention, and sent a committee from a Soviet research institute to try to learn how it worked. They attempted to learn it for half a year but were unable to do so, so they ordered two machines from the Hungarian state and took them with them to Russia. The Russian specialists were extremely well-trained press and technical experts but were utterly primitive in other respects. They wore slippers on the street, etc. But, in spite of the fact that they were not overly intelligent, they all knew two or three languages. One of them had two jobs, in addition to being a press specialist he was also a movie machine repairman because he was unable to live on one job alone. We tried to ~~bring~~ ^{embarrass them} ~~them to~~ ^{test} technically, to probe their weaknesses, but found them perfectly prepared and trained in their field. They had a far greater knowledge of foreign technical advances than we did; in this respect their schooling was better since they were allowed to read the foreign technical publications. The fact that they were unable to learn the intricacies of our invention should not be held against them. A typewriter is a jungle; one can't ~~master~~ master such a machine in half a year if one is not a typewriter expert. ~~Worked in~~ ^{aristed} this factory ~~until~~ until 1952, or 1953, when the inventor, my brother-in-law, was ^{knifed} ~~assaulted~~ ~~from his office~~ because

he was a bad káder, having been a capitalist in the past. My brother-in-law, who was a first-rate typewriter expert, was now given a job as a typewriter technician. He kept at this for a year, but then he couldn't stand the intrigues against him any longer, and quit his job which was exactly what the regime wanted. Subsequently he went to work as a textile washer.

I didn't try to get admitted to the University; I would probably not have been admitted at all, without using ~~a~~ some pull through my father's position. My father worked at the Experimental Institute ~~■~~ until about 1953, when he ~~■~~ quit and went on sick leave, because he couldn't take the hard work any longer. He received sick pay for a year, ^{and} meanwhile he got an international diploma for his helicopter work. As a result he received a pension from the regime. This is how it came about. My father asked for a permit to ~~sell~~ sell newspapers at the National Theater. He explained that he had to make a living, and couldn't do so unless he received this permit. This was after the diploma. It would have been too humiliating for the regime to have people say that an internationally known inventor was selling newspapers on the street, so about two years after he received the diploma they gave him a pension of 1,800 forints per month. My father and his helicopter invention are mentioned in a Soviet book on flying, which also states that the inventor of the helicopter is in England. If the Soviets had not made this mistake, then my father would probably be in the

Soviet Union today, working for the Russians.

After my father retired he could work at home, in peace. His old colleagues and friends used to visit him; they often got together and discussed technical problems and ideas. This ~~is~~ is what enabled people like my father to exist under the regime; their absorption in technical problems enabled them to forget about day-to-day life. The workers worked in order to fulfill their norm and therefore to make enough money to live, while the intellectuals worked in order to do something, to keep their minds occupied.

The privileged scholars were able to receive foreign technical publications; my father was among these. The regime copied many Western patents without telling the Western inventor or paying him. Among the ~~set~~ satellites there was a free exchange of patents, which was a very healthy development for the state, but it did not help the individual inventor because he did not have patent rights. Hungarian engineers are very productive; under the Communist regime they worked very hard for little compensation, because they needed even that little money. An engineer received a salary of ~~1,600~~ 1,600 to 2,000 forints per month. I received a salary of 1,6000 forints at the Typewriter concern.

The regime's new technical intelligentsia consists chiefly of specialists. The chief engineer at the Typo-Press factory where I worked was a former fireman who was made an engineer

because he was a good Party member. He attended the University; university professors were afraid to fail good kaders. This man was very poor in the field of theoretical knowledge, but he had a good practical knowledge of the machine. He was a specialist. The planning, etc., was done ~~in~~ by the older engineers. Of the personnel of 120 in the factory there were from 10 to 12 Party members, chiefly the managers. There was a rumor that one of the workers was an AVO agent. There were very few Party members among the technical w staff. Nor were the seminars and meetings attended very frequently. The higher ^{party} organs criticized the engineers for this, who answered by making themselves indispensable technically. This was the same in almost every factory. When a factory had a very lively ^{ely} Party organization, that meant that they lagged behind in production. Nobody had to be a Party member. I suffered only slightly from not being a Party member. For instance, when my baby was born my wife didn't get maternity aid, as did some of the others, because I was not a Party member and because I didn't attend ^{the} political seminars. There were differences of this sort between Party members and non-Party members: If a Party member came up with an invention, it was sure to be a success, and he would receive money for it even though it was a dud. At my factory all the Party members among the engineers belonged to the new intelligentsia. Some of them had considerable technical competence.

The factory manager was an old Communist. He was a man! One could really have arguments with him; for instance, he often said that one could live far better on unemployment insurance before the war, than today by holding a job. His own wife had to work. He was a truly idealistic Communist, but there were very few of that sort. The Communists were chiefly careerists. ^{the whole} On the regime put a great deal of pressure on technicians: they had to subscribe to Szabad Nep, and participate in Szabad Nep readings at the factory, and they also had to attend various meetings. At meetings they were forced to participate in the discussions. This was fortunately not true of my own factory. We had a production conference every month where the workers' propositions and ideas were listened to and discussed.

After I left the factory, I looked for a free occupation. I continued to help my father with his work and I earned my living by being an air brush man for the Chamber of Commerce, the country's top export organization. I earned an average of 4,000 to 5,000 forints per month, doing this. There were only twelve air brush men in the country. My job was to retouch technical drawings to make them look as if they were photographs of machinery, etc. These drawings were used as illustrations in export sales brochures. I did this on a free-lance basis until I left the country after the Revolution. The last piece of work I did was a drawing of an ~~type~~ eleven hundred ton ship for export. Hungary made 17 or

so sea-going vessels of this type for the Soviet Union ~~x~~ ~~as~~ as reparation payments. The cost of production was fantastically high, and the country naturally lost on the transaction. In return the Soviet Union allowed Hungary to make two boats for herself. The Soviet boats were decorated with frescoes; in fact even four by four-meter nurseries had life-size frescoes in them. The ~~the~~ quarters of the crew had no windows but the officers' cabins were luxurious, decorated with Persian rugs. When the first of the ships ~~were~~ ^{was} transported to Russia, the Russians escorted ^{ing} it ~~the~~ sold most of the movable equipment of the ship by the ~~the~~ time it arrived in Russia. Therefore, later the entire ship was covered with wood, and locked so that nothing could be stolen.

The regime didn't affect my thinking in any way. My friends and I never discussed politics. In our free time we attempted to rest; we attended concerts, went on ~~the~~ hikes, played tennis, sailed. My interests are strictly technical - I am an engineer, nor do I have friends with political interests except for a few of my publisher friends. Sometimes we discussed the news heard over the Western radio stations, but not always. I spent much of my time and money on a boat I owned, a sailboat with an out-~~the~~ board motor.

What about the political changes in Hungary since 1953? Well, after Imre Nagy came to power, there was a definite relaxation: there was a greater supply of consumer goods and small artisans