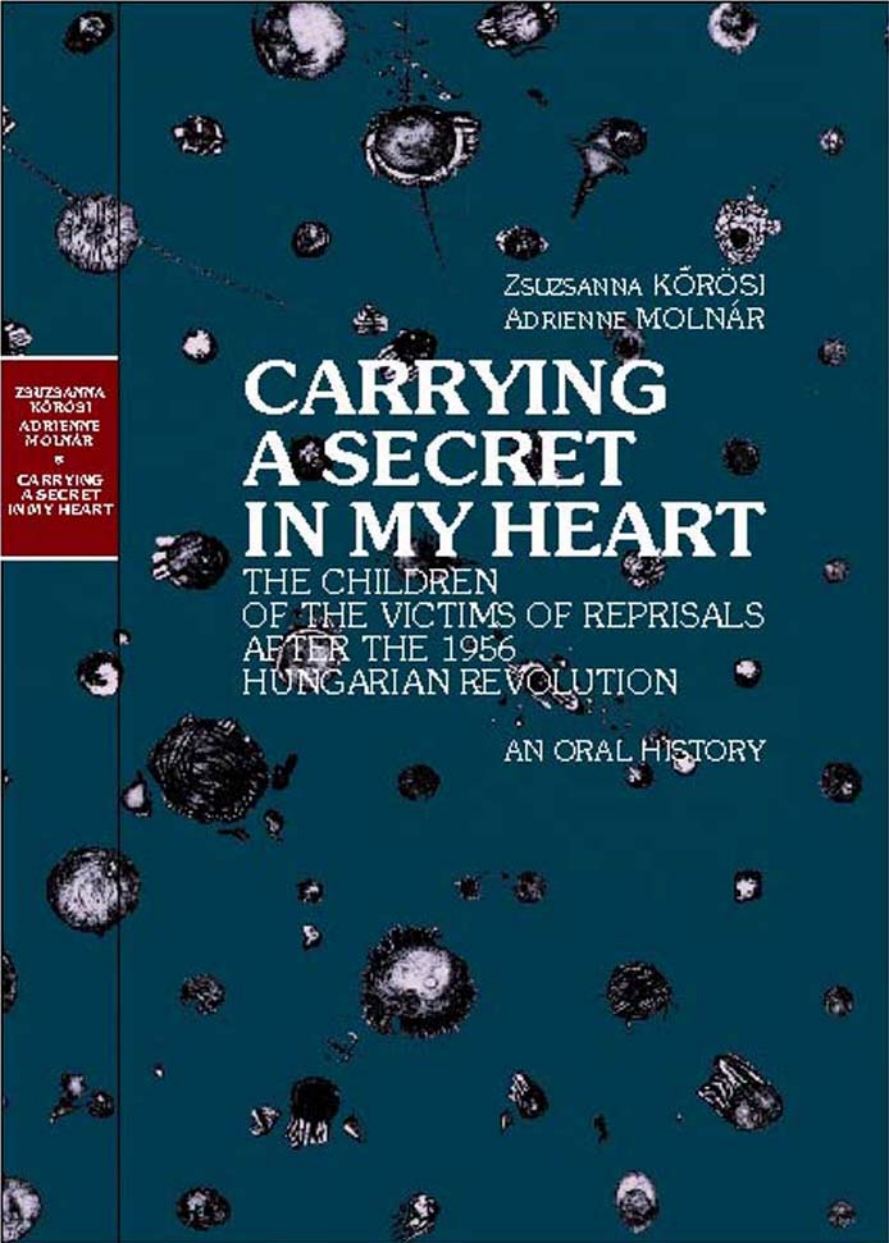
Zsuzsanna Kőrösi
Adrienne Molnár
CARRYING A SECRET IN MY HEART
THE CHILDREN OF THE VICTIMS OF REPRISALS AFTER THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION
AN ORAL HISTORY
ZSUZSANNA KŐRÖSI ADRIENNE MOLNÁR CARRYING A SECRET IN MY HEART

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Children of the Victims of the Reprisals
after the Hungarian Revolution in 1956
An oral history

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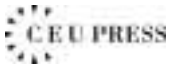
An oral history

by
Zsuzsanna Kőrösi and Adrienne Molnár



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In this volume we present the results of oral history research carried out under the title *The Second Generation of 1956ers*. In the course of our investigations we were looking for answers to the following questions: How were the fates of the children of those executed or imprisoned after the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution affected? And how did the members of a generation that was punished for the revolutionary roles played by their parents grow up with the burden of their heritage? Through our exploration of their personal fates and their experiences in the public and private spheres we also gained valuable information about the micro-history and mentality of Hungarian society as a whole.

Documents found in archives that have been opened up since the change of political system in 1989 prove beyond doubt that the crushing of the revolution was followed by a campaign of political retaliation that surpassed anything that had happened in modern Hungarian history. János Kádár and his government, who were appointed by the Soviets in November 1956, had 229 people executed for their activities in 1956, including prime minister Imre Nagy, the leaders of several revolutionary organisations and workers' councils, armed fighters, and several participants in the intellectual resistance. About twenty-two thousand people were sentenced, thirteen thousand were interned, and tens of thousands more were dismissed from their workplaces and put under police supervision. Following the general amnesty in 1963, the majority of those who had been imprisoned were released, but in many cases discrimination lasted for decades. The revenge, which, besides retaliation against the participants was intended to intimidate society, included the families of the convicts. Children grew up stigmatised and their whole lives were affected by the fact that, because their parents were regarded as enemies by the authorities, they too were being punished. This took place in an atmosphere in which, in order to legitimise the system, the central authorities aimed to control remembrance, forcing people to forget and to remain silent. Their goal was to force members of society to remember things in a particular way. They falsified facts and reinterpreted correlations in keeping with their own goals. They stigmatised the revolution as a counterrevolution and its participants as enemies of the people, murderers and criminals. They rewrote history, and as a result, personal history lost its validity at an official level. They wanted to erase memories that were unwelcome from

the point of view of the system and in order to do so they removed unwanted details, and even people, from film footage, for example. The reinterpretation and falsification of events can also be found in the concepts and language used in the trials that followed the revolution, and in the demagoguery of the so-called *White Books*, brochures and films, which, especially in the first years of the Kádár regime, portrayed the revolution as a counterrevolution. In 1957, for example, as part of the propaganda campaign, a touring exhibition was organised that tried to prove through documentation the horrors of the "counterrevolution". The machinery of falsification worked on several levels, starting with the manipulation of the past in school education, the entire rewriting of official history, as well as the new memories, memorial sites and monuments imposed on society and the demolition of former ones. They attempted to undo the revolution and to make its participants non-existent, in such a way that the mere mention of their names would evoke fear. During the consolidation that followed the direct retribution, however, they tried to relegate to oblivion the events of autumn 1956—both the defeat of the revolution and the retribution that followed. Virtually the only exception to this was a series of campaigns on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the revolution, when the radio, television and press flooded the country with lies that promoted the official evaluation of the revolution.

According to psychologist Ferenc Mérei, himself a 1956 convict, the crushing of the revolution was followed by "nation-wide repression". In the atmosphere of dual communication that was forced on society by the authorities, the majority of people apparently accepted the rules and erased from their minds former memories, feelings and opinions: they were silenced and silent. What had happened in 1956 and the retribution that had followed remained taboo, not only in official communication but also in private life, almost until the change of political system in 1989. One reason for this was that the authorities made certain allowances. The open terror of the previous system disappeared, restrictions were eased, and the majority of people had a growing sense of freedom. As a result of significant changes in the economy the standard of living rose. The methods for transforming memories were not, of course, completely effective. There were areas of personal recollection that could not be reached by the authorities: the institutionalised world cannot erase everything from the memory. Nor should we forget about those who did not give in to manipulation, who did not believe the authorities, and who resisted consciously. They held to the ideals of the revolution until the end and some of them even tried to voice their opinions.

The background to the research was provided by the Oral History Archive (OHA) of the 1956 Institute. The OHA, which began its work in 1981/1982—at a time when it was still illegal—with round-table conversations with participants in the revolution, contains the classified recollections of more than one thousand witnesses of twentieth-century Hungarian history. The aim of this series of conversations was to enable participants, by questioning and extending one another's memories, to piece together their stories of the revolution as

they had known and experienced it, in contrast to the official and falsified historiographical view in which the truth had been reinterpreted. From 1985 the financial support of the Soros Foundation made it possible for the OHA to continue its activities within an organised framework. Since, during the Kádár era, between 1987 and 1989, researchers had no access to written historical documents that were kept in closed archives, research into private and micro-history—in other words, oral history—proved the only possible means by which real events could be explored. As part of the project, which was called *In the Second Line of History*, interviews were made with people who had participated in, shaped or witnessed important events. They included the leaders of the democratic period that followed the Second World War, the economic, political and cultural elite of the Communist system, and participants in the revolution. We talked equally to the representatives of power, those responsible for the retribution, those who had suffered persecution, those who had been imprisoned, and those evicted from their homes and marginalised. Émigrés, predominantly those who had fled abroad following the revolution in order to escape the retribution, formed a separate group. A large group of the interviewees comprised outstanding scientists, artists, writers, architects, religious figures, doctors, newspaper editors and university teachers, who had had a significant influence in their own field or on the history of Hungary as a whole. In an unexpected turn of history several of our interviewees, despite their advanced age, began to be politically active once again and their interrupted public careers, which they had believed to be over, were relaunched after 1990 and the fall of the Communist system. Since we conducted sociologically based interviews that explored motives, background information and complete biographies, besides being an exploration of the falsified Hungarian history of the twentieth century, the collection represents a huge resource for the interpretation of the processes at work in particular social groups and for the examination of life strategies, changes in culture and values, as well as the ways in which values were preserved.

From the middle of the 1990s the OHA further increased the scope of its research. On the one hand, by analysing the interviews contained in the collection certain specific social phenomena can be studied and classified. On the other hand, further interviews were made among members of various social groups. Thus, for example, as part of a project launched in 1999, we are classifying interviews made with 1956 convicts from Miskolc and Budapest using the so-called network method. Using the selected recollections we are reconstructing the interviewees' individual systems of relations and the resulting overall network. The OHA interviews provide a similarly rich resource for a research project begun in 2001, exploring the way in which those imprisoned in relation to the events of 1956 found their way back into society. By making and analysing further oral history-type interviews research on repatriation examines the fates of a particular group of people who left Hungary after 1945, who spent a significant part of their lives abroad, and who returned home following the change of political system.

The tape-recorded conversations are entered word by word into a computer, after which both the interviewer and the interviewee make any corrections they deem necessary on the printed text. The interviewee decides on the level of publicity to which the interview should be exposed. The interview can be closed, which means that the permission of both interviewee and interviewer is required for either research purposes or citation; it can be available for research, which means that the interview can be used freely for research purposes but that the permission of both interviewee and interviewer is required for citation; or it can be public, which means that it can be used freely for the purposes of research and citation, as long as the source is acknowledged. A disc and one bound copy of the transcript, including a front page giving the most important data about the interview, the contract regarding availability for research, an index of the interview, and in some cases attachments, are added to the collection. In order to make it easier to find important information, we make short synopses of the interviews that are transferred to a computer database. The collection is available to researchers. In recent years several hundred people—historians, sociologists, anthropologists, journalists, filmmakers and university and secondary-school students—have visited our research facilities to find information and help in their work.

The most important parts of the OHA are the approximately five hundred interviews made with those who participated at various stages of the revolution. Thus even before our research on *The Second Generation of 1956ers* we had information about how participants and their families had experienced the retribution and about the kind of individual and family strategies they employed in order to handle a situation that was brought about by external forces and accepted by a considerable part of society. Until recently, however, we knew little about the daily experiences of members of the convicts' families, and about what it meant to be the child of a 1956 convict during the Kádár era.

In the course of our investigations, we were looking for answers to the following key questions: What kind of memories do the children of the convicts preserve of the autumn of 1956, of the role of their parents, of the crushing of the revolution and of the retribution that followed? How did all of these affect the lives of the convicts' families? What were their lives like under the changed circumstances, and how did they come to terms with the trauma that had befallen them? What kind of discrimination did the children experience? What formal and informal reactions to the children's difference could be detected on the part of the immediate and wider social environment (micro-community, school, workplace, army)? And how did the children themselves respond? How did their situation influence their emerging identities? How did they evaluate their fathers' activities in 1956? What image did they have of the revolution? How did this image change during the Kádár era? And how was it modified as a result of the change of political system in 1989? What is their attitude to politics and political involvement? What of their experiences have they passed on to the next generation?

We approached the subject of our research from a historio-sociological, socio-psychological and psychological perspective. The interviews focused on the fate of the individual in its social and historical framework and on the inner conflicts experienced by the individual. Thus we became acquainted not only with individual histories but with the characteristics of a unique social group. We thus obtained further information about the mechanism of the Kádár system since we were examining a unique group, the members of which were neither participants in the revolution nor directly involved in the retribution. In this respect they stood closer to the majority of society than to the participants in the revolution. At the same time, however, because they were indirectly involved they acted as indicators of the relationship of society to the political system and to the authorities, since by their mere existence they forced those around them to take sides and make statements. Their experiences also reveal how for forty years Hungarian society related to 1956 as a historical and political event, and to those who had participated in it.

We do not have precise data about the social composition of the participants of the revolution—nor, because of the nature of the event, would this in fact be possible. However, it is obvious that among them we can find representatives of every social stratum. The majority were ordinary people and many of them had lived through the political changes that followed 1946 as adults, experiencing the tensions within society on a daily basis. They were not "conspirators". Life had been made almost impossible for them and they merely wanted to live. Certain groups, such as intellectuals who were members of the Communist Party, the so-called revisionists who had been disappointed by the party's policies, demanded reforms and called for an improvement in the lives and working conditions of the workers and for workers' autonomy. The majority of participants in the revolution, however, were carried into events by the storm of history. They went out into the streets and demonstrated, went on strike, voiced demands and joined armed groups. Some were elected to positions of leadership by the people around them.

We selected our interviewees in several stages. Since we had little preliminary information about potential interviewees, we used the two databases of the 1956 Institute as a starting point: we used documents from the trials of those executed or sentenced to imprisonment in the course of the retribution that followed the revolution as well as the classified interviews of the OHA that related to 1956. We chose our interviewees bearing in mind the social position of their parents. Thus our analysis is not based on quantitative research using a representative sample. Our aim was rather to interview a few individuals from each social stratum in order to explore the fates of people from various backgrounds and society's judgement of them. This would enable us to describe and analyse similarities and differences and to characterise differences according to social position. We also tried to take into consideration differences related to place of residence. When selecting our interviewees we even tried to reflect differences arising from the father's role in the revolution and the age of the child.

We conducted forty-two interviews with forty-three persons. In one case two sisters were interviewed together. Twenty-one of the fathers had been executed and twenty-one imprisoned. In 1956 twenty-one of the families were living in the capital city, thirteen in towns, and eight in smaller villages. Fourteen of the fathers were intellectuals, three were intellectual workers with medium-level qualifications, sixteen were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled industrial workers, five were agricultural workers, one was a leading party functionary, and three were army officers. Among the mothers five were intellectuals, ten were intellectual workers with medium-level qualifications, ten were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled industrial workers, three were agricultural workers, one was a party worker, twelve were housewives, and one, who had been an agricultural worker, died in the summer of 1956. During the revolution three of the fathers were higher-level political leaders, ten were leaders of regional revolutionary organisations, ten were armed fighters, two were members of the army, six were leaders of factory or institution workers' councils, eight took part in the political resistance, while three were sentenced on unsubstantiated charges of murder. In 1956 fifteen of the interviewees were below four years of age, eight were between four and six years of age, sixteen were between seven and ten years old, and four were above ten years old. In terms of gender, twenty-five were women and eighteen were men. We did not originally differentiate according to the gender of the convicted parent. We tried to interview people whose mothers had been convicted, but we found scarcely anyone in this category. On the basis of facts explored so far, we can see two important reasons for this. On the one hand, it was largely men who participated in the revolution, while the women who took part were usually young and childless. On the other hand, the direct retribution affected women to a lesser degree than men. Of the 229 people who were executed 6 were women and none of those 6 had children. There were larger numbers of women among the imprisoned or interned, but the overwhelming majority were either very young or middle-aged and therefore did not have young children. When selecting our interviewees we took additional factors into consideration. First, we contacted only those who were minors and dependents at the time of their fathers' arrests, and who therefore had no way of escaping the consequences of their convictions. It can also be said that the experience of being stigmatised was an inherent part of their socialisation at the beginning of their lives as individuals. Secondly, we excluded those who had left the country after the crushing of the revolution. Thus we interviewed only those who had grown up in Hungary and who were socialised during the Kádár era, since we wanted to obtain information regarding a phenomenon that was embedded in Hungarian society. This does not mean that the fates of those living abroad are not of interest. However, they had to cope with problems of a different kind.

There were great difficulties involved in contacting the interviewees and encouraging them to talk. Even initial encounters gave away something—sometimes a great deal—about them and their relationship to the revolution and the

retribution, and the effects of their personal trauma and long silence. Almost one-seventh of those contacted refused to share their memories. This refusal was motivated, in all cases, by anxiety and fear. They were afraid of facing the trauma. They were unwilling to reopen the old wounds and claimed that an interview would seriously disturb them emotionally. In their cases several decades of pressure to forget proved to be so strong that even during the mid-1990s they were unwilling to talk about what had happened to them. Others were afraid of further revenge, believing that many of those who had masterminded, or passively supported the retribution were still in positions of power that made them potentially dangerous. It was at this stage that we obtained our first personal impression that these people had been completely taken over by their fears.

However, the majority of those contacted did agree to be interviewed. For them the pain and shock of recalling the past was mixed with relief that they could finally talk to someone who was interested. They trusted that by recording their life stories they could pay tribute to their fathers who had been victims of the retribution. None of this, however, contradicts what we have said about fear and anxiety. It simply represents a different way of coming to terms with it. There were some who confronted for the first time during the interview experiences that had been repressed for decades, thus we needed particular empathy in order to help them through the difficulty of recalling the past and breaking their silence. Since we intended to explore the socio-historical correlations of personal experiences, as well as the silenced history of the Kádár era, our subjects could basically be explored by means of interviews. However, in order to represent the context with greater accuracy we also carried out archive research. In making the interviews, we followed the methods of oral history, of the sociological life story-type of interview, and of the deep psychological interview. We recorded entire life stories and attempted to reconstruct the life stories not only of the parents but also of the grandparents in order to become familiar with their everyday lives, their experiences, and their social heritage, while devoting most of our attention to the key aspects of our research.

The design of the interview, which was drawn up as part of the research plan, contained the major question areas and the most important subjects, highlighting the information that we had to obtain from each person in order to end up with comparable answers. The interview design was not, however, a standardised questionnaire but rather a guideline from which we could, and had to, depart depending on the life and the cultural and social background of the interviewee. One cannot prepare for another person's life story. One can, and must, adapt with flexibility, in keeping with the goals of the research, to actual situations. In the course of our conversations we also tried to find answers to questions that the interviewees had relegated to their subconscious selves. On such occasions one cannot ask direct questions or expect immediate and direct answers. If the interviewer acts as a helpful partner and allows the interviewee to talk freely, even hidden correlations can come to the surface. We did not inter-

rupt the interviewees but let them interpret their own stories in their own way. Thus we obtained answers to questions we had not even asked, and with sufficient empathy we were also able to ask some painful questions. Finally, we were aware of our responsibility to help the interviewees to channel the tensions caused by the conversation and by their confessions.

The tape-recorded interviews, the shortest of which was one and a half hours long and the longest ten hours, lasted on average five hours. We usually met on one occasion, but sometimes three or even four times. The transcripts of the recordings are between thirty and two hundred pages long. The interviewees authorised the transcripts and signed a written declaration as to who is permitted to use their recollections for the purposes of research, and under what conditions. Synopses of the interviews were also made, in which we recorded sociological facts, answers to certain questions important to our research, and significant correlations within the life story.

Before starting our analysis it is worth saying a few words about memories and recollections in general and in particular about the authenticity and usefulness of the information provided in our interviews. According to some, recollection is a very doubtful resource from the historiographer's point of view, because, due to the imperfection of recollection, the past cannot be reconstructed from an interview. Indeed, the past cannot be recalled perfectly. The individual experiences of participants, however, are as much a part of any historical event as the facts themselves—which are, after all, often difficult to verify. A memory is never an exact replica of events or of past mental processes. We preserve certain aspects of what happened, forget others immediately, while others fade with the passing of time. Remembrance is not repetitive but constructive. When recalling their life stories those remembering not only describe events but represent them in a particular way and always recreate them from the perspective of the present. Thus memory in itself is not authentic. Memory, when compared to the original event, distorts, simplifies and embellishes. Those remembering preserve and highlight seemingly insignificant elements, while not mentioning others. They are always selective. In recollections myth and reality, fact and fantasy, past and present are permanently confused. The interview setting makes conscious the act of remembering. The interviewee becomes a "professional" rememberer and often instinctively tries to meet, as far as possible, imagined or real individual and social expectations personified by the interviewer. The way in which the life story is constructed, the way in which the interviewee remembers—and what is remembered—are greatly influenced by their distance from the past, the importance of the events described in terms of the person's later fate, as well as the actual situation, the current interests and the verbal abilities of the person remembering. In the process of remembering we build on our knowledge, experiences and emotions. The content and emotional intensity of the recollections reflected the deep personal involvement of the interviewees, who were making confessions about their families and about their innermost feelings and describing their fates, and in some cases their personal tragedies.

Our aim is not to explore historical reality, nor do we intend to reconstruct it in our book. Our intention was to find out about the kind of memories that characterise one particular social group, about their knowledge of the past, about the extent to which they are capable of understanding and incorporating into their identities the significant events of the recent past—the revolution and its consequences—which had an immediate influence on all Hungarians. These interviews were made decades after the events. Prompted by our questions, those remembering systematise what they can recall of their past from the social, moral, mental and intellectual viewpoint valid for them at the time of the interview. Thus no matter how they try to speak of their past experience, it always appears as knowledge with hindsight. Their memories are often mixed with later experiences and tale-like mythological elements. Sometimes they appear to talk "nonsense", or what they say is influenced by actual political and personal factors. We reconstruct what happened to them on the basis of this. When drawing our conclusions we rely on what was said, and we present what the interviewee brought to the surface during our conversations. We do not examine the factuality and truth—that is, the authenticity—of what we hear. We have no right, nor is it our task, to correct them. We have to accept everything, since we have nothing with which to compare the recalled individual stories and emotions. These are relative stories that exist simultaneously. There is no single, valid story.

The current book is structured following a chronological order. We illustrate our observations highlighting the common features of the individual fates by the words of the interviewees showing how, according to their recollections, they experienced these years.

The name of the interviewee follows each edited interview fragment. Three of the interviewees were not willing to allow us to publish their names. They are referred to by the (fictitious) abbreviated surname "Z". Short biographies of the interviewees and members of their families are also included on page 153. The illustrations were selected from the personal documents of the interviewees.

In the course of our research, psychologist Gertrud Hoffmann worked alongside us. Sadly, she did not live to see the publication of this book.

She was born on 28 March 1928 in Újpest, near Budapest. In May 1944 her family was forced to move into a ghetto. Her parents and elder sister were deported, and she was conscripted into a non-combatant labour corps, from which she managed to escape. First, she hid in a boathouse in Újpest, then she was hidden by friends and acquaintances. Her mother and sister died in Auschwitz. Only her father returned. In 1946 she was admitted to the University of Budapest and in 1951 she graduated in Psychology and Biology and became a secondary-school teacher. From November 1956, she participated in the production and dissemination of illegal publications, then in organising aid for the families of the convicts. She was arrested in 1958, and in 1959 was sentenced to four and a half years in prison. News of the illness and death of

her father, her only remaining close relative, reached her in prison. She was released in 1961.

She taught in a children's home and an elementary school, then from 1963 in a secondary school. She was an excellent teacher and her students remember her with great fondness. Even so, she never gave up her profession as a psychologist and continued to pursue her own studies while she was working. From 1967 until her retirement in 1989 she worked as a leading educational psychologist. She actively participated in organising a network of educational counselling services and in shaping their professional profile. She managed to help many teenagers through their problems. She also participated in training young psychologists at Loránd Eötvös University, Budapest and at the Psychology Centre of the Municipal Pedagogical Institute. She regularly published articles in professional journals.

She assisted us in our work from the very beginning with her professional and personal experience. In a note written in May 1999 she described what this research meant to her: "I was delighted to be asked to take part in this project. I am personally involved in the subject on two levels. During my twenty years in outpatient child psychology I was particularly interested in cases in which children had been exposed to severe family trauma, such as death, serious illness, loss of freedom or bitter divorce. (I myself was traumatised as a child—because of Nazism.) The other level is the 1956 revolution itself, for which I personally tried to do something. I served almost three years of a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence. I am deeply interested and emotionally dedicated to the survival of the spirit and ideals of the revolution. I recorded these interviews with a passionate interest imbued with personal involvement. I listened to them and reread them several times, and never for one minute was I bored by them."

As a result of illness that left her in great pain she decided to bring an end to her life. She died on 31 July 1999.

This book is also dedicated to her memory.

A két kakas

Volt egyszer két kiskakas. Egyszer az egyik kakas talált egy ~~pénzt~~ aranyat. Elment a boltba, hogy felváltsa. Mikor hazament adott a testvérének. Mikor a testvére ment ki a szemétdombra két ~~pénzt~~ aranyat talált, de nem adott belőle a bátyjának. Ezen összeveszekedtek. Végül el kellett menni a cica bíróhoz, hogy igazságot tegyen. Azt mondta a bíró, adják oda az ~~összes~~ pénzt. A kakas oda adta a ~~pénzt~~ aranyat a cicának. A cica csak ezt várta. Miután odaadta elker-

I.

gette őket. A két kakas szomorúan ment el és megfogadták, hogy többet nem vesznek össze.

Tekete Zsolt
II. o.
M. Tapolca 1956. VI. 7.

Ecsi Tamás
kuruc vitéze
1703-17 11.

miau-miau

For description of illustrations see p. 181.

II.

THE REVOLUTION

People's memories of the revolution depend largely on how old they were when it took place and on the nature of the events they experienced, but also on how their families interpreted those events, both at the time and later. While the memories of those who lived in the capital, or in places where there were mass demonstrations or armed fighting, are based on first-hand experience, others heard news of the revolution only indirectly. Those whose families discussed the events as they took place during the revolution itself have recollections that differ from those who were surrounded by silence. Some memories have faded or altered over the years, but some are still very much alive. Environmental factors, as well as the publication of memoirs, analyses and political interpretations, have significantly affected people's ability to recollect what actually happened.

"Uncertainty was part of our everyday life"

Those who were very young (i.e. less than four years old) in the autumn of 1956 cannot be expected to remember the days of the revolution, and even some who were older at the time are only able to recall fragments of memories. Others, however, have a clear recollection of events and their relevance. Their memories are distinguished by emotions and moods that had previously been unknown in their families. Some recall excitement, perplexity, tension, anticipation and fear; others recall feelings of relief and euphoria.

"I remember that when I was six I ran home one day screaming and screaming that the 'revulsion' had broken out. I was proud of bringing such an important piece of news, something I was able to judge, to some extent, as being bad for *them* and good for us. I must have had a very childish perception of what was happening. And it was then that my parents switched on the radio. I can recall the picture clearly." (György Orbán)[1]

[1] The name of the interviewee follows the edited excerpt from our conversation. Three of the interviewees did not want their names to appear—they are referred to by the (fictitious) initial Z. in this volume. See the short biographies of the interviewees and their families on pages 153–183.

"Then we could go out into the street and everybody was in a state of euphoria. Complete strangers hugged and embraced. I felt tremendous happiness because something had happened that everybody was cheerful about. It was like Christmas. (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

"It is not fear that I remember most about those days, but a kind of tension. I didn't feel as if I had to be afraid, but it wasn't clear what would happen next. Uncertainty was part of everyday life; people were discussing things all the time. Things were certainly more tense, less relaxed than usual. It was in the air. Even I felt it." (ÉVA Z.)

Most of our interviewees had a photographic recollection of the traumatic events. The strange experiences were made more dramatic by their emotional charge and by the unusual behaviour of their parents. In their childhood memories, incidents related to the revolution—fighting, the noise of firearms, the roar of tanks, the sight of the dead and wounded—are often accompanied by a sense of being threatened and the desire to run away.

"I remember when the tanks came up the street and we all went to see grandmother. I remember how whizzing bullets were lighting up the dark. I was very afraid. Whenever it happened we would sleep in the cellar." (MARGIT BATONAI)

"It was exciting, even children were captivated. We lived in Fő utca, opposite the city soviets (as the local councils were called at the time) and I remember that the red star was knocked down. I also remember that when the Russians either withdrew or pressed forward the tanks rolled past in front of our house and we had to turn off all the lights. We sat in the bathroom in candlelight with my grandmother. I remember this scene very clearly." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

"It was a terrifying scene I found in front of the hospital where the first wounded arrived who got injured in the fusillade in front of the border guards' barracks in Mosonmagyaróvár. It turned out that three privates had carried on shooting for as long as they had ammunition left in their barrels. In the end, the officer had hand grenades thrown into the crowd although people were already writhing on the ground. There were many wounded, most of them with internal injuries. My friend's mother worked in this hospital and when we got there one man, who had just been taken there by a furniture removal van, had almost all his insides hanging out. He had an injury to the head and one leg missing. We were very frightened then." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

The marches, demonstrations, and destruction of the symbols of soviet power—memorials were pulled down and the red stars were knocked off buildings in almost every town—were all deeply imprinted in children's memories. By way of contrast, many interviewees recalled symbols of Hungarian patriotism and freedom: flags with the Communist symbol cut from the middle, the Kossuth coat of arms,[2] the much-played national anthem, the patriotic poem *Appeal*, Sándor Petőfi's *National Song*, and slogans demanding independence.

"There was a long, long rope attached to the red star and people were pulling it. And then, I can't say exactly when, people removed the red star from the

city hall as well. I remember a ladder there, and people seemed to be taking it off." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

"I remember people, grown-ups, came in columns of four or six, shouting. They were singing the national anthem and the *Appeal*, and something else too. I joined the crowd. I also shouted that 'Whoever is a Hungarian should come with us, whoever is a Hungarian will join us'. It was like a great game to me, but it was thrilling at the same time. It makes my heart beat faster even today. It was a wonderful thing. I felt that it was good to be Hungarian." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

"During the revolution, in October, we had to remain in school for a celebration when the old Communist coat of arms was replaced by the Kossuth coat of arms. It was my form teacher who delivered the speech. He explained what the coat of arms meant: the stripes represented the rivers Danube, Tisza, Dráva and Száva, the hills stood for the Fátra, Mátra and Tátra mountains. That is how he explained it to us young pupils. And then the Kossuth coat of arms was put on the wall." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

In October and November the supply of food was irregular and queuing in front of shops became increasingly common. Some were alarmed by this, while others maintained the appearance of orderliness: people remained patient and there was no looting. Children felt proud of being given important tasks to do by adults: they took part in the family's division of labour by queuing up for bread and milk.

"A few men organised queues where everyone received food. Things were relatively civilised. There was no stealing and people didn't smash shop windows to loot. Quite the contrary. Everyone stood in line in an orderly fashion, and eventually they all received their rations. I mean, there was no unrest." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"When the Russian troops began to march in the whole family moved to the cellar together. We spent a week there. As children we were not really aware of the danger but rather enjoyed the romanticism of it. One of my enduring memories is of how, as a child, I was appointed to take care of the family's bread supply, and every morning at about four or five o'clock I had to go to the baker's and wait until the bread arrived." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

Many of the older children were present alongside their parents and peers at locations where the revolutionary events took place and took part in local demonstrations. The younger children were aware only of the novelty of the events and the crowd, while those who were teenagers at the time recall the stirring atmosphere, the experience of participation, as well as how the incidents were explained to them.

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[2] Flags with holes in the middle, the most widespread symbol of the revolution, appeared during the first hours of the revolution. The Communist emblems that symbolised dictatorship were cut from the national flag, and in their place appeared the Kossuth coat of arms, as a reference to the 1848–1849 Hungarian war of independence.

"I remember that on 23 October my father took me to the demonstration in front of the Parliament. I have some recollection of this, but only that there were plenty of people there and that something was happening." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

"When we got to the soviet building the revolution, the whole circus in fact, was in full swing. They had already begun to paint over the red stars, standing on tall ladders. They went from shop to shop and painted them over. They may have knocked down the one on the soviet building, but the ones on the shops were painted over with red paint. We children didn't really understand what was going on. A few buildings further down the road was the police station and we saw that the army had already arrived. The soldiers were kneeling and their guns were ready to fire. They were only waiting for the order to fire into the crowd." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

"I remember that we took part in a procession in [the small village of] Ököritófülpös. There were about two hundred children there from elementary school, boys and girls, up to the age of fourteen. Their parents were either dead or had put their children into state care. And there we were, following the teachers and the nurses. They were shouting slogans and we repeated them in chorus. As we walked people threw flowers in front of us." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

"On 26 October, the students at the military academy, the secondary school, the industrial training institute and the upper grades of elementary schools, and the teachers of Moson organised a silent procession to the memorial to the 1848 revolution. This took place without event. All the classes were led by their form teachers. Holding national flags we proceeded in silence to the statue. We sang patriotic songs, of course. And then we suddenly felt the novelty of the events and it was really stirring." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

Even if family members were not present at the events, the children's environment, the press and the radio informed them of the rapidly changing situation. Listening to the radio—especially to Radio Free Europe—was of special significance in those days. Families, acquaintances and friends gathered to listen to the latest news and tried to find out what was going on and what to expect.

"In Sopron leaflets and bundles of newspapers were thrown from aeroplanes, and we also listened to the BBC's Hungarian broadcasts so we knew that there was a revolution going on. It was never our father or any of the parents in the neighbourhood who went to collect these leaflets, but always the children. They ran for them because there were no papers and everybody was hungry for news. Since there was no postal service the only way to find out what was going on was to collect these newspapers, which were thrown from a low-flying aircraft onto the nearby football pitch. Then we shared them on the streets. They were in great demand since everybody was keen to get news." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

"I was sitting at the table, watching people bustling about in the room. When they started to talk on the radio everybody fell silent. My father leaned on the radio, while Géza Törzsök squatted in front of a kitchen stool and rested his elbow on it. This image has been preserved in my mind like a photograph.

The others were scattered around the room, sitting or standing. Everybody was tense as they listened. I can still feel that tension. And then suddenly the voice on the radio began saying 'We have been telling lies by night, we have been telling lies by day, we have been telling lies on every frequency'. Everybody was absorbed by the voice." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

Tuition in schools was suspended and the delighted teenage boys began prowling the streets. The revolutionaries, who were often only a few years older, welcomed the curious children. Some of the teenagers even got hold of guns, while others produced and circulated leaflets.

"I remember quite clearly the excitement when we heard news of what was happening. When we went to school the next day it turned out that there were no classes because some of the teachers hadn't turned up. It was a rather strange situation. We were sent home, but as news spread that tanks from Székesfehérvár would be passing through Budafok we went to see what was going on. By then a few tanks had already passed by and we followed them as far as the far end of Albertfalva, where we came across a group busy erecting barricades against the tanks. At the junction between Fehérvári út and Andor utca they pushed wagons across the street using the industrial tracks on Andor utca. Of course we were delighted to help them. It began to feel slightly frightening when the tanks actually arrived and the soldiers began to threaten us with pistols. Then we slowly went home. My father was not too pleased that we had been out on the streets, but he couldn't keep an eye on us all the time." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

"There were many abandoned weapons lying about on the street, and there was a shepherd-boy, or at least his father had sheep, and he herded them to the Danube bank. He got hold of two machine guns and two rifles. They were Russian weapons—bayonets and hand-grenades. We took them down to the Danube bank where there were sheaves of reeds that had been bundled together after reed harvesting, and we hid them. Later the Russians came and collected them. But we had rifles. We were marching along with them but we were just children and it had no significance." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"We were just small kids, in the fourth grade, and we stole red crayons from school to write on the walls: 'Russians go home!'. We wrote other things on pieces of paper and scattered them around like leaflets. A chaplain called Bandi caught and reprimanded us. 'Do you want to get your fathers sent to jail?'" (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

Children were affected by the atmosphere of the revolutionary days, but how much they understood and how they interpreted events depended predominantly on their parents. Some of the adults could not make any sense of the chaos for themselves and were therefore unable to provide explanations for their children no matter how much they wanted to. Often there was not even time for interpretations. We will see how, even later on, not all children were able to understand and interpret either the historical events or the personal tragedy. Those whose parents did not discuss the revolution in the following years—and

who were surrounded by silence on the part of their wider environment—preserve a negative memory of the days of the revolution. For them the revolution is associated mainly with tragedy and loss, and their infantile fears and inhibitions remained with them for many years.

"What happened in 1956 caused only misfortune, not just to my father but to every other man who shared his fate. That is what I think. I was not allowed to continue my studies. I have a few books about 1956 but I have never finished reading them because I am unable to come to terms with what happened." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

On the other hand, many were stirred by the extraordinariness of the historical situation and were aware especially of the desire for freedom and the significance of rising against dictatorship and soviet oppression. From all that they heard these aspects must have been the easiest for them to understand, since at school they had learned that it was every nation's responsibility to defend itself from alien oppressors.

"It would be better if the Russians went home. What did a child think? What were they doing here? They were strange people who did not speak Hungarian. Probably that's what I thought. I saw, for instance, a burnt Russian soldier beside a tank and I felt no sorrow for him." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"I also remember that I was very excited and I wanted them to win. At the age of thirteen I was already aware that there was a revolution going on. And I was rooting for them to succeed because I knew that it would be good for us if the Russians went home, if there was freedom of the press, and if other demands were fulfilled." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"MY FATHER BECAME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT"

If the father was executed, it was left to the mother or to another member of the family to tell the child what their father had done during the days of the revolution. Children whose fathers were sentenced to imprisonment were in a position to be given an explanation from them later as to what they had done and why, but not every father was able, or willing, to talk about his role in 1956. Later on children could obtain information from places other than their families, which helped them to broaden, or verify, their existing knowledge.

During the revolution, what younger children perceived most was that the life of the family had suddenly been upset. They had fewer opportunities to see their fathers, who often came home only to sleep and wash. Or, on the contrary, the house suddenly became full of bustle, and strange people turned up in the flat for long discussions.

"I recall the impression that something very important and something highly mysterious was going on. It was obvious that something unusual was happening and that daddy had something important to do. I only found out later about many things, such as where daddy had been and what kind of things he had been involved in. At the time I only knew that he was involved in dan-

gerous situations, but I didn't really know where he had been. I don't think he was very keen to talk about it, and I'm not sure if he was supposed to talk about it at all. If he could ring my mum he did so. Otherwise he only dropped in to change clothes and say hello to us. Everything revolved around daddy, the wondering about his whereabouts and the relief when he got in touch. Then everything started all over again. (ÉVA Z.)

"For another two or three days nothing happened. Then it was like a landslide. He was elected—I'm not really sure as what—and I began to be aware that more and more people were starting to turn up at our flat. My father became increasingly important." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

"My father was a busy person and always had lots of friends around him. Our home bustled with activity and we had many visitors. They were adults whom I had known earlier. And my father was often away from home. (IDA VÁMOS)

Those who were already aware of their fathers' activities during the revolution itself talked mostly about the positive, humanitarian nature of what their fathers had done. Fathers who were recalled with this kind of respect had perhaps been elected as head of one of the revolutionary organisations; they may have been responsible for maintaining order so that arms were not passed to unauthorised persons; they had helped fugitives and saved lives. Others were remembered as having fought for freedom and justice and for having taken up arms against the invaders.

"I remember fairly well that after 26 October, when it looked as if the situation would be consolidated and that new parties could be established, along with my father I took part in the first steps towards party organisation. In practice this meant that with several of my father's friends we went down to one of the party offices used by the Democratic Association of Hungarian Women and confiscated it. My father had an old signboard that he had saved in the attic with 'Democratic People's Party' written on it, and we placed it at the door of this office." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

"I hung around the council all day to see what was going on. I remember the feverish commotion, people running around, some with weapons and armbands in the national colours. I often went to see my father in this building, but as a thirteen-year-old I was interested less in the events themselves than in the fact that I could be beside my father. I was often present when he gave a speech. I remember his speeches. They were strongly anti-Soviet. He wanted the Russians to leave and for us to be neutral, like Austria and Switzerland. He did everything that he believed in wholeheartedly, and he had a deep conviction that this would result in something very good." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"GET DRESSED, YOU'RE COMING WITH US!"

The majority of children were aware of the defeat of the revolution from the change of mood within the family. For them the real turning point was not

4 November, the crushing of the revolution, but rather the disappearance of one of their parents. The majority of families were expecting the arrest, since people from their neighbourhood had been taken away one after the other. Some hid with relatives or friends for weeks and months, hoping to avoid arrest.

Acquaintances and relatives often tried to persuade the men to flee, but they refused to emigrate—partly because they did not consider themselves guilty, and partly because it never occurred to them that they would be punished. Some, on the other hand, wanted to face the consequences of their actions, while others remained at home out of love for their country and feeling of responsibility towards their families.

"I remember him saying to my mother 'Why should I leave? I've done nothing. I have no reason to leave. First of all I am Hungarian, I will not leave my country. Secondly, I have a family, three children here.' It never occurred to him that he should leave. My mum always quoted the example of other people who had left. He was taken away several times and my mother was afraid that one day they would not let him return home. And she was right. By letting him come home, in fact, they were offering him an opportunity to emigrate. Perhaps they didn't want to put them behind bars immediately. I don't know what their considerations were, but I know that nobody took that opportunity. Nobody left." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"When the borders were opened and many Hungarians emigrated, my father could have left, because a car came for him. A black Volga car arrived and the people in it told him 'Look, you have two children, one of them is ill, you have a wife, the border has been opened, everybody is leaving.' But my father said 'Then who will be hanged? I will not leave this place.' And he even told me that if he had to do it all over again he would do everything in just the same way." (MÁRIA BALI)

The women had a much keener sense of reality, and consequently suffered from greater anxiety. Several interviewees recalled family conversations in which their mothers had argued for emigration. Some men had already made up their minds to leave the country along with their families but changed their minds as a result of the propagandistic promises of pardon. They believed the statements of János Kádár (the new prime minister elevated to power by the Soviets), which he repeated several times in the course of November, that participants in the revolution would not be punished. A few of the wives later blamed their husbands for not being realistic about the consequences of their actions, and for the fact that by staying at home they not only made their own position more difficult but that of their families as well. Even if some families chose to stay, almost everybody had relatives or close acquaintances who went to live abroad.

"It probably happened during the second attack by the Russians and he wanted to save us. He promised my mother that he would emigrate with us, because he had some idea what would happen to him if the Russians won and he was captured. He convinced my mother that we should emigrate. He sent us ahead to Győr, to my grandfather. We spent two days there, then he sent

for us. He sent a message to say that everything was alright, that we should go home, and that he would not emigrate because he had nothing to be afraid of. He said he had done nothing for which he could be called to account." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"He didn't think very far ahead. He didn't think of fleeing with his family, for example. My mother often reproached my father for this. But he really didn't want to go. He could have organised it. He had the chance to get hold of a van, pack up his family and leave." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

Most interviewees had no direct memories of their fathers' arrest. They were either not present or were too young at the time to remember. However, those who were present remember it as one of the most traumatic moments of their lives. They still find it distressing to remember how, often during the night, policemen, soldiers, and occasionally plainclothesmen broke into their homes, woke the whole family and ransacked their flats. They looked at them terrified, not understanding what was going on. How could their strong fathers be overpowered? Some of the mothers cried, others demanded explanations or protested about what was happening. They remember how their fathers accepted arrest with dignity. They said farewell to their families and asked older children to take care of their younger siblings in an attempt to calm and reassure them. Many interviewees recall such moments as the last image they have of their fathers.

"People always remember moments of extreme sadness or joy. It seems like only yesterday when he was taken away. They searched the house and we were woken up. They searched the straw mattresses since they were looking for weapons. I remember that there was no heating in the bedroom and the fireplace was stuffed with newspaper, which they pulled out. They searched the whole flat but found no weapons, then they told my mother that one change of underwear was allowed. And they took daddy away. The scene often appears before my eyes, as if it were happening now. Then he said goodbye to all of us. He said we should be good and obedient, and that we must remember him fondly. I think that is what he said. I remember it as a traumatic experience. I didn't really know what was happening." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

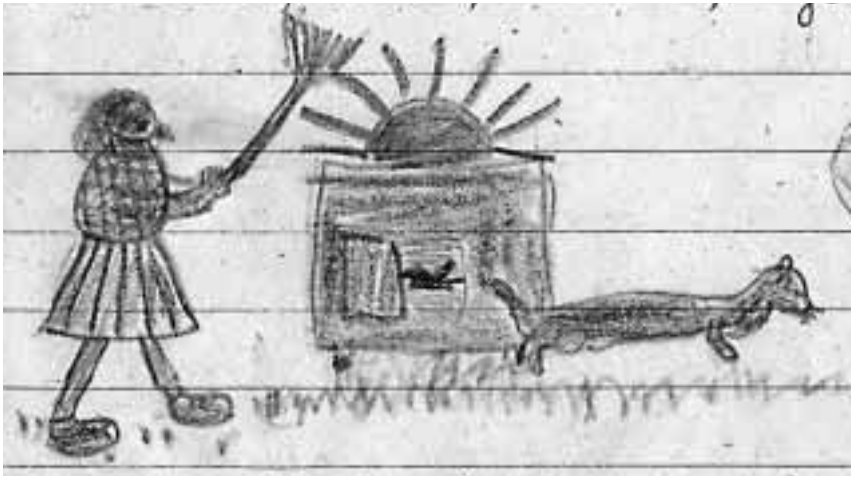
"One night they came to search our flat. I was woken up by the noise of two strangers turning everything upside down. My mother or father told me to stay still and not get up. I watched them search through everything. They said hardly anything. They were not exactly rude, but rather silent and determined in a threatening way. Both my mother and father watched them closely, because sometimes these people deliberately hid compromising objects in the flats that were being searched. When they had finished they said to my father: 'Get dressed, you're coming with us!' My father got out his railway official's uniform, which he wore when he was working. On the collar there was a thick gold stripe with three gold stars, which in the army denotes the rank of colonel. 'Not that! You must wear civilian clothes!' they said. My parents reacted calmly. My mother was much more determined than my father. He had a kind of quiet serenity. But my mother, in a very resolute, very militant voice, asked: 'Where

are you taking my husband? Please let me know!' They said they were taking him to the nearby police detention cells in Sopron." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

"As they led him away my father said to me: 'You are the man of the family now, you must help your mother!' While he was away I always remembered that. My younger sister and I took the task so seriously that we managed to save some of the money that was entrusted to us. We felt that the family needed to stick together." (TIBOR MOLNÁR)

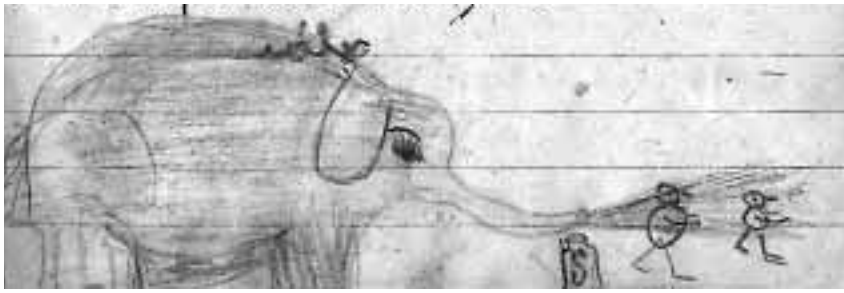
"He always shaved using a small mirror placed in the window. He was covered with shaving foam when the policemen came for him. He washed, got dressed and left. The policemen paid no attention to us since they saw that he wasn't going to resist arrest. And he didn't resist. He got dressed, said goodbye to us and left. We children never saw him again." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

The vivid, expressive images they used, and the way in which the interviewees recalled the revolution and their feelings at the time reveal how deeply the events were imprinted on their minds. This can be explained not only by the exceptional atmosphere of the autumn of 1956, but also by the life-changing consequences of what happened during those days.



III.


Ehető gombák.
Csirke gomba
Vargánya gomba (Cipeke)
(Tinarú)
1957 október 25-én az
ujságírókat kiengedték.



A NEW WORLD

The arrest of the head of the family, a figure who represented security, marked the beginning of a new and difficult period in the life of the family. Children were left without fathers, and the intimate family atmosphere and security that had characterised their lives before the revolution suddenly disappeared. There were no more family outings and their fathers were no longer there to make toys for them or tell them stories. Forty years later the interviewees remember their fathers as family men who were cleverer, more erudite and more hard-working than others around them.

"He joined in our games. He loved children. Those weekends were like few others in my life because I grew up very quickly." (Erzsébet Pekó)

"I adored my father, as if he were God. He was very erudite. You didn't just have to look up to him, you had to crane your neck. He deserved admiration but you could only feel love for him. I avoided being naughty and getting up to mischief not because I had no desire to do so, or because I was afraid of a beating, but because even the thought that I would make my dad unhappy was too terrible to bear! This was enough to keep me from misbehaving." (Patrícia Kállay)

"He loved us, there is no doubt about that. We were always going on excursions together to Leányfalu. We spent a lot of time together. I remember that we always took part in the parade [on 1 May] and I really hated it. He always carried me on his shoulders." (Margit Batonai)

"I remember a wooden knife that he carved, and I carved one just like it for my own son. I also remember him carrying me on his bicycle. There was a child's seat at the front." (László Kolozsy)

"My mother left no stone unturned"

The women who were left alone had to struggle with many existential and emotional problems. Very often they had to take care of the family on their own and had to come to terms with what had happened and why, while at the same time creating a new life for the family.

Those who did not know what their husbands had done and who had no idea why they had been arrested were left bewildered and powerless. Those who

knew nothing about what was happening to their spouses because the authorities gave them no information, and who learned about their sentences only later lived in insecurity and helplessness. Unless they received help from those around them, they simply lost hope. The majority of women, however, did everything they could to get information, and depending on their own capacities and the opportunities available to them tried to save their arrested husbands and get their punishment reduced. Some sought the help of friends whom they believed to be influential, while others sought out acquaintances in positions of power in the hope that they could help. But even then they managed to get hold of very little information and often learned nothing about their husbands for weeks and months.

"I think my mother was beside herself for several months. First of all she had no idea where my father was. She tried to run after him so she could at least find out where he had been taken. In those days people were ready to believe anything—that they would be taken off to Siberia immediately, for example—and, as it turned out eventually, not entirely without reason. She didn't even know if he was alive at all. With great difficulty she managed to discover that he was in Nagykanizsa." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"I think my grandfather, along with Tamás Major [a celebrated actor of the day], went to see Kádár. He left no stone unturned in his attempts to save my father. At one stage it looked as if Kádár had promised my father an absolute pardon, but nothing came of it. I think the explanation was that an envoy had been sent from Russia to say that it was not possible after all. This isn't very likely, but this is what I heard from my grandmother, and she also said that he had an enemy, a careerist." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

Relatives initially hoped that legal proceedings would be carried out fairly, but the trials usually ended in severe sentences. People generally had no trust in the public defence provided, and whenever they could they hired their own. However, the authorities often imposed restrictions on them. As a result of a decree passed in 1957, in particularly important political cases—the so-called double zero cases—in order to preserve state secrecy the defence could only be provided by lawyers approved by the Ministry of Justice.[1] Many defendants made great financial sacrifices and sold their valuables in order to cover their lawyers' costs. However, even then many of the lawyers chosen did not provide an effective defence. The majority carried out their duties simply for the money without standing up against the authorities and risking their careers.

"A public defender was assigned to him, who said that if I didn't send him three thousand forints he wouldn't attend. I sent the money, but whenever I went to see him he was out. I could never manage to meet him. When the death sentence was pronounced I waited and waited for him for an entire day. Then the lawyer came and said that he had no time, that he was in a hurry, and that I should just look at it as if there had been an accident, as if [my hus-

[1] See Peragraph 31 (1) of Law Decree 34, 1957.

band] had been run down by a tram. He didn't even listen to me." (Mrs JÁNOS MAGYAR)[2]

Some more fortunate women were able to find lawyers who performed their task honestly and professionally, and who supported the families sympathetically.

"This lawyer was a true Hungarian and took on every case he could during the trials after the events of 1956. However, János Kardos was an old man and died of a heart attack while he was working. His successor, József Máli, who had studied under him and who had been his apprentice, continued my husband's defence. He did an excellent job. He defended not only my husband but everyone else who had stood for the same cause. He also allowed payment of his fees in small instalments. I can't speak too fondly of him." (Mrs SÁNDOR BALI)[3]

"My mum was looking for a lawyer but she was told that it was to be a double zero case so not just anyone could take it on. Somebody recommended a lawyer who could assume this kind of case. I remember that in the evenings we sat for long hours in the office at the lawyers' co-operative because he always left my mum until last and talked to her at great length. This helped her a lot. He let her talk and he tried to answer. He was able to bring news of dad. This meant a lot to us." (ÉVA Z.)

If the arrested person was tried along with his former colleagues or acquaintances, wives tried to help each other. By discussing possible methods of rescuing their husbands they co-ordinated their actions and kept their hopes alive.

"My mother went to pieces. She kept crying, breaking down, and crying again. Other women, friends of hers who had suffered the same fate, would visit her. Our flat was their headquarters. They held council there and talked. They said they would go as far as Kádár. They also said that the consequences might not be too dire, since someone had talked with this person, someone else with that person, and the management of the metallurgical company was on our side. So they were optimistic. They didn't expect the sentences to be anywhere near that harsh. I saw my mother crying, I saw her break down, but somewhere deep down she always hoped that this would only be temporary, that the situation would change. She went on feeling like this until the sentence of twelve years imprisonment was pronounced. Then she went to see all her acquaintances and left no stone unturned in her attempts. When she was in Pest she even went to the ministry, along with the wives of other condemned men from Miskolc." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

Women who had already been in similar situations, that is, those whose acquaintances, relatives or husbands had been harassed for political reasons under one of the previous political systems, knew just how important it was to avoid the death penalty. They knew that a sentence of several years' impris-

[2] The interview with Mária Magyar was conducted in the presence of her mother.
[3] The interview with Mária Bali was conducted in the presence of her mother.

onment pronounced in political cases was usually eventually followed by an amnesty, thus they were relieved to hear anything other than the death penalty.

"Seven years. That was a huge relief. Especially the fact that the waiting was over. According to my mother, we had got off reasonably well. And the end was in sight. We could foresee a time when it would all be over." (ÉVA Z.)

"The other women were crying and were really distressed because of the sentences. They asked my mother why she wasn't. In fact she looked relieved. She told them it was because he had not been hanged. She had been scared the whole time—and I think not without reason—that he would be hanged. Then she told me that in her opinion there was no such thing as fifteen years in prison. If it was fifteen years then it would be bearable. She believed it would not be fifteen years, but less. And she was right. In the end it was six and a half years." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"LIFE BECAME EXTREMELY DIFFICULT"

The sense of personal loss that accompanied the arrest, imprisonment or execution of the father was only heightened by the further consequences, firstly in the form of discrimination against other members of the family. With the loss of the breadwinner, and as a result of the confiscation of all his assets, the family's standard of living fell significantly and several families were reduced to poverty. As a result of a decree passed in 1957, relatives of the executed were not eligible to receive widows' pensions or support for those left as orphans.[4]

"The two of us earned sufficient money for food at least. We were scared, starving and cold. That's the truth. In the winter we had no fuel. Our acquaintances and relatives raised some money for us every now and again so that we could buy food. We really had fallen on hard times, and these were very difficult years." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"We couldn't even attend school since we were more or less barefooted and starving. Really starving. My mother went out cleaning in other people's houses while we delivered coal or water to Hungarians and Gypsies alike, just to get a piece of bread. On other occasions we worked as day-labourers in order to get a little food in return. I was extremely thin." (VALÉRIA KOLOMPÁR)

"My mother went to stuff geese at 2 am, and by the time she went out to clean for a doctor she had stuffed sixty or seventy geese. She knew she had to go, otherwise there would be no food for us. My younger brother and I collected sacks of cow pats from the fields and took them home to our attic to dry to use for heating in the winter." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

"She was sacked and no one wanted to employ her anywhere. She took on cleaning jobs in various places because we still had to live somehow. She kept selling bits of our furniture. We had had a relatively well-furnished, well-run

[4] See Peragraph 1 (2) of Law Decree 45, 1957.

household before, as well as animals and everything. Bit by bit it all disappeared. Furthermore, the confiscation of assets was also part of the sentence." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

In the course of the retribution, spouses also became targets, with the authorities restricting their employment opportunities. Of the women we interviewed, one in three had been given the sack. This happened mainly to those whose presence was regarded as dangerous due to their husbands' participation in the revolution, or to those who, following the arrest of their husbands, had stood up for them in public. They were forced to accept less favourable posts. Those who had been housewives or had lived on a homestead now had to look for a workplace. Those without qualifications could only become unskilled workers or day-labourers, but in many cases the overzealous local authorities made even this impossible. Even those with qualifications had difficulties finding employment, and most of the time they could only get menial, poorly paid, hard physical work.

"My mother was sacked from her job and it was very difficult for her to find a new workplace. Eventually she found work in the local shop in the next street." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

"Afterwards my mother's life became very hard. She had to look for work but no one wanted to employ her. She applied to many places and eventually she was given work at a cloth factory. She got a job in the woolscour. The job she did is now automated but back then the wet wool had to be placed in the machine and removed by hand. It was extremely hard work. She had to stand in water the whole time wearing rubber boots. The men were unwilling to do such a job. But she had no choice because she had three children. We had to live somehow, she had to put food on the table for us." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"My mother went out to work as a cleaner but the party secretary had her dismissed even from this job. Then she went to Budapest to work for a chemicals company. They couldn't get her sacked from there." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

"She was given work in a day-care centre, in the kitchens. She cleaned the cooking pots. They even said to her 'Well, the grande dame might not like doing this kind of work!' But when they saw that my mother was more concerned about her family and the fate of her husband than about such provocation they left her alone." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

The restrictions were felt most severely by the uneducated village women who were already poor, and by their children, who had to go out to work at a young age in order to alleviate the family's financial hardships. The situation was similar for those who were reduced to poverty as a result of their assets being confiscated. In families with several children, the eldest sometimes abandoned his or her studies in order to go out to work, while the younger children helped with the household chores.

"When we were older we started to go with my mother to the countryside to work. Our first common workplace was Telekgerendás. That's when I dropped out of school in the eighth grade. It was all outdoor work, like hoeing carrots.

We worked in a team with the adults and we all had to do the same jobs. No one did my work for me. I had to work just as hard as everyone else. We had to get used to hard work, even as children." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

"My elder brother attended the Franciscan school in Szentendre. He left the secondary school in the third grade and began to work as an unskilled labourer because my mother couldn't cope on her own. By then she had sold everything, and we were at rock bottom." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

Even those who were not given the sack had no security. Their salaries were often reduced, and they were demoted and frequently humiliated.

"The party secretary ordered my mother not to be difficult and not to wear mourning." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

Their situation was made even more difficult if their apartments were taken from them and they were moved into temporary accommodation, either as a result of the confiscation of assets or the withdrawal of job-related housing. This meant not only a deterioration in their standard of living but the loss of the family home.

"Life became extremely difficult. For a year my mother had no idea where my father was. Then came the notice to quit. They came and told us they would take everything. They made a list of every item in the flat and took even the ladles and the scissors. Everything that could be moved was taken. We were assigned another flat that was no bigger than a hole. The one room was three metres by three metres. There was a small kitchen and a tiny larder that was only big enough to take my grandfather's bed. Five of us lived there. When it was time for bed—my older brother and I always joked: 'Here we go again'—we pushed the two chairs out into the kitchen, pulled out the bed, then pushed one of the chairs back beside it." (MÁRIA BALI)

"When my father was executed in 1957 we were banned from the whole of Budapest. My mother received a document stating that she had to leave Budapest within forty-eight hours. She tried to return several times but couldn't. She moved with us to Kiskunlacháza, to her parents, but before long I was sent to my paternal grandparents because my mother couldn't support two children. My sister stayed with her." (MÁRTA MICSINAI)

In several cases, as a result of the mental and physical strain, the mother's resources were drained. Some found escape in drinking and others struggled with various illnesses. Psychosomatic symptoms, such as stammering, stomach ulcers, sleeplessness and heart conditions, became common among the children as well.

"My mum's nerves gave out completely. She cried all the time and it was very hard for us. Then she got all kinds of illnesses and had some serious operations. The doctor said it was all due to her nerves. She suffered a great deal. She was always afraid and always sick and we were always having to run to the phone to call the doctor. On many occasions when mum was in hospital we three children were left alone and I had to look after the little ones. Then I got an ulcer and I was taken to hospital several times." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"I know from my grandparents that she cried a lot in secret when I was not at home. Finally she became really run down because she just bottled everything up. Now that she's getting older it shows, and she's falling prey to various illnesses that are a direct result of those years." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

Sometimes couples divorced during the legal proceedings or the years of imprisonment. Among our interviewees we came across only one case: the arrested man himself suggested divorce, hoping that his ex-wife would be brought as a witness. In other cases divorce may have been prompted either by emotional alienation or the hope of escaping discrimination.

"IT WAS GOOD THAT WE COULD SAY GOODBYE"

Among the children of those who were ultimately sentenced to death only a few were able to see their fathers again following the arrest. Permission to visit the convicts depended on the benevolence of the investigating officer. During the legal proceedings family members were allowed to visit the convicts only as an exception, and they could only talk during the intermission in the trial. At the time the younger children were not aware of the significance of the last meeting, but with the passage of time memories have become more vivid and those last few minutes together are treasured more and more. A father's last words, his admonitions, a touch, a caress, his smell are imprinted on their memories for ever.

"People sat handcuffed, my father among them. I found it strange, but it was interesting rather than upsetting because I didn't realise the significance of it. And we talked. I didn't know that he was saying goodbye to me. He said 'Daddy is going on a journey', and I asked him 'Where are you going?' He said he was going a long, long way. 'When will you return?' I asked. 'When you are a big boy', he answered. He asked me to sing a song for him, so I did: '*It's not good to live near the forest…*' That was one I knew by heart." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

"Until about the age of ten I could only recall a scene in which he did not have a face. I could see only bars. We went through the bars and then I sat on his knee. I knew he was my daddy, but I couldn't see his face because I was snuggled up close to him and he had a wonderful smell. I think I must have been allowed into either the Győr or the Budapest prison, or somewhere else, before the trial. After the trial they didn't let me in. We went through the bars. They let us in through a small gate and then there was my father, but I have absolutely no recollection of his face. Then he took me onto his knee and he had a wonderful smell. I was surprised when one day my mother took out a wallet, a cigarette holder and a purse, and when I opened them there was the very same smell again. It was really surprising. Then he taught me two lines of Greek, which I still remember today. It was amazing that I could remember them, since I was only a little girl, just three and a half years old. Later, if particular friends arrived I had to repeat the lines to them. And those two Greek lines contain all my memories." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"They were closed trials, two of them, and during a break in one of them we were able to go into the room. They were sitting in the front row. We could talk for about half or three-quarters of an hour. He talked mainly to my mum and we children sat around him. He said that since I was the oldest I was to help my mum and try to help the little ones because they were weak and needed looking after. I did what he said. Even then I thought that he would certainly not be let out for a long time. At the time we had no idea what was going to happen." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

Sometimes children were given permission to visit during visiting hours, but the sentence was carried out in the meantime and the visit could not take place after all. In some cases the condemned person refused to see visitors.

"It was only later, before we moved to Győr, that my mother dared to tell me that my father was in prison. I only learned where he was and how long he had been there after receiving permission to visit him. When my mother was sent the paper, the trial and the sentencing were over. It was only then that she received permission to take me in to see him. But this never happened. So I saw my father for the last time in October 1956." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

"And then my mother asked them if she could bring her children so that he could see them and say goodbye to them. But my father said that it was out of the question: 'I would rather remain in the children's memories as I was when I said goodbye to them when I was arrested.' My father did not allow us to go in and see him." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

Only a few fathers had the opportunity to say their final goodbyes following sentencing, or while in the cells of the condemned.

"My mother learned about the date of the execution from the lawyer. She ran to the public prosecutor's office and asked them to let her say goodbye to her husband. On 5 August 1959, the two of us were allowed to enter the prison and we could say goodbye to him at the crack of dawn. We were led through long corridors into a room with bars. My father wore dark blue prison clothes and a white shirt with bandages on his wrists. We had been talking for a good while when the supervising officer told us to finish, even though the time assigned for visiting was not over. The officer was really distressed at seeing us saying goodbye. In my eyes my dad had a kind of supernatural beauty. He was extremely sad. He looked sadly and comfortingly at us, with his beautiful blue eyes. The conversation was one-sided. My father comforted us and we cried and cried. There was nothing meaningful we could say to each other. The guard allowed him to hold our hands through the bars and we could even kiss. Despite the tragic circumstances, I still believe it was good that we could say goodbye. My father gave me the usual admonitions. He appealed to the family to stay together. He asked me to take care of my mother, to look out for myself when it came to boyfriends, and to study hard. But I think we were mostly looking at each other, and he was trying to keep our spirits up. We were not to cry, he told us, since this was the Lord's will. We should find peace and stay calm." (KATALIN KÓSA)

We came across no official directives with respect to farewell letters. These were probably either rejected or permitted and forwarded to relatives on the basis of individual judgements. Some received a moving last message through the official channels, while others found messages hidden among the clothes of the executed. Several of the mothers could not bring themselves to show these to their children and in some families the long-hidden letters were eventually lost. However, those who were told about the contents of such letters as children have preserved throughout their lives their fathers' last words of guidance.

"He is supposed to have written me a story on toilet paper, but it never reached me. I heard about it from his fellow prisoners. They told me that he had written at length but wasn't able to send me what he had written. It would have been good to receive it. He wrote three letters from prison in Budapest—his three last letters. They were written in pencil and have been stamped 'Checked'. All of them read like farewell letters: 'I am fine. I am in good physical and spiritual health. I am well.' He addressed each member of the family individually: 'My dear father, my dear brother, take care of my loved ones!' They're all like farewell letters. All of them contain his prison number. The letters have been skilfully bound in clear plastic in such a way as to preserve the messages that were written in the margins. My mother treasures them. After the sentence there was no opportunity either for a farewell visit or for a farewell letter. They allowed us no chance to say goodbye at all." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"He wrote telling me to help look after my brothers and things like that. Because I was the oldest. He also wrote to mum saying that he already knew he was to die, only he didn't know the reason why. He wrote on tiny slips of paper. They weren't real letters, just notes. I don't know what happened to them, we don't have them any longer." (MARGIT BATONAI)

"We received nothing from the prison. But one of his fellow prisoners came to visit us after he was released. My father sent with him a tiny pencil—I still have it—with which he had written his notes, and a tiny little dice which he had somehow made out of toothpaste. I have nothing else from him, only this dice that he made for me." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

"His farewell letter was found when his clothes were handed over. There was a sheepskin jacket that we had sent, along with some other clothes, to my mother's aunt, for them to use in the countryside. And one day my mother's aunt appeared with my father's farewell letter. She told us that she had had a dream in which my father had put the jacket in her lap. When she woke she immediately called her husband: 'Miklós, where is the jacket?' And the poor old man ran at once to the stables and brought the jacket in. They cut open the seams and there was my father's farewell letter. It was amazing, the way he saw life. This was all he left to us. We were told what was in the letter as soon as we received it, and we learnt every word of it by heart." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

The arrest, sentencing and loss of their fathers had opened deep wounds in every one of the people we interviewed. The greatest shock, however, was the moment when the news arrived that their fathers had been lost to them

for ever. Those interviewees who were kept informed as children about events concerning their fathers recall how they were told immediately the news of the father's death.

"The lawyer came out and told us at the end of the trial. He had left the courtroom before the prisoners had been led away. He had already told my mum that she should expect the worst, so he had prepared her. We heard him saying that sadly the worst had happened. That the death sentence had been passed. But he also said that there was to be another trial, that an appeal for clemency could be submitted. We waited until they were taken away but we were pushed aside. Then we saw my dad coming and could see that he was unable to stand up straight. I saw no fear in his face when we talked to him. Afterwards we went home and in Csepel we bought some cigarettes at a kiosk. The tobacconist asked what had happened. My mother told her, and it was then that I fell ill. I had to be taken to hospital. I felt a pressure inside my head and I felt dizzy. I already knew in the courtroom, but perhaps it had not registered in my mind. Perhaps I thought that if they submitted an appeal for clemency he would be pardoned. When my mother said that he was going to be hanged it was probably at that moment that I realised that he was going to die. Later I developed a stomach ulcer or something of the kind. Eventually I got better, so that was probably what caused it." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"I don't know if dad was executed in Kozma utca or somewhere else, but I seem to remember hearing that mum could take in cigarettes or something else for him, so she went to the prison. When she got there she was given his clothes and was told that he had already been executed. My grandmother, my dad's mother, was looking after us. I remember that my mother came in and told us, then she fainted. Everyone was in tears. I know that I was very distressed because after my mother had told me that he had been executed I didn't go to school for three months. My heart… I think I was angry with everyone. I think I loved him the most." (MARGIT BATONAI)

"My mother said to me: 'Please go to Itza néni—our dance teacher—and tell her that neither you nor Csilla can be in the play.' I asked her why. 'Because your father is dead.' I know that I cried then. My mother was crying, and we cried, too. I went to Itza néni as I had been instructed and told her that my mother had said we could not be in the play. Thinking back, perhaps she could have told Itza néni herself. She was a teacher as well. They were colleagues, but it was not she who gave the message. I had to. Perhaps she did it deliberately, so that even I, as a child, would understand that that was the reason why I couldn't be in the play." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

In other families the news was kept from the children, who found out about what had happened only by accident. Despite the greatest precautions on the part of the adults, children sometimes came across documents that revealed that their fathers had been sentenced to death and executed. They could not, and dared not, share their questions about this in an atmosphere that forced them to remain silent.

"I was told nothing. I must have been about ten or twelve when I found a newspaper in which there was an article with the headline 'István Micsinai on trial'. I couldn't read it because it was taken from me and I was told it was none of my business. When I was about fourteen or fifteen years old I learned from my elder sister that my father had been executed in connection with the events of 1956. She may have learned it from our grandparents. She didn't tell me any details. She was a child, too. She told me only that he had been put on trial in relation to what was referred to, at the time, as the counterrevolution, and that he had been executed. I only learned exactly what had happened when the change of political system came, but I never found the newspaper." (MÁRTA MICSINAI)

These children's fathers appeared again and again in their imaginations. Until they found out about the father's death, they dreamed that one day he would return and they would be together again. Even later on they tried to make up for his absence by imagining what he would have done or said, or how he would help them in various situations. Even today many of them still meet their fathers in their dreams and talk to them.

"I thought a lot about how perhaps we wouldn't have to be so poor and how he would one day attend parents' evenings at school, like other dads, and see that I was studying well and that kind of thing. I also wanted to write to him, to send a letter to him somehow, even if he was abroad. I mostly dreamt things like how he sent parcels and presents. I didn't even remember his face. Nothing at all. Not even being kissed. I have absolutely no memories of that kind." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

"I only have fragments of memories. In the morning I wake up knowing I have had some kind of dream with my old father in it, and then I realise that we were in the amusement park and we were sitting on the roller-coaster and it was really good. And my father said 'There's no need to be afraid.' Or I go to the bus stop, for instance, and wait for my father and the bus doesn't come. Things like that. It's sometimes just a complete muddle." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"THERE WAS DAD, IN PRISON CLOTHES"

Writing letters, sending parcels and visiting during the permitted hours provided opportunities for contact between the convicts and their families. The length of the letters, the possible content of the parcels and the frequency of visits and correspondence depended on the length of the sentence. If a prisoner was being punished for his conduct while inside the prison by a withdrawal of privileges, these opportunities were denied him.

Letters were censored, thus both the convicts and their relatives had to consider carefully what they wrote. Letters that were sent from prison bore the mark of the censor's hand in the form of sentences deleted with black ink and the censor's stamp. Convicts could occasionally avoid this censorship by sending letters with people who were being released, and occasionally via prison guards. In letters sent to their families they could not, of course, describe their

actual circumstances, but almost all of them urged their loved ones to persevere and gave fatherly advice to their children.

"The letter is about how terrible it was for him to be inside rather than with me, when my mother had died a year earlier. His sentence was to be carried out in a few days—the letter is full of pathos—but he said that I was to be at peace and hold my head up since he had stolen nothing, had not been a thief, had served an honest cause, something that he was proud of, and I should be a good, obedient girl, etc. That is what he wrote in the letter. Of course, even this couldn't be sent legally. I don't know how he managed to get it out. On the other side of the paper he had written a letter to his mother in Slovakia and I received it—although I had already read it—when my grandmother was seriously ill. That is when she passed it on to me. The letter came back into my hands in 1986: she had treasured it until then. Now I treasure it." (IDA VÁMOS)

Families usually wrote about their everyday lives and personal affairs. They used tiny handwriting, as this was the best way to make use of the permitted space of thirty-two lines. Some of them, in a roundabout way, gave information about the political situation. Children usually drew a picture on the letter, or added a few lines.

"I sent him a drawing and a photo. We went to the photographer, who took the photos of us, and we sent them. We still have them, with the stamp of approval on the back. We have many of them." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

"I know that I had to be encouraged to write, as I had no idea what to say. Because, after all, in such a distant relationship what could be said in a letter? So I think I wrote about my daily life. But my father seemed so remote." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

"My mother regularly informed dad in a roundabout way about the atmosphere outside. Not only about our lives, but about the situation. Dad was interested, and I know that this was an important topic in their correspondence. Dad told me how much they looked forward to my mum's letters inside, and how they always asked what she had written since the message was hidden between the lines." (ÉVA Z.)

Relatives always tried to make up their parcels of permitted food products so that they contained everything requested by the prisoner while still being within the allowed weight limit. They tried to include some favourite delicacy as a way of expressing their love. The more courageous occasionally smuggled in forbidden items by cleverly concealing them. For the children, breaking the regulations was an adventure, but at the same time rather frightening.

"When it was time to send a parcel my mother bought things that she would not otherwise have done—salami and other items that were difficult to come by, since they were in short supply or too expensive." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"Whenever I was given some chocolate, for instance, I was immediately told that I was not to touch it. It would be put aside for daddy because occasionally we were allowed to send parcels into the prison." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

"I remember that my grandmother once baked some fruit loaf with diodes

inside. They were making a radio in the prison and it was my grandmother's task to bake the tiny diodes into the fruit loaf. It really scared me. It was very daring but I was afraid that there would be trouble. I was a nervous child. One explanation could be that I had seen how someone could be taken away for many years even for a minor offence. If the diodes were discovered, they might perhaps even kill him." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

Convicts who were able to work in the prison were free to spend some of what they earned. Some of them were therefore occasionally able to support their families.

"The parcel that arrived from inside always seemed like a present. For Christmas, for example, we were always sent books. I was given Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, for instance. My mother received an opera guide, a concert guide, and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Hill*. My brother got a bird book by Ottó Herman and my elder sister got a book about wild flowers. We were sent other things as well, but these are the ones I remember best. My father worked inside as a shoemaker. He learned the skill while in prison and was paid. Not much, but it was something. I know that my mother, either during visiting hours or in a letter, asked him not to send a parcel but to give us the money instead. After that my father sent money as well. We're talking about one hundred forints, although at the time this was a reasonable amount." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

Visiting time was a rare and important occasion to meet in person. While getting ready and travelling to the prison the family would talk about the father. The majority of mothers had no compunctions about taking their children with them, while for others the decision to do so was only taken after much deliberation. While we have no information about such hesitation, we know the explanations for some of the decisions that were made. Those who did not want their children to see their fathers while in detention or prison argued that it would be too distressing for the children. They thought it would be easier for the children to cope with the father's absence if they had no personal experience of the circumstances of his detainment. In some cases mothers told their children that they were too young to obtain permission to visit. It is possible that in some places there were indeed such restrictions, but it is certain that children of three or four years old did accompany their mothers on prison visits.

"My mother showed us the letters sent by my father. She always went at visiting time and told me how he was. She didn't want to take us into the prison, and we weren't in fact allowed to go in. It wouldn't have made any sense. Thinking about it as an adult I know that if I found myself in the same situation I wouldn't take my child in either. A child doesn't need to see that. If I wanted my child to be upset at seeing his father in such a situation I would take him in, but if I wanted to avoid that and to strengthen his spirit of survival instead, the thought that one day it would all be over, then I would make the same decision." (TIBOR MOLNÁR)

The recollections of our interviewees suggest that the children's situation was not in fact made any easier by not seeing their fathers in prison, since

without direct experience of what was happening they could rely only on their imagination. In their fantasies, understandably, the prison became a terrible and frightening place.

"We had a family album and I took out photos of him and always kept them on my desk or on the table where I studied. But my idea about the prison was that it must have been a truly formidable place." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

Mothers who decided to take their children with them considered it important for the child to see his or her father despite the difficulties inherent in such an encounter. An important motive in such decisions was that wives wanted to reassure their husbands that the family was still together and that the children were healthy. They must also have hoped that these encounters would help the convicts to endure the years of imprisonment.

One five-year-old girl was taken along on the final visit at the request of her father, so that she could get an impression of the prison. As the child was only a few months old at the time of the arrest, this was the first encounter that she remembers.

"The only image I have retained is of several men in striped [prisoners'] clothes standing behind bars. We talked to one of them, my father. I cannot recall what we talked about, I can only remember this scene." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

Sometimes mothers visited the prison on their own, or on each occasion a different member of the family accompanied them. Occasionally, older children visited their fathers on their own. A common motif among the interviewees' recollections is the excitement that preceded the visit and the apprehension felt while they waited to see their fathers. Many were afraid that because of their long separation they might not recognise their fathers.

"There were many people in a large room, mostly women. We were sitting on long benches. We waited for what seemed a terribly long time. We got there by eight and some official read out the list of names at noon. They formed us into groups of ten or twenty and led us over into a long room. The room was separated lengthways down the middle by a one-metre-high counter topped with small-meshed wire fencing which reached to the ceiling and closed off half the room. We had to enter the room in the order we were told and stop at the box assigned to us. When everyone had found their places the prisoners entered from the corner of the room on the other side of the wire, in the same order as we had been placed. They halted and made an about turn. When they entered, I knew at once which one was my father. While we were waiting, and whenever it was mentioned that we were going to visit him, I wasn't sure whom I would meet. I don't mean whether it would be my father or someone else, but rather what he would look like. Whether short or tall, bald, blond or brown. I couldn't remember. I had no idea. I remember very well that during the long wait outside I wondered several times about what he looked like. When he came in I knew at once which of the many prisoners was my father. Some picture from the past must have come into my mind. It stirred something in my soul. I felt something

rather like apprehension. My father kept smiling and asking questions. The whole thing lasted just a few minutes." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

The journey to the prison often took hours, but during this time the tension eased since it was mostly people sharing a similar fate who travelled together. On such occasions the children were able to learn from each other things that they had not been told at home. Here, at last, everyone was talking about what the children wanted to know.

"I loved going there, in spite of how terrible it was. I remember that we had to wait for the bus in front of the Corvin department store. Others came too, and then I had the feeling that I had found a place where I belonged. It was very strange. I had no sense that these women really loved me or that they were especially kind. Everyone was busy preparing for their own visit. However, these women were all talking about the prison—that was very important to me—and I was able to learn about lots of things that I was not told at home." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

Sometimes, mainly when they were waiting along with the relatives of common criminals, children had less of a sense of sharing a fate but were instead embarrassed by the situation, and this embarrassment only increased their anxiety.

"I was glad to see my father, but the truth is that I was always a little bit anxious when we had to go there. The other thing is that I was embarrassed, because when we waited at the prison gates we were with the relatives of the common criminals and I was ashamed to be alongside them. I can't say why. I was worried about my father, but I was still happy that we could go." (IDA VÁMOS)

There were many things that cast a shadow over the joy of these eagerly awaited encounters: the long wait, the strict, often rude, guards, the dense wire mesh separating the visitors from the convicts, and the fact that they were not even allowed to touch.

"We woke at dawn and could hardly rouse ourselves we were so sleepy. We went along a cobbled street to the prison. Then we were eventually allowed in and we saw many people in tears. When dad appeared behind the bars it was heartbreaking to see him there at first. We couldn't even touch him, not even by pressing a finger through the wire, the holes were so small. There was my dad in prison clothing, standing to attention. He was accompanied by two guards who listened to everything and watched his every move. We could only signal with our eyes, by raising our eyebrows, what could not be expressed in words or what we were not supposed to talk about." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

"What has stayed in my mind, like a photograph, as the most interesting thing is the close-meshed wire behind which my father stood. I was already aware of the fact that he was my father. I was too little at the time to ask questions. I accepted the situation as it was. It had been like this ever since I was born: he had always been somewhere else, the way I saw him then. I remember that there was some kind of a desk in front of the bars. They made me stand

on it, and then I asked my mum if I was allowed to stroke the uniformed man's moustache. The guard nodded graciously. Then through the wire—I clearly remember this—I stroked his moustache. This is the only definite picture I recall of the prison." (MÁRTA REGÉCZY-NAGY)

It was also disappointing that visiting hours were very short and there was no opportunity for genuine conversation. Everything they wanted to say during the encounter had to be conveyed in front of strangers and amid the hubbub of voices. It was difficult to cope with the chaotic circumstances. Usually the parents did most of the talking while the children exchanged only a few words with their fathers. It was forbidden to speak about the political situation and the prison conditions, but by means of metacommunication or by using the family's own coded language they could still pass on the most important information on these subjects. A few children were worried about the consequences of breaking the rules, but most of them were proud that their parents were able to tell each other things in such a way that the guards could not understand them.

"I also remember that we went out to the prison (in Kőbánya) in a rattling tram and that we had to wait a long time in a huge crowd. The whole thing was extremely tense. At least it was for me: the fact that I was about to meet my daddy. What would I talk to him about? We had not had a conversation for ages and we had not met very often. In other words, I don't think I enjoyed it very much. I was aware that I was supposed to 'perform' for my poor father and I knew that I wouldn't be able to behave as I should in this situation. To make my father feel that I loved him." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

"We were always preparing, preparing so much, and I always left the prison with a sense of failure. It was very strange. I prepared so hard, I wanted to tell everything so much, and then I was incapable of doing so. For some reason I just couldn't. And then I left with a sense of failure. I remember how mum and dad discussed so many things in a roundabout way. They understood each other very well." (ÉVA Z.)

It was sometimes the children who, in spite of being upset by the situation, came to terms more quickly with the tension around them and came to the help of their parents.

"After we went in we were stopped in front of a wire partition. At first, there was nothing going on behind the wire. Then on my left, on the other side, a door opened and the prisoners came in led by a guard. They marched past in front of me. What disturbed me most was that he was wearing striped clothes. To my mind striped clothing like that was worn by bad men, real prisoners. Those striped clothes made it obvious that they could do whatever they wanted with them. And that hurt. And then I saw in his face that he didn't recognise me. I realised immediately that I had to do something to avoid my father getting into trouble with my mother. Because I knew her. She was bound to be cross with him for ignoring the fact that she had brought the children along. It was meant to be a gift, a way of demonstrating that 'While you are inside I am doing my job, and you should hold out as I do. Just take a look at the children.'

But my father, blind as he was, saw only my mother. I realised that my mother was beginning to be aware of what was happening, so I suddenly began to talk. I told him that I had been chopping wood, and that I had done some chopping just the day before. I said it to make him understand who I was. And it worked because he understood and accepted my help. And I was pleased with myself for managing things so smoothly." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

Since there were few occasions for direct encounters, the women tried to find other opportunities for seeing their husbands. Some of them waited with their children in front of the prison or went along to the court hoping to catch a fleeting glimpse of their husbands standing at a window or in a corridor.

"I have one pleasant memory. Pleasant? It was only pleasant because I was able to see dad. There was someone with an allotment behind the prison. My mother made an arrangement with him and we went there every Sunday afternoon. I could see my dad at the cell window and we waved to each other." (MÁRIA BALI)

"He was in custody in Miskolc, and we went there to wave to dad from the garden. We could see him from the courtyard, but only a silhouette. We couldn't see him properly." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

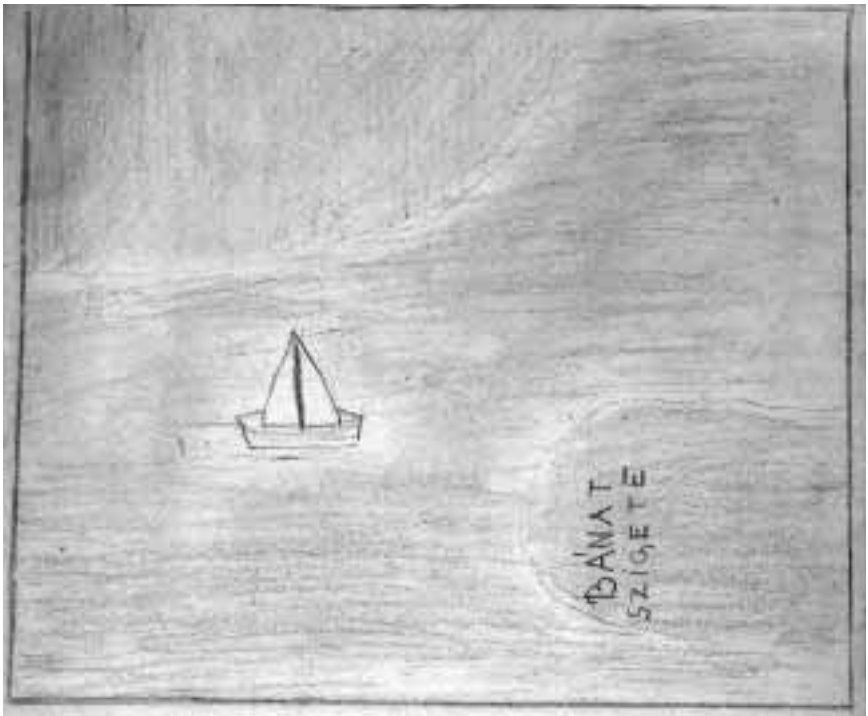
Tisztelt Tanács Elnök Úr!

Két szerető kislány kér, hogy hallgassa meg könyörgését. Édesapánkat – Kóta Pál, szül. 1921. január 25-én Budatétényben – az 1956-os ellenforradalomban való részvételért halálra ítélték. Nem tudjuk, hogy mit készített el csak annyit, hogy senki élete sem tapad hozzá, és ezért bátorkodunk kegyelmét könyörgni. Apukánknak Nagyon nagyon kérjük a Tanács Elnök Urat, hogy hadd legyünk egy kicsit boldogok, hadd legyen nekünk is szerető édesapánk, mint a többi gyermeknek. Mi nemsokára kilépünk az életbe, és könyörgünk, hogy segítsen ránk a Tanács Elnök Ur, ne kelljen ilyen szomorú emlékkel, ilyen boldogtalanul indulnunk az életbe. Segítsen hozzá, hogy mi is mások és boldog fiatalok lehessünk, hogy boldogan tudjuk mi is élvezni az életet. Nagyon szépen kérjük a

Tanács Elnök Urat, hogy konyakunkon meg két
Édesapjáért aggódó és féltő gyermeken, kik remegnek
Édesapjuk életéért, hálával várják a Tanács
Elnök Úr döntését. Kérjük, hogy kegyelmével meg
Édesapánknak, két nagyon nagyon szeretünk és
minden várunk haza. Ha elveszítjük, úgy érez-
zük hát sem fogjuk élni azt a nagy csapást.
Mégegyszer nagyon k
Tanács Elnök Urnak,
fájó szívű leányainak
nyomását. Minden n
a Tanács Elnök Úr
segíteni fog rajtunk

Sok szeretettel és soha el nem múló hálával
gondolunk a Tisztelt Tanács Elnök Úrra.

Kőrösi Katalin és
Kőrösi Klára.



Evezz, evezz az élet tengerén,
De jól vigyázz, hogy ki ne bössz
A bánat szigetén.

Ezt kívánja szeretettel Kingának

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COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

In terms of a child's development the family—the space of primary socialisation—is of the utmost importance. At the time of their fathers' arrests our interviewees were all children, thus their families played a decisive role in how much they learned about their fathers, about their fathers' imprisonment or execution, and about the revolution itself. It was from their families that they received—or should have received—answers to their often unspoken questions about what their fathers had done, why they had been sentenced, in what respect their families differed from others, why they too were being penalised, and whether their fathers were guilty, innocent, or perhaps even heroes.

It was (or should have been) the task of the family to prepare the child for life in a world in which, according to the official ideology, his or her father was an enemy and the family was stigmatised and persecuted because of his "crime". The ease with which a child was able to come to terms with the trauma and cope with the problems arising from the double communication that characterised everyday life in the era also depended on his or her family. In the case of our interviewees it is significant that the primary and most important source of information was the mother, or the grandparent or other relative who raised him or her. The internalisation of reality took place predominantly as a result of their influence, as they represented the first significant other. All parents tried to keep family life going according to the existing traditions and routines. Their success depended mainly on the mother's personality, the stability of the family's values, and on its available resources. The mother's instinctive or conscious choice of strategy played a major role in determining her children's future lives.

In the course of our research we identified three different communication strategies. These are not clearly distinct varieties, and they could be modified even within individual families with the passage of time. We even came across one case in which a mother discussed events with her elder child but not with the younger one, in an attempt to spare him from the painful knowledge.

"At home we talked openly"

In those families which followed the strategy of sincere, open communication, children—depending on their age, degree of experience and maturity—were informed about everything that was going on. What the father had done in 1956

and its consequences was discussed openly. The mothers knew—or felt instinctively—that if they did not tell their children the truth, it would reach them in a distorted form and would cause personality problems in later life. This must have been in their minds, even if they did not express it in so many words. They therefore involved their children in the handling of everyday problems and stressed that from the moment of the arrest everything was to be treated as a family matter. They regarded it as permanently important that the children remain in contact with their fathers and that the fathers' memory be kept alive. If the opportunity arose, they took the children along to the trial and on prison visits. They involved the children in getting things together for the parcels to be sent to the prison, and they wrote letters together. The children were informed about the sentence immediately. They had first-hand experience of the prison, the iron bars and the guards, and their fathers remained present within the family in a spiritual, even if not physical, way.

"On Sundays we would go to my paternal grandmother's for lunch, and granny would always lay a place at the table for my father as well. There was always one setting extra, so in this strange way he was always present with us." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

"Whenever dad was mentioned I always felt that he was important and that they loved each other, and that mum would do anything she could to help him. He was present in our lives in the form of letters, prison visits, parcels, news of his whereabouts. He was always important and was not excluded from the family." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

Older children had personal experience and immediate memories of their fathers, of the revolution, and of the father's arrest. Their mothers would share their problems with them from the start and members of the family faced, and tried to come to terms with, the difficult situation together.

"My mother didn't try to spare us, even from the very beginning as it were, from knowledge of events. What my father had done, where he was and what was happening to him was never a secret, nor was the fact that there had been a revolution. When my mother learned that they were dead we were told at once." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

If the children were younger and were not aware of the sudden disappearance of their father but grew up without him, the mother had to tell them the story later. As they grew up the children learned more and more, and the picture was completed gradually.

"I knew that there had been a revolution, and my mother told me that my father had been a hero and had died for Hungarian freedom—I think that's how my mother put it. I knew that he had died, and I also knew that it was the Russians' fault, but not because they had killed him but because the Russians were here, which was not good for us because we were not free. That's what was said. But I didn't know any details, anything about the execution at all, only that he had died for liberty and that he was a hero. Later it changed. The fact that he had been in prison and had been killed was discussed. I had not known that.

I had never made a connection between the two. Then the fact that he had been killed changed to the fact that he had been executed." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"They didn't try to fob me off. In our family they didn't go in for the kind of secretiveness that I saw in most other families. We talked openly at home, like everyone does these days." (PÉTER ZSÁMBOKI)

Mothers who chose the strategy of sincere, open communication knew about, and consciously identified with, their husbands' revolutionary activities. Later, by keeping the memory of, and respect for, the father constantly alive they helped their children find a balance, both internally and with the outside world. They did all they could to help their children gain a knowledge and understanding of their fathers' fate. They were able to handle the difficult, almost insoluble, task in such a way that their children suffered as little as possible. They preserved the memory of the child's father and of the revolution, thus the children had a positive image of both. This open atmosphere helped every member of the family to come to terms with the trauma. The security of the home offered protection from occasional attacks from the outside world.

"At home I never had the impression that there were adult topics and children's topics. We sat around the table for long lunches or dinners, and everyone talked about everything. Obviously the children talked about their own concerns, but in the meantime one could make a comment about anything. On the one hand, there was poverty and helplessness, and on the other, there were all kinds of values. That is how I always saw it. I learned from this that values can be very effective if they are put into practice. One must not give up, one must keep going; money can run out very quickly and money alone means very little. Money offers only a temporary solution but is not the answer in the long term. This is obviously what they had to say, or suggest, if we were to survive." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"My father was a part of our lives, as if he were there, as if he were alive. He was not a taboo subject just because we were little children. He was present with us to such an extent that our mother kept saying things like 'I had a dream about your father and I asked him to help us and give us advice.' This was a permanent topic of conversation in the family. It had happened, it was a tragedy, but we didn't experience it as a tragedy. This was mainly due to our openness, the fact that we kept talking about it. Nothing was ever kept secret only for us to discover it later and be shocked." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

The sharing of the emotional burden strengthened the sense that the fight was worthwhile. If they could be united in their support of the convict, they would be invincible.

"On the bus to the Márianosztra prison one woman often talked about the women who did not come, and how if they hadn't come in the past it meant they wouldn't come at all. And in fact the number of women did fall. It is certain that for them, and I think for my mother too, it must have been a very important subject because even I became aware of it. If I imagine myself in their situation the question must obviously have been something like 'Who will hold

out the longest? Who will be the next to give up?'. Another recurring theme was the financial situation of the families, the extent to which the women were able to hold the family together while their husbands were in prison. I understood that what was important was how long the families could maintain their unity. Families who were able to endure this time would survive through their children, while those who gave in and fell apart would be allowing *them* to win. As I see it, that is where the frontline was at the time." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

What do we know about the mothers who were able to follow such a strategy? They lived in the capital city or in large towns. They had a high- or medium-level education, and even if, in terms of their profession, not all could be regarded as intellectuals, in terms of their attitudes and mentality they were. In these homes the family atmosphere was open, even before the revolution. They possessed the kind of communicative skills, mental abilities and cultural and social background that was essential in such a situation, and mobilised their survival mechanisms more consciously than others. Even before the revolution fathers belonged among the informal elite, thus in 1956 they were promoted into political positions on the basis of their respectability and it was a conscious decision on their part to assume a role in the revolution. For example, the father, as a member of one of the revolutionary organisations, took part in maintaining order, in preventing local atrocities, or in peacekeeping. It was not only the family but those around them who preserved a positive image of their activities. Thus, even if only tacitly, there were other people who supported the family of the convict. This meant they were not left alone with their memories and their tragedy. Since they were better embedded socially, they had better chances of being given help and moral support both from their family and their friends, as around them there was stronger and better organised solidarity. In their case, the strong protective network meant that the family values were reinforced by the people around them: those around them did not question their family values.

"IF SOMETHING BECOMES A TABOO IT IS GRADUALLY BURIED"

Mothers whose communicative strategy was based on taboo did not initially inform their children of the truth, although they never lied to them. Several of them hoped for years that their husbands had not in fact been executed, thus they told their children that their fathers would come home one day. Later, however, they informed them that their fathers were in prison or that they had died, and later still that they had been executed. However, these mothers were unable to talk with their children about the reasons for the execution, about their own feelings and doubts, or about the foreseeable consequences. All of these subjects were taboo. Thus neither the personal fate of the father nor the events or the evaluation of the revolution became part of the family's communication. Children were kept apart and spared from learning about the events, thus they could only fantasise about the things of which children who were raised in more openly communicating families had personal experience. Due to

a lack of information, or through fear, mothers did not understand the events themselves and this meant they were not capable of providing satisfactory answers to their children's verbalised or non-verbalised questions. With their matter-of-fact, laconic answers they blocked the possibility of further questions, and their attitude suggested that silence was the only possible response in their insoluble, helpless situation. These children remained alone with their burden and received no help either in coming to terms with the trauma or in finding ways to defend themselves against discrimination.

"At first they kept telling me that he would come home. But as the years passed I kept nagging them, asking them what daddy was doing, where he was, and when he would come home. Then I somehow found out that he was dead, and later on I was told that he had actually been executed. But neither mum nor grandma really knew the whole story, at least they did not know exactly what had happened, how things really were and how it had taken place. I suppose this was the main reason why they didn't tell me everything, because they didn't understand things, either. If the family got together, no definite mention was made of the events of 1956, only dad's memory was brought up, and what a good man he had been." (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

"My mum's mum spent a lot of time with us in Esztergom, since my mum's nerves were very fragile at the time. When they talked about my father I listened in, being a child, and my love for my father also made me curious. This is how I learned that he was in prison. My mother often went to Budapest to visit my father. She was frequently unable to get in, but just tried to catch sight of him from outside, hoping she would see him through one of the prison windows. She never said anything. Not a single word. She kept hoping and believing right up until the last minute. She loved him very much. She knew that he was innocent and would therefore come home. This was how she felt, and perhaps this is why she didn't tell me the truth later on." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

"When I began to ask more definite questions about things, my mother merely told me that he had died. She did not tell me that my father had been executed, only that he was dead. And then, for a while, the door was closed. When I began to be interested again she answered me in the same way. For our mother the family was the most important thing and she was always afraid that something would be stirred up in us and she wanted to avoid us getting involved in any kind of movement or mass happening. She kept reminding us that he would be however many years old, then she would start to cry, go back to her room and sleep. I only recently discovered exactly what happened." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

This strategy is not directly related to the parents' profession or place of residence. It was followed by mothers from virtually all social backgrounds, from villages to the capital city and from agricultural workers to intellectuals, although most of them were unskilled labourers. There is also a fairly wide spectrum in relation to the fathers' activities in 1956. Some were political leaders or peacemakers, others participated in armed action, while some were charged

with participation in lynching. Such mothers were not very strong and broke down in the new political situation. They were either unaware of their husbands' revolutionary activity, or, if they were aware, were unable to identify with it. The majority of these women also supported their husbands after arrest—predominantly out of duty and love for their husbands—but they were unable to accept their fate with heads held high. Their fear and anxiety about the future of the family proved stronger than everything else. Their lives were filled with bitterness, fear and silent resignation. Although they also enjoyed the support of those around them, which predominantly meant everyday help in kind, this did little to make their situation easier to bear. Children who grew up surrounded by taboos were left uncertain both in judging the historical events and in evaluating their fathers' role during the revolution, and were helpless against negative impacts from the world outside.

"My mother was subservient enough to do everything she could to keep her job. She remained grateful until the end for being alive, for her mere existence, and for being allowed to teach." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"I have been told that my dad has been executed but nobody knew why. I don't remember ever talking about it. I remember being told that he has been taken to the Soviet Union into a mine. But they rather avoided mentioning it in order to keep out of harm's way, since it was regarded as a big sin in that political system…" (MARGIT BATONAI)

"The past was a taboo subject with mum, we weren't even allowed to mention it. She is perhaps still afraid even today. Everybody around us regarded it as a revolution, but nobody ever said a word, they chose to remain silent. If something becomes a taboo, people do not talk about it and it is gradually buried." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"WHY DID SHE KEEP IT A SECRET?"

Mothers who followed the strategy of secrecy tried to keep the fact of the arrest and the sentence a secret from their children as long as they could. They explained the father's absence by saying that he was working abroad and mitigated the fact of his death by claiming that he had died of natural causes. The changed atmosphere and certain casually made remarks, however, made the children suspicious and inquisitive, but some mothers were even then afraid to tell the truth. Some of the children did not learn even from other family members what had really happened. When they eventually realised that those closest to them had lied, it shattered the foundations of their sense of security, their unconditional confidence in their parents. When the disclosure of the secret was not followed by open communication and the issue remained a taboo, the mental burdens they were forced to bear were further increased. In every respect these children were in the most vulnerable situation.

"In our family it was acknowledged that he was not at home, and that was that. It was a subject that we avoided. It was cold. We pulled our socks off under

the duvet when we were getting ready to switch off the light. My elder brother asked when my father was coming home. My mother only said 'You don't have a father anymore.' Then the lights were switched off and there was silence. So that was how I learned that he had died. But I still didn't know about the execution. Then we were told a story of how dad was doing some work in the prison. He had gone up to bring a radiator down from the umpteenth floor. He had got sweaty, then he had drunk some cold water, got pneumonia and died." (PÁL Z.)

"We couldn't get a single word out of my mother. For years I was led to believe that he had emigrated and would come home. So I lived in complete ignorance. Until I was in the sixth or seventh grade I was always waiting for him to come home. There were other people who had emigrated, fair enough. They were not allowed home, but they sent letters or parcels. I waited for him for ages. Then one day, later on, my brother said that things weren't like that at all. I don't know what we were talking about, but I said that I'd heard that those who had emigrated either came home or wrote letters. He told me I shouldn't wait for him because he wasn't even alive. Something like that. He had died in prison, but my brother didn't tell me that he had been executed. We discovered the truth fairly late on. Perhaps we don't know all the details even today." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

"Our mother tried to avoid the subject until we actually started asking questions. It was a very painful issue for her. She tried to spare us from this. When I asked her why she had kept it a secret she replied that she felt we were not mature enough to understand. End of discussion." (FERENC Z.)

In families who chose to be secretive none of the members of the family knew or understood, either during the revolution or later, what the father had done and why he had been sentenced. They were left bewildered by the tragic events. The majority of the women did not identify with their husbands. Some of them even felt ashamed of their spouses and what they had done and rejected them. Along with their children they were left entirely defenceless in the face of the outside world, and their lives were ruled by fear for decades. The image of the father and of the revolution retained by children who grew up in secretive families was most closely in line with the official viewpoint of the Kádár era.

The place of residence and profession of the father, in the case of families who remained secretive, shows a similar distribution to that in the previous group, with the exception that one finds hardly any intellectual fathers among them. They cannot be typified on the basis of their activities in 1956, but unlike the others, the majority did not take a conscious and deliberate role in the revolution but can rather be said to have drifted into events accidentally. Most of these families were of the lowest cultural level. The mothers generally had only low-level qualifications, something which was reflected in their social status.

In some cases, we may hypothesise that there were different reasons for the women's silence and secrecy. The husbands of these women rose to a leading

position during the great social changes following 1945. They became committed to the Communist system and changed their views only during the revolution. These women were unable to cope with the conflicts that resulted from their rapid social elevation, thus their husbands' apparent or actual confrontation with their former convictions caused serious problems. They did not understand what had happened in 1956, they failed to see wider contexts, and they interpreted the events merely at the level of personal tragedy. And if their former friends were among those carrying out the retribution—as was frequently the case—their insecurity further increased.

"They didn't explain anything to me. I learned about the whole 1956 affair almost at the very last moment, sadly not from my parents but from others. As to my father's whereabouts I was told that he was abroad and couldn't come home for a little while. I lived in that trust and when I learned at school that he was in prison I returned home in a state of great agitation. But even then I was told that he was not in prison but abroad. Soon after that a girl from the neighbourhood reprimanded me for telling lies about my father being abroad when he was in prison. After that I demanded to be told the truth about my father at home. My poor mother didn't even know how to begin. She tried to explain to me the important position my father used to hold. But at the time I didn't have the faintest idea who Mátyás Rákosi or Kádár were or about anything they said. Well, she tried to explain it as well as she could to an eight-year-old child. Eventually she pacified me by saying that I should believe that my father was innocent. But as a child I was incapable of understanding why an innocent person was being held in prison. Why had he been sentenced? They tried to spare me but it was terrible that I had to find out the truth from somebody else and it was terrible for them that they were forced to provide explanations." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

It was mostly the widows of the executed who generally followed the strategy of secrecy, since the execution made the loss of the head of the family irreversible. There was no one to send parcels to, no one to visit in prison, and no one to write letters to. Even if, for a while, they hoped that their husbands would return, these widows were left on their own to create a new lifestyle. Their children were denied the chance of being comforted by their fathers after release. Their fathers could not help to ease the trauma they had suffered, nor by sharing their experiences could they guide their children towards a view of the revolution that was different from the official version.

In the course of our research most of the people we met had grown up amidst taboos and secrets. The people around the children of the convicts had remained silent or had rarely talked about the tragedy they had suffered, thus they were not able to come to terms with it entirely. In most cases, 1956 and its aftermath were family secrets that were not explored until long after the event. Some families tried to erase even the memory of what had happened. One may well suppose that the families' communication problems amplified the dysfunctional socialisation suffered by the children. Value systems and communication

strategies undoubtedly differed in families with a different social and cultural position. In several families even before the revolution couples had not shared with one another, nor with their children, problems that fell outside the scope of everyday life. Thus, in the extraordinary circumstances in which they found themselves it was inevitable that they would remain silent.

"I DIDN'T DARE OPEN UP"

Lack of information, along with fear and helplessness, strengthened the choice of a strategy of taboos and secrecy. During the revolution news spread mostly via informal channels. Due to the disruptions to their daily lives there were few opportunities for family members to discuss and evaluate events. The arrests that followed the defeat of the revolution only increased their insecurity. The trials were held mainly in closed courtrooms. The majority of those who were subsequently victimised were forced into a vacuum. They were unable to come to terms with the tragedy even for themselves, nor did the people around them have the kind of material and moral resources that would have enabled them to offer support. In many cases, the families were abandoned by former friends and acquaintances, some of whom even gave evidence for the prosecution. This further increased the families' feelings of distrust and vulnerability.

"We missed our father, but we didn't know what had happened, what he had been charged with, or why he had had to die. My mother attended the trials, but even she was not aware of the impending death penalty. My father had not been able to tell her, even during her last visit, that he would be executed. He had only hinted at it. None of us understood, not even my mother. Several years were to pass before I began to understand what it had all been about and why we had had to work so hard. It was some years before her nerves and psyche began to recover. We avoided the subject until then. But even afterwards, when the family got together, we didn't talk much about it but just referred to our father's absence in passing." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

Retaliation evoked in the whole of society, and in the relatives of the convicts in particular, the collective fears that had been passed from generation to generation during the previous decades. In almost every family there were former prisoners of war, people who had served in labour gangs, people who had been dismissed from their jobs for political reasons, people who had been classified as "class-aliens" and who had been imprisoned or whose assets had been confiscated. Several family members had already been involved in some kind of political conflicts with the representatives of power. Their relatives were afraid of the sentence and its consequences and that retaliation might reach them as well. Mothers were—and generally not without reason—distrustful with respect to the outside world. Another reason why some mothers did not speak to their children about their fathers was to ensure that they would not pass on the information, which could have resulted in further persecution. They were also afraid that their children would not be able to come to terms with the imprisonment

or execution of their fathers and they thought that by remaining silent they could save their children from anguish.

"During our childhood our mother never said a word to us about him. We never talked about dad. She must have been asked about him everywhere, and she probably believed—or at least that's what I think as an adult—that it would be better if she didn't say a word since then we wouldn't be able to talk either. As children we could easily have been used, and my mother was very much afraid." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"The subject was an absolute taboo, we were not allowed to say a word about it. I wasn't allowed to talk about it, because if I blabbed, something would happen to the family. And it was particularly forbidden to ask anything from strangers." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

From occasional remarks we can surmise that some mothers felt guilty or had a bad conscience either about believing the propaganda or because they thought they had played some part in their husbands' arrest.

"I think my mother was interrogated. And somehow she didn't say the right thing, she spoke against my father. I don't think my mother was ever able to come to terms with that. Of course, this only came to light afterwards." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

Some women felt, albeit without reason, that they had abandoned their husbands, and they felt responsible as survivors. This is a typical reaction even in less extreme circumstances. Since members of the family had not got into such serious situations as a result of their own conscious decisions, they occasionally turned their own frustration, whether openly or in secret, against the convict, making their husbands or fathers responsible for everything that had happened to them. They argued that fathers are responsible first and foremost for their families and should leave risky politics to others.

"My mother must have been terribly angry with him. He had left her on her own after all. She kept telling him that he shouldn't have got so deeply involved." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

The interviews confirmed the psychological theory that parents are capable of talking about a family trauma naturally with their children only to the extent to which they themselves are able to face up to their situation and their emotions—that is, to the extent to which they are able to come to terms with the catastrophe. There was also evidence to justify the truism that children cannot be sealed from life nor spared from the cruelty of reality. Even very young children are sensitive to metacommunication. They can sense excitement or fear in people around them, and they can recognise the gestures of suffering. They are aware if people fall silent when they appear, nor is there any way to prevent information filtering through to them from their wider social context. The uncertainty of the family's status, and children being reduced to finding out the truth from overheard conversations or by "stealing" information, both contribute to the shattering or loss of the family's sense of security. It should also be pointed out that a person's natural defensive mechanisms in the face

of trauma—denial, silence, and repression—had begun to work naturally in the case of the interviewees. The process had been reinforced by the officially generated atmosphere within society, by a political system that expected silence. In an atmosphere of nation-wide silence it was both difficult and dangerous to talk.

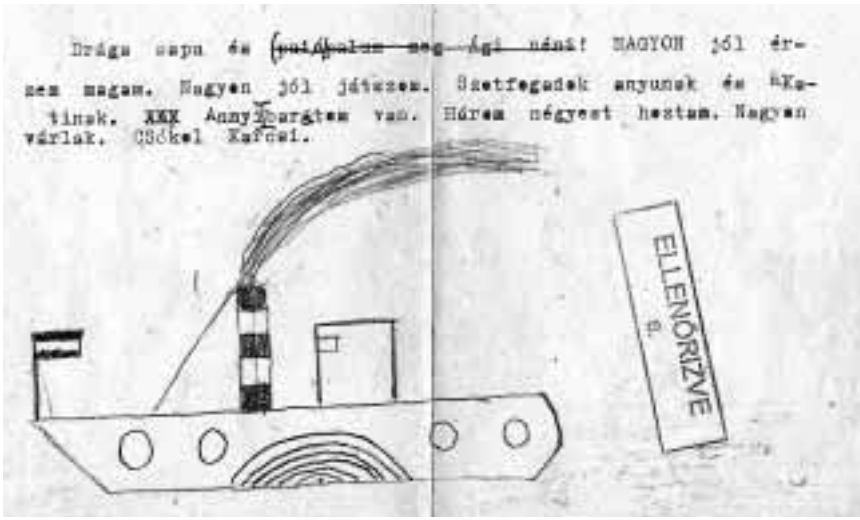
"Even later, when I began to make inquiries on my own, I kept coming up against brick walls. People refused to answer, saying 'It would be better if you kept quiet as well. Ask nothing, and stop searching.' I didn't dare open up, and I never showed my real self, since that was forbidden. I still had fear, that of a person who has been brought up being told: 'Try to avoid talking about your father at any cost, since your name reveals everything and you're already in enough trouble. You should stay like a little grey bird. Don't try to fly. Don't try to be yourself.' People always look for the truth, people always want to know what is real and what is not, but I never dared to, because I was always told 'Don't ever try, you're better off not looking for answers.' Everywhere I went I was told: 'It's forbidden. You should be happy to be alive!'" (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

"We often talked about daddy. The only problem was that mum would always burst out crying, so we usually avoided the subject. It only stirred up my mum's memories and caused her pain. We were also afraid, since no one can forget four or five armed men bursting into the house and doing to us whatever they wanted." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"My aunt didn't say a word about it to me. The truth is that I didn't want to cause her, or myself, pain by asking questions. I didn't think it would be good either for her or for me if I insisted on looking for answers. Tact overcame my curiosity." (MÁRTA MICSINAI)

Due to their special situation the children of the 1956 convicts had particular need of the support and protection of the family and the people around them. They could only find their way through the labyrinth of a hostile world if they were not left alone with their unique problems and if their families and the people around them were able to help them. If the members of a family lived in a sincere and open atmosphere, they shared their burdens, and the children were protected against fear and helplessness.

It is not silence that heals, but remembrance.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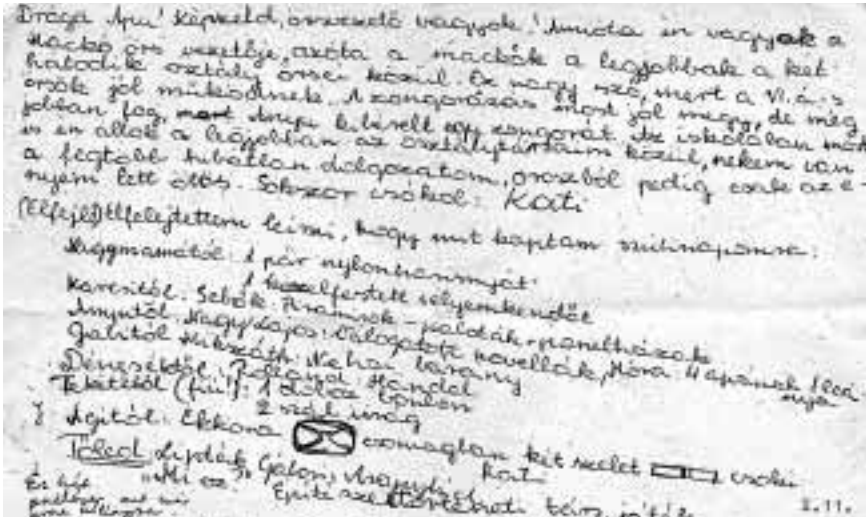
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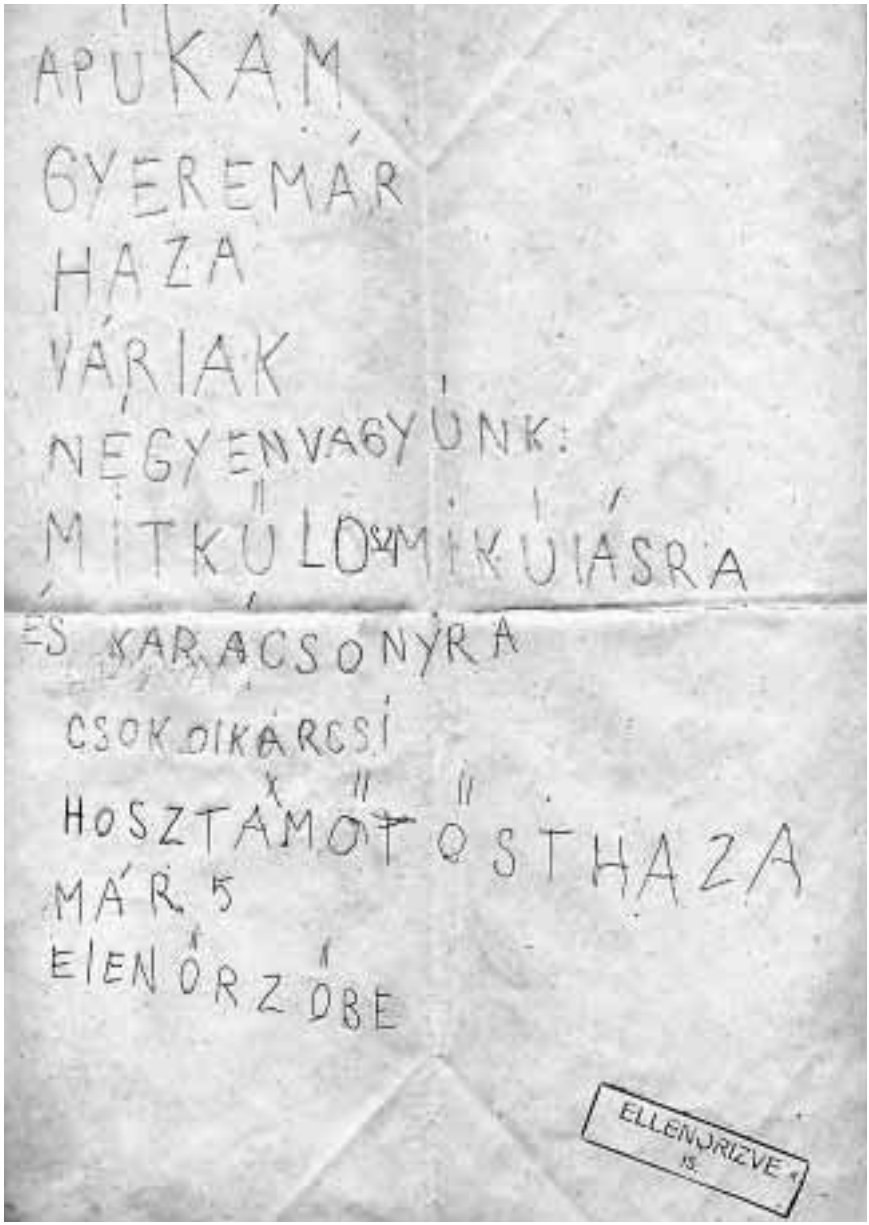
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15.

IX.

Draga jó Édesapám.
Levelem jó egészségben találja. Én jól vagyok a kis Marikával együtt. Apuka hogy van? Én járok iskolába, és igyekszem jól tanulni hogy Apukához méltó legyek.
Édes Apukám. Nagyon tetik hiányozni. Nagyon várjuk haza. Minden este imádkozunk hogy segítse haza a jó Isten minél előbb közénk. Zárom soraimat millió csókkal
Üdvözli szerető kislja Sándorka.
és kis leánya. Marika.

Szeretet Kedves fiam fájó szivel irom e pár sort légy erös mert én már nagyon gyenge vagyok úgy érzem hogy már nálam nem sokáig kitart még ugyan láthatnálak de többet nem kivánok imi Kedves édes fiam mert a könyem tól nem látok számtalanszor nyolcunk ti erös együtt isten veled.

x.

STIGMATISATION

The ancient Greeks branded with clearly visible signs people regarded as unworthy or disgraced. A stigma was thus, for them, a mark of shame on the pariah of society. In the Christian tradition the concept was given a different interpretation: marks resembling the wounds of the crucified Christ were said to have been supernaturally impressed on the bodies of certain holy people. Today, stigmata refer to differences highlighted in order to discredit.

According to Erving Gofman's classification, one type of stigma comprises the 'tribal' stigmata of racial, national and religious belonging, which spread along the lines of family ties and stain each and every member of a given family.[1] The people we interviewed belong to this category: their stigmatisation and their position as pariahs were a result of their fathers' actions and were related to the revolution, the event that the Kádár regime had denounced.

One of the characteristic features of the situation of stigmatised people is that they are treated differently by others as a result of their stigma. They are not treated as "normal". We also learn from Goffman (among others) that those who are stigmatised in the same manner go through the same learning process. Firstly, all stigmatised people adopt the "normal" point of view, that is, they accept, however unwillingly, society's opinion of them. They then realise that there is a stigma attached to them that will, or might, lead to discrimination against them. Next they experience the consequences of stigmatisation and learn how to protect themselves from the reactions of people around them, as well as how to live with their stigma in such a way that it causes them the least possible hardship.

Stigmatised people whose "flaw" is not apparent—that is, those who have not yet been branded with shame by a given community—may try to conceal their differences by manipulating the information that would discredit them. They are very careful about how much of their "sinister" past to reveal, and to whom. In other words, they learn to keep their stigma a secret. In contrast, those who are stigmatised and discredited openly have to learn to cope with other people's negative attitudes towards them.

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[1] Goffman, Erwing. *Stigma and Social Identity.* Goffman mentions two other basic forms of stigma: one of them comprises bodily defects, the other various negative aspects of an individual's character.

The realisation that they are in some way different from the majority, and that this difference might lead to disadvantage or even exclusion, is a moment of crucial significance in the life of every stigmatised person. The discovery may be delayed by their family, but sooner or later every stigmatised person has to face the fact that they are different.

"Our family was different"

We have already seen how, as a result of the retribution that followed the defeat of the revolution, the political power penalised members of the convicts' families. However, the children of the 1956 convicts grew up stigmatised not only by the political power, but also by a part of society. They could only conceal their stigma successfully if they knew exactly why their fathers had been convicted or executed and how it had affected their lives—in other words, if they were fully aware of their unique situation. Their ability to cope—the way in which they faced the internal conflicts that arose from their being different from others, the techniques they used in order to conceal their past, and their response to negative attitudes towards them—depended largely on the behaviour and communication strategy of the mother, or occasionally the grandparents. What the mother—or in certain cases the father upon being released—told the children, as well as when and how, was therefore of crucial importance.

In families where the revolution and the father's fate were talked about openly, mothers tried to prepare their children for the kind of situations they might have to face in life. They made their children aware at a very early age that their family was different.

"I was aware very early that something was wrong with us. I knew because I did not attend nursery school at the time and I had plenty of time to think. I would stand at the window, longing to be like the others and to go where they went. I wanted to be like them and have a father too. I didn't want to be *illegal*." (Margit Brusznyai)

The majority of the children became aware of their special situation when they moved outside the protective circle of the family. They came up against the negative reactions of the world of officialdom mainly at elementary school, the place where they were first confronted with the limits imposed by the authorities.

"One day at school orphans or half-orphans were told to stand up. I was in the second grade at the time and my father was already dead. I stood up. What else could I do? Then the teacher told me to sit down. This experience proved to me that I was different from the others. My family was different and I was being treated differently. Which meant that I had to accept, observe, and keep things at a distance." (László Tihanyi)

"The consequences of 1956, and the situation it landed us in, left its mark on everything. It was not so much a feeling of inferiority, rather a lack of permission and of opportunities in certain areas. We were not allowed to do this,

we were not eligible for that. I found it quite natural that I had to stand at the end of the line at school. And not because I was the smallest. But when something was being handed out—and not only then, I'm just using it as an example—I couldn't reach for it first. I had to wait until all the others had got theirs and only then was I allowed to take it. This feeling of always having to stand at the end of every line was also manifested in not being thought capable of a certain level of performance, for example. That is, I came from a context, from the kind of place, from which no more could be expected." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

Although they may have guessed at much of the truth, those who had been told nothing—and who were thus not prepared for the kind of situations likely to arise—were forced to confront their difference in a dramatic way. If children did not experience direct discrimination while at school, their awakening came later, in some cases only in adulthood.

"A new maths teacher arrived at the school, who, as I learned later, was a failed cadre. He had been appointed as a party secretary and a teacher of mathematics and physics. One day he broke down and began yelling that his nerves were not made of steel, and that he had been attacked by counterrevolutionaries who had treated him cruelly and threatened to execute him. 'It was all because of men like his father', he said, pointing at me. I was devastated. I had always thought of myself as a good child, and of my father as a hero. What was it all about? This was the first time anything like this had happened, and it made me think." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

"Only now, as an adult, have I begun to understand the reason for all the misery and poverty, and why I was unable to continue my studies." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

If children were made aware of their stigma they were also taught to manage the information relating to it. Such families employed different internal and external tactics. They talked openly with one another, but circumstances demanded that they behave themselves according to the demands of the outside world. In other words, they were forced to play a role and to keep their "dangerous" past a secret.

"My mother kept nothing secret from me, but I also knew that I must not talk about things in front of other people. So I lived with a secret in my soul and was not allowed to talk about the fact that my father had been killed, about freedom, or about the Russians. I was fully aware of this when I was in the first grade. My mother told me I had to live, to advance, to study, to go to university. To achieve something. And it could only be done by not shouting about the past. But it did not mean complete self denial or denial of the past." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

These children learned that they must not talk about their fathers, and that in the interests of their careers, or in many cases their very survival, they had to make compromises. They therefore avoided conflict, since they knew that in certain situations there was no point in fighting against the judgements

passed by the authorities and society. In many cases, they did not make a choice to remain silent in the face of the outside world but simply followed this strategy instinctively.

"Somehow we knew immediately that we were different in this respect, that we had to erect a kind of barricade around our family, and that we must not talk about a whole lot of things that were none of other people's business. We needed little warning about this: we sensed it somehow. We were left so much alone with this that I can't begin to describe it. My mother must obviously have come to the conclusion that we had to avoid anything that might call attention to us. We learned that we had to remain silent in order to live. Besides, there was terror all around us. In other words, we didn't advertise who we were. We kept our mouths shut and in this way, in the end, we were left alone." (László Tihanyi)

"By the time I finished elementary school and began secondary school I think I was perfectly aware of what was going on. This made me extremely proud, especially since I saw how ignorant most people were, which made me feel superior. I was sure that I was right about dad's conviction in 1956 and that others were either stupid or lying. Of course, I was told not to get into arguments, and although I didn't always keep to this rule I was a cautious gambler." (Péter Zsámboki)

"While I was never restricted or banned from being a Pioneer or that kind of thing, I was never told what to say if anyone asked… It was obvious that I knew how to behave. Firstly, it was an ongoing process in the outside world, since initially the ideological condemnation had not been general. It all started much later, when they could lie more openly and as things began to get confused in people's minds. So I grew into it gradually, like everyone else did. I learned to recognise in what situations and with whom I could talk. Obviously one wouldn't chat with someone and go on about the counterrevolution." (Katalin Litván)

We have seen how many mothers made a taboo or secret of what had happened to their children's father, and how they tried to hide it from the outside world as well. Several of them tried to start a new life. Some of them relocated, and some widows of executed convicts remarried, changing their own and their children's names and thereby making their lives easier.

"It is interesting that later on we were not affected by the atrocities. My mother cried. She was absolutely beside herself. She was afraid that we would be relocated, which was apparently not without precedent at the time. The then president of the council recommended that she remarry and that her children take her new husband's name. The adoption was sorted out in Újpest in just a few days. József Fekete became my father. From then on it was his name that I used on my CV. If the identity of my real father had been known I could not have completed my secondary schooling, nor could I ever have become a teacher. Perhaps I might have done some day, I don't know. Who knows what my fate might have been?" (Katalin Kósa)

"My mother was also worried, that's why she agreed that we should take the name of her second husband so that we would not be at a disadvantage due to our name." (MÁRTA MICSINAI)

In cases where a family chose the strategy of taboo or secrecy, the children did not become aware of their difference, nor were they prepared for the fact that society would treat them differently. They had to shape their survival techniques, and find a way to bear their stigma, on the basis of their own, mainly negative, experiences. They usually became secretive instinctively, following their families' example. They felt unable to ask questions about their fathers, thus they had to remain silent about them.

"We didn't like talking about this to anyone. It was like having an inferiority complex. It was as if we had been branded. We didn't even like hearing about it. In fact, it remained a taboo until recently, until the compensation case." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

Gestures of solidarity within society will be discussed in the next chapter, but it is worth remarking here that several people received tacit support from those around them. No questions were asked, no one said anything. They remained silent.

"Everyone knew that if one wished to avoid lying this was something one could not talk about." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

Hiding was generally a successful strategy. As long as the children had no wish to stand out society accepted them and treated them as "normal". The authorities used their discrediting measures to coerce those involved into keeping their relationship to the events of 1956 a secret, thereby warning other members of society that they would be better off forgetting the revolution and the circumstances of its defeat.

"THE REPRESSION WAS SO STRONG"

When attempting to adopt the most effective possible attitude, it is helpful to a potential subject of discrimination to divide society according to what the members of a certain area know, or might learn, about his or her stigma. In the event that his or her "shameful past" is revealed it is helpful to know how others are likely to react.

For the children of the 1956 convicts—especially in the early years of the Kádár era—there were so-called forbidden, or closed, places, to which they were not admitted. Access to such places was controlled so strictly that applicants had no way of keeping the facts relating to their past a secret. Following the defeat of the revolution the authorities allowed the stigmatised very limited room to manoeuvre. They were barred from almost every formal community and institution. Regardless of their academic achievements they were barred from any form of further education. After completing the compulsory eight grades of elementary school they were forbidden to attend secondary school, in accordance with a Ministry of Education decree, and many applications, even to voca-

tional institutions, were rejected. It was not only their further education that was hindered. They came up against the same brick walls even when looking for employment, and almost all of them were reduced to doing hard, physical work.

"Since I was unable to continue my studies after completing secondary school I wanted to find a job. Wherever I applied—and in the end I was on the point of accepting a job as a street sweeper—I came up against a party committee. The party secretary told me 'You can't make a silk purse out of a Lajtai', and it was his personal recommendation that I should not be allowed to get work. Nor was there any point in me trying in Győr-Sopron county, since I wouldn't find a company willing to give me any kind of work. On each occasion, when they learned who my father was they told me 'Thank you, but we regret…'" (ENDRE LAJTAI)

"After 1956 I was unable to continue my studies. My application form was sent back from the secondary schools. Finally, our headmaster told me that it was because of my father that I had not been accepted anywhere. He was sorry, but he could do nothing to help. Not only was I unable to attend secondary school, I could not even get a place at a vocational school. I had no other choice but to begin to look for work in a factory. Initially I was received with kindness, but when they found out whose daughter I was and why my father was in prison they immediately thanked me for my application and turned me down. Finally, with the help of some relatives, I found work as a garden labourer." (KATALIN KÓSA)

Until the great amnesty in 1963 further education was out of the reach of the children of most 1956 convicts. With the consolidation of the political system and the softening of the dictatorship, the rigour gradually eased. They were accepted first by vocational schools, then by secondary schools, although they continued to be excluded from institutions of higher education. In accordance with a party decree, from 1957 the children of "counterrevolutionaries" were put in the same "X" category as class aliens. The "X" category had been valid from 1952 to discriminate against those elements that were regarded as unwanted in the system. According to the decree, they could continue in higher education only with special ministerial permission. However, such permission was only given to the children of internationally acclaimed, highly qualified, prominent victims, providing they were outstanding students. Even they could only get into university after several attempts, and having spent two years doing some kind of physical work. According to an order of the Ministry of Education, "Applications for further study must be examined by the form teacher and the headmaster, who should verify the correctness of the information supplied on the application form. […] The applications of those who displayed politically objectionable attitudes during counterrevolutionary events or subsequently should be rejected by the headmaster. […] In order to establish the above facts the headmaster should ask for the opinion of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the council organisations." The minister of education forced the various institutions to set up school committees, which had to include

representatives of local political and social organisations among their members. Although it was not stated openly that further education was forbidden to the children of counterrevolutionaries, the presence of political organisations on the committees, and the clause in the order according to which "Applicants for further education should be judged and evaluated with particular care and thoroughness", guaranteed that the party decree would be carried out.

Although in the political atmosphere of consolidation admission to institutions of higher education was liberalised, in practice discrimination continued for several years and university and college applications and job applications continued to be obstructed.

"One of my sisters had wanted to be a doctor all her life. On the basis of her school grades and entrance examination she was accepted to the University of Szeged in 1966. However, a few days before the beginning of the semester she received a letter telling her that her place had been cancelled. During the oral exam for admission to the nursery-school teacher-training college my other sister was told to her face that she had no hope. The director said to her: "Can you imagine that the daughter of a counterrevolutionary would be permitted to teach the future generation?" She was told to stop dreaming of becoming a kindergarten nurse." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"I was a qualified metal worker. I applied for a job at a plant and was immediately accepted as a skilled labourer. But when we went into the personnel department to sort out my papers, I was told that there had been a mistake and that they could only take me on as an unskilled worker. About a year later they raised the hourly wage. I was sure I had worked well but I was not included. Eventually it became obvious that I would never get anywhere there, so I applied to other plants where they were looking for technicians with my qualifications. I found several vacancies but by the time I talked to the officials the jobs had disappeared and they were unable to employ me." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

Apparently, if the children of the 1956 convicts attempted to further their studies or to find a job in the place in which they lived—that is, in a place where everyone was aware of their stigma—they had little chance of success. Decisions about an applicant's political and personal aptitude for a given profession were made—by directors, party secretaries, personnel managers, for example—almost entirely without regard for professional considerations. These influential people—with a few exceptions—carried out the wishes of the political power, since they had to submit reports on the carrying out of party decrees.

"I applied to college from my workplace. When I went into the personnel department to get my character reference I asked them what was in it. They said it was none of my business. That made me wonder, since at the time I was on friendly terms with my colleagues and I had thought they would let me know. They wanted to take it back from me but I didn't give it back because I guessed what I would find. When we got home I opened the envelope. The letter contained details of my father's activities in 1956. As for me, it said that I was neither a Pioneer nor a member of the party's youth organisation, and that I did

not take part in mass demonstrations. In addition, it said that my attitude made me unsuited for positions of leadership, thus they did not support my application. With a letter like that it made no sense to show up for the entrance exam. The personnel manager had served in the armed forces." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

As a result of the discrediting measures employed by the political authorities, prestigious professions and leading positions were for a long time out of the reach of the children of the 1956 convicts. Thus their attempts to achieve a higher social status—with a few exceptions—were obstructed. They were made to feel inferior to others and many of the things that were regarded as automatic by the average Hungarian citizen were unavailable to them. They were kept under observation for years. The majority were not given passports until the early 1980s and each year, on the anniversary of the revolution, the police would round them up.

"One night in October 1966, at 11 o'clock, a young man came to our flat. I was seventeen at the time. He asked if I felt like driving around for a bit. 'Well, at this time of night I don't really. Where to?' 'To the police station.' I told him I had to let my mother know. He told me I could set her mind at rest as there was nothing wrong. I said 'Look, if the police come for me at 11 o'clock at night of course it's bound to make her feel easy.' Then I realised what it was all about and I told my mother 'Don't worry. This must be something to do with 1956. I haven't done anything wrong.' They drove me away in a black Volga with civilian number plates. They amused themselves flicking the light on and off and they asked me where I had been on a particular day. I don't remember which day. This went on for an hour or two, then they let me go." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

"I applied for a passport for the first time in 1984 but was refused one. I was summoned to the police headquarters in Miskolc. They asked a lot of questions and eventually my application was turned down." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

The situation was different for stigmatised people who tried to continue their studies or find work at some distance from their birthplace. They were generally successful, since in a strange place, where no one was aware of their past or their family, they were able to start afresh. They could usually keep quiet about the facts connected to their stigmatisation. Nor did they come up against any difficulties if they applied for some kind of hard physical work since there were so few applicants for such jobs. These were usually the only places in which they were judged according to the same criteria as everybody else.

"My brother moved to Miskolc. It was there that he completed elementary school. Some well-meaning people had asked him 'Why do you have to study here? Why don't you go somewhere else, to another town?' Later I was asked why I had had to go and work in Ózd, of all places. If I moved to the next town they wouldn't know and there'd be nothing on paper." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

"It wasn't an issue there. It also meant that if someone was over-qualified it didn't matter *there*. You could work in the mines even in the darkest era of the 1950s since no one would be fighting you for the job. It didn't matter if you

were a count as long as you were pushing a mine cart. After a while you might even get to work at the coal face." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"Havens" were the only secure places in which these people could act and talk openly among their fellow sufferers, who accepted them unconditionally. For families in which communication was open and in which children were informed about everything that happened, the home represented a safe, albeit small, haven of this kind.

"We were always taught that it was a very good thing that there were so many of us together, that it was best like this. It was good to be an Orbán. I remember family dinners that lasted for hours. If there was a power cut, for example, we would sit in the dark telling stories. My mother told stories, I told stories, everyone told stories. With hindsight I can see that this kind of lifestyle had been very consciously created." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

Ideally a group of friends might also represent a haven in which the father's story could be kept secret. Such havens were available predominantly to children from intellectual families, who helped one another after the revolution.

"We were extremely close. This circle was very effective. I remember that I made friends with Juli Szilágyi. We must have had some kind of joint values, something in common." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

Some people, however, as a result of the stifling constraints imposed by the family, were not able to open up even in the company of friends.

"They were all children of families that knew one another. I knew that they knew, and I knew that I could speak openly in front of them, but often I didn't speak out even there because the repression was so strong." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

Learning to separate the various social spaces and adopting certain types of effective behaviour that can be followed in particular circumstances, is, in part, an aspect of primary socialisation, and in part an aspect of secondary socialisation, that is, of adult learning. In families with several children the younger children often learned failure-avoidance behaviour from the experiences of their elder siblings. The eldest child often attempted to breach the walls imposed by the authorities and to enter places forbidden by society, and their failure not only stopped them from making further attempts but also discouraged their younger siblings.

"You eventually realised that there was no point in trying to be a smart Alec. There was nothing you could do except what *they* said." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

There is only an apparent contradiction between this and the fact that younger siblings were sometimes able to continue in higher education. This became possible because of the easing of repression on the part of the authorities by the time they had finished their elementary school studies in the 1970s.

Secrecy required distancing, and members of the convicts' families tried to hide certain episodes of their past from the people around them. Many of them adopted this behaviour so successfully that they did not talk about such things even within their personal, intimate relationships. Even if they did reveal

what had happened to their fathers, very few of them managed to establish sincere, open communication in their new families. On the other hand, being able to talk sincerely with their spouses about their secret and about the psychological consequences of the tragedy provided a sense of security.

"I told my future husband everything so that he knew who he was going out with. I told him as soon as I realised that things were getting serious and that he wanted to introduce me to his parents. We talked about it that one time and never again. I thought about my father a lot at the time and I still think about him today, but we don't talk about it because it just makes the pain even worse." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

"I kept things so repressed that only my husband recognised it. I had to tell him everything, the things I had experienced and the things I was experiencing. He understood. He asked my mother about my inhibitions and about what had happened to my father. Then we started to talk about things gradually. He began very cautiously. He didn't just carve straight through. He waited for me to express my feelings. He was the first person after my mother with whom I could talk about my inhibitions, about all the things I had experienced in 1956 and the years that followed. Unfortunately, he had to live through it all with me, every time we talked about it, since all our conversations ended in tears and distress. I demanded a great deal of patience from him." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

In the first years of the era, discrimination against the children of the 1956 convicts included preventing them from becoming members of the youth organisations that were compulsory for their contemporaries. They could not be enrolled either as "Little Drummers" or as Pioneers. The ban was eventually lifted and the authorities even promoted their membership of such organisations, which the majority subsequently joined. For them, however, as for other youngsters at the time, there was nothing political about belonging to these organisations. It was rather a leisure activity, a form of community, and also an important condition for the furthering of their studies.

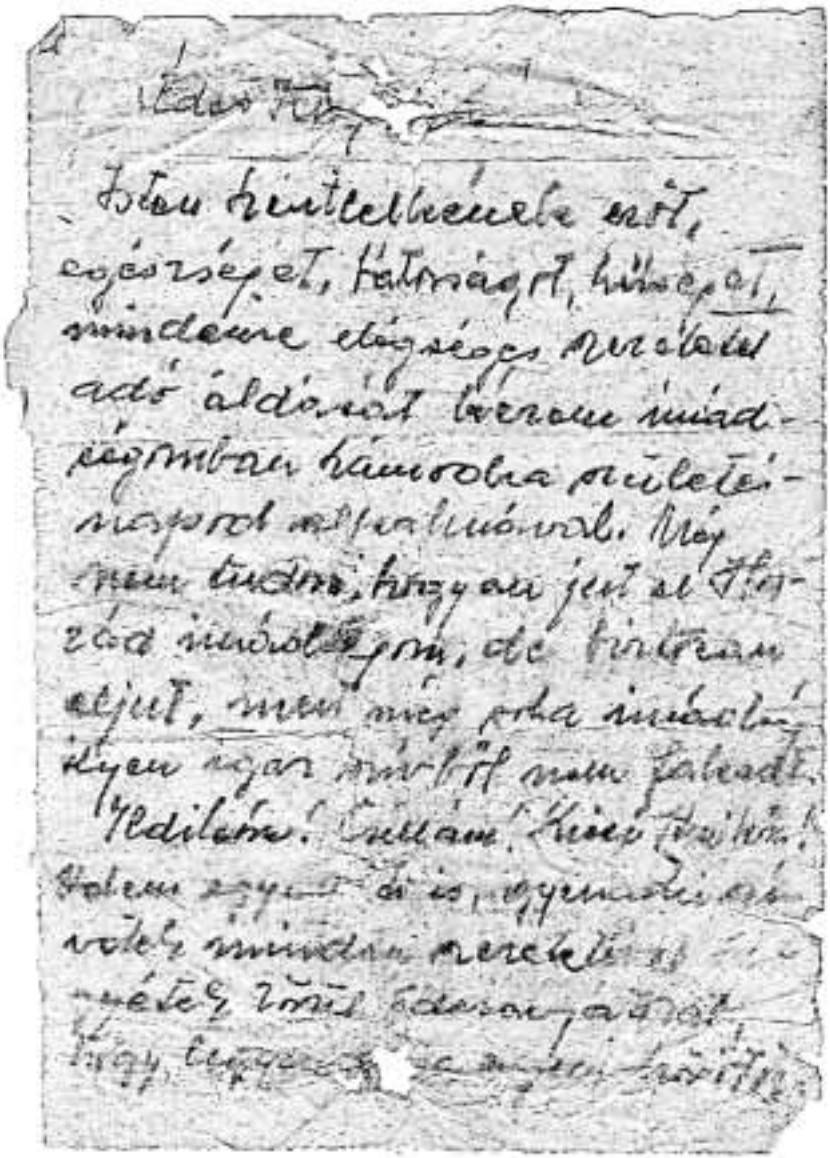
"There were a few of us in the class who were not Little Drummers. Don't ask me why, I don't know. Nor do I have any idea why I wasn't a Pioneer. There was a Pioneer enrolment ceremony for everybody else, but not for me. It didn't happen to me, so I wasn't officially enrolled. But interestingly, on the occasion of every school celebration when the red scarf of the Pioneer had to be worn, I was always asked why I wasn't wearing one. I said it was because I was not a Pioneer. 'Well, here's a scarf. Just shut up and put it on.'" (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

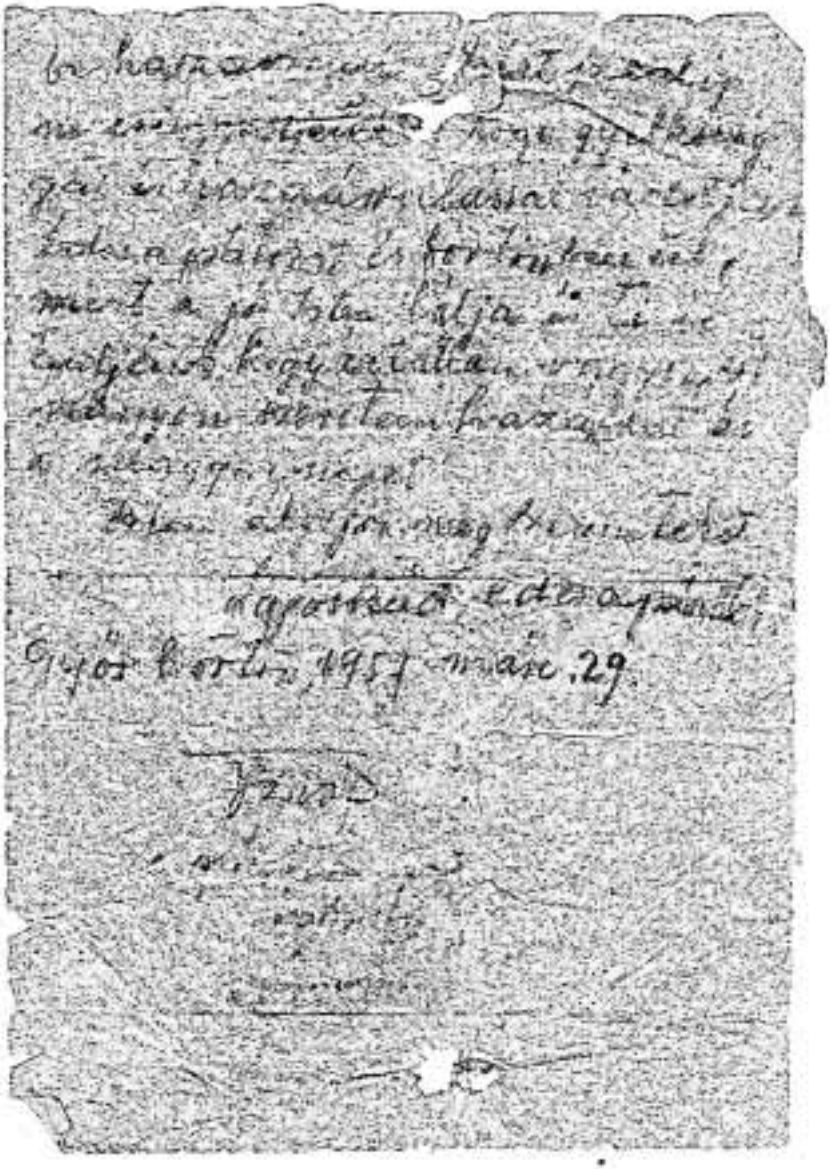
"There was a Communist Youth Association in the secondary school. Everybody had to be a member, and not for political or ideological reasons. People joined because they wanted to further their studies, and if someone wasn't a member of the CYA they were at a disadvantage. I never regarded the CYA as a political thing but as a community with excursions, parties and get-togethers." (ZSOLT FEKETE)

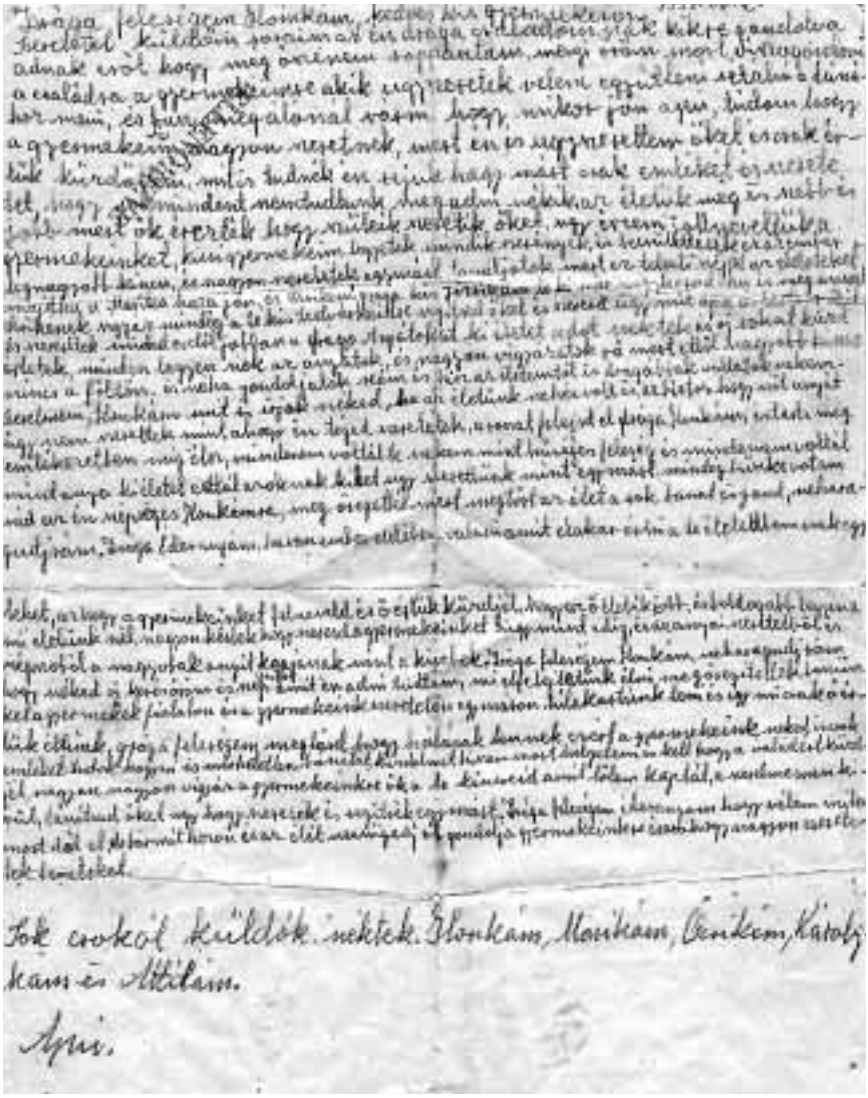
In the 1970s—unless someone was in open revolt against the system—even enrolment in the Communist Party was encouraged. However, the majority of our interviewees did not take advantage of the opportunity.

"On the one hand, they were nagging me. They knew that I was religious. I never denied it. I admitted it openly. They also knew that I was a churchgoer. I was fortunate that the party secretary there respected this. However, he advised me to become a member of the party since it would provide me with more opportunities for advancement. Then I talked to him frankly and told him that when this thing happened to my father I made a commitment never to get involved in politics and never to become a member of any political party." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

The stigmatisation of members of the families of the 1956 convicts gradually became less intense. In 1989 they were officially "pardoned". It would be tempting to believe that decades of pain and fear simply disappeared. However, although people have been able to talk freely since 1989, strategies that had been followed for decades were difficult to put aside overnight. The political changes prompted differing reactions. In some people fear and secrecy had become so ingrained that even today—albeit in a milder form—communication blocks are still at work. Others began to boast about their fathers' actions and expected special treatment by way of compensation for the long years of suffering. Some began to talk with pleasure and pride about their fathers. In the lives of many the initial euphoria was followed by withdrawal, and because of the mixed reaction of society they became afraid of being recognised.







Sok csokót küldök nektek. Klárikám, Manikám, Cecikém, Katalinkám és Attilám.

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SOCIETY AND THE FAMILY

On stepping outside the family circle, the children of the 1956 convicts came into contact with several different communities, such as the extended family, neighbours, school, workplace and army. Here they met with rejection, neutrality, or support. Officially, as we have seen, they usually encountered discrimination, although in their capacity as private persons officials did on occasion prove to be helpful. In civilian life, however, neutrality and solidarity were more common responses. Of course, there is no way of knowing what those who came into contact with the families of the convicts were themselves doing in 1956, what they thought about the revolution, and what kind of relationship they had with the authorities. However, their reactions towards those who were stigmatised reflected their opinions, albeit indirectly. Even people who would much rather have forgotten about the revolution were forced by the convicts and members of their families to remember and to express opinions. This prompted rejection by some while evoking sympathy from others.

The meaning and significance of the reactions elicited from various places were of course different, nor were the numerous social contexts homogeneous. Judgements about the convicts and their relatives also changed with the passage of time. In the first years of the Kádár era discrimination was more obvious and harsh, while gestures of solidarity were more limited—and therefore of greater significance. As the dictatorship became more lenient both discrimination and support gradually became less intense. Only a thin stratum of society remained loyal to the ideal of the revolution and to those who had been involved. Nevertheless, there are certain cases that stand out from the ordinary—either of excesses on the part of the local authorities or of untiring solidarity. Social solidarity in the face of oppression, and the spiritual and material support provided to those in need played an important part in enabling members of the families to cope with the difficult circumstances.

In the days of the revolution the Hungarian nation won unprecedented domestic and foreign respect. All over Europe university students, workers and intellectuals declared their sympathy in the form of protests. They organised collections and sent aid to support the fighters and the wounded. In Hungary, while the revolution was taking place the feeling of national unity was intense and was accompanied by general social solidarity. People in the countryside

supplied those in the capital with food. Those taking part in the revolution received shelter, clothing and food from the general population. The activities of the Association of Hungarian Writers were to become legendary: in the first days of November they collected donations of money in open boxes on the streets of the capital city for the relatives of those who had died in the revolution. Due to the effective resistance of society it took a long time for the new authorities to break the mood of national unity following the invasion on 4 November. Factory workers protested by means of strikes against the arrests of worker leaders and the Soviet deportations. Families in the countryside gave shelter for months to children from the capital whose homes had been damaged during the fighting. Those who, in the increasingly alarming situation, decided to leave the country, could count on the assistance of the population during their escape. Those who were forced into hiding from likely arrest could find temporary homes with acquaintances and friends.

In mid-December 1956, the Kádár government banned regional workers' councils and retribution began in the form of arrests and summary judgements. Although the strikes were ended by force, open solidarity continued until spring 1957 and the beginning of the mass arrests, predominantly in the form of organised aid. After several of the organisers of such aid were arrested fewer and fewer people risked open solidarity, preferring to offer help in secret. By the time of the partial amnesty in 1959/1960, when those who had been sentenced to short-term imprisonment were released, and the general amnesty of 1963 when most 1956 convicts were freed, Hungarian society—in parallel with the easing of oppression and the slow improvement in living standards—reached a compromise with the authorities in return for minor rights of freedom. The majority opted for silence and tried to forget. The degree of solidarity decreased and the memory of the revolution faded.

"In 1958 social solidarity was certainly in evidence, and the fact that my father was in prison was by no means a stigma. But this did not last for long. In other words, one was aware of it initially, but then it faded. Between 1956 and around 1960, a time when officials were supposed to make life difficult for me, the official who dealt with me in person could often be sympathetic and made me feel that it was not his fault, that he was just carrying out orders. Later on one sensed that when one had to refer to it on a form it was not only the office that would have a negative reaction but the officials as well." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"We received support of many kinds in those times. Then obviously much less of it as it faded. But when it was all happening the support was very great and very wide ranging." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

"We experienced three types of attitude. There was the official reaction of officialdom; there were the private reactions of officials; and there were the reactions of private people who showed the greatest understanding and sympathy." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

The communities and institutions that surrounded the children showed different attitudes towards those who were suffering retribution. In the changed

situation the pressure to make a stand was stronger on relatives, neighbours and friends than on others. Sympathy and support were more common in micro-communities, while members of the wider social context were characterised rather by an attitude of neutrality or rejection.

"We had to stand our ground"

The majority of relatives offered solidarity. In traditional, multi-generation families most help was offered by grandparents, who undertook to care for the children, to manage the household and, most importantly, to provide moral support. Children who were not admitted to after-school childcare facilities were looked after at home by their grandparents, who attempted to create a loving, safe atmosphere for them. All those interviewed spoke with tender respect of the grandparents who lived with them.

"My grandmother was a cheerful and very kind woman. We laughed a lot. I think she did everything she could to keep up her daughter's strength, good humour and will to live. There was certainly poverty, but it was very good that when I returned from school it was warm in the kitchen and lunch was waiting for me." (Margit Brusznyai)

"My grandmother was ill and needed to stay in bed. But then she got out of her bed because of the difficulty we were in: her daughter had been left on her own and we had to stand our ground. She did all the cooking, the kitchen became her domain. My mother did the cleaning while trying to keep herself together, to do all she could to help in her husband's trial, and to look after the children. They did it together." (György Orbán)

"My mother's parents helped a great deal. Since my mother was working I was left practically in my grandparents' care. They took me to school, they made my lunch, they acted as a surrogate father and mother to me." (Magdolna Földvári)

Even grandparents who lived further away did their share in terms of making everyday life easier. Some moved in temporarily with the depleted family that needed their help, or families who had been evicted found a home with the grandparents. Other grandparents had their grandchildren to stay for shorter or longer periods and supported their family financially.

"I was accepted neither at the crèche nor at the kindergarten. I was rejected on the grounds that there was not enough room. It was a plausible enough excuse, but it was obvious that they didn't want to contaminate the others with a child like me. It was a huge problem having a baby that needed attention while work had to be done and a living had to be made. Then my grandmother came to live with us. In the end it was she who kept the family going by her work, since my mother was often ill and spent a lot of time in hospital." (Krisztina Lukách)

"We were literally kicked out of the flat provided for us by the Ministry of Defence. We had nowhere to go. My mother's mother, and her sister and three

children, lived in Győr in a two-room flat. We moved there too, so seven of us lived in the two rooms. We spent about two years there in these circumstances." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

"My relationship with my grandparents and with my father's younger sister was very good. In fact it was she who brought me up. When I went to the village of Szárazd she was twenty years old, so she sacrificed her life to raise me so I wouldn't have to live with strangers." (MÁRTA MICSINAI)

These grandparents, regardless of how they judged the father's activities during the revolution, did everything they could to help. Most of them spoke about the convicts, strengthened their grandchildren morally and eased their pain through their constant love. In ideal cases they even explained what had happened.

"My grandparents loved and respected him completely. This was crucial because they kept alive my image of my father and they must have played an important role in shaping it, since I was living with them." (MÁRTA REGÉCZY-NAGY)

"My grandfather was quite unhappy about my father's activities in 1956 and later. Not because he didn't agree with it politically, but with hindsight I suppose that, with his eight children, he thought it too risky to do anything that would have irreversible consequences from the family's point of view. Nevertheless, when the internments happened in 1957 he gave his full support to the family, and of course we lived together." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

Grandparents who lived in traditional villages tried to balance the loss of the father, or occasionally of both parents, by transmitting solid community values and creating a stable family environment. Some of them, even in spite of their beliefs, were willing to come to a compromise with the political authorities for the sake of their grandchildren.

"It was a wonderful childhood, as nice as a fairy tale. Everyone loved me. In the little village there were morals and traditions. The whole thing was pleasant and good. Something to depend on. My grandparents took care that I had no unsuitable friends. In the Csepel district of Budapest I'm not sure they would have been able to do that." (IMRE FARKAS)

"I felt safe, but as it turned out later I wasn't actually very safe at all, because they wanted to take me away from them and put me into state care. They said that they could only leave me with them if my grandfather joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. And my grandfather joined." (IDA VÁMOS)

Other relatives also helped with money, food, clothes and occasionally influence. The degree of support from relatives usually depended on family tradition and their financial situation. Among intellectuals this kind of help proved to be more effective than in impoverished families of lower social standing and with several children, in which relatives who lived at some distance or in similarly poor financial circumstances could do nothing to alleviate their situation even

if they wanted to. However, almost everyone had at least one relative who felt that the convict's family was unacceptable, and who, due to his or her real or imagined sense of danger, broke off all contact with the family.

"Our relatives, like other people, withdrew a little. We had a little land left, a very little, and we lived off that. My mother and I were very poor. We had some rye and barley, but a minimal amount, and that was what we lived on. My mother and I were really scraping the barrel. The little rye and barley that we had needed harvesting. My mother had a cousin who worked as a gravedigger and he was the only one who came to help us in 1957 and 1958. My mother said to him 'I can't pay you right now.' 'No problem, that's not why I'm here.' He was the poorest in the village, but he came to help. We had wealthier relatives, but they didn't do anything." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

"My mother had a younger sister in Kalocsa but she was not in a position to help us financially. She had four children, including twins who were only little, like we were. She couldn't have helped us financially." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

"My father's relatives didn't dare to help us. They were afraid. Or perhaps they simply had no money. And there wasn't a lot they could do. I know that my mother was rushing around a lot at the time and I slept at the neighbour's." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

"My father's sister's husband was a party member, and despite the fact that we had often got together before 1956 and had been on good terms, they started to see us as a burden. They began to withdraw from us and then, when we visited them one day, they told us we had better not go there again." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

One-fifth of the people we interviewed reported that they had received no support at all from their relatives. If a mother was unable to cope on her own, her children would be taken into care. There were even occasions when siblings were split up. One person we interviewed had grown up in a state institution and three had spent several years in state care. It was these children who suffered the most.

"All in all, my life was destroyed. My younger brother and I were not raised by my mother but by my grandmother and my father. When my father was arrested we were put into a state institution. My grandmother didn't have enough money to take care of us. They killed my father and they robbed me of my family." (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

"I think my family, and that means everyone, behaved in a quite ugly way toward me. That's how I reconstructed it later. I was put into a state institution. It was real suffering. It was really, really bad. I am not saying that we were beaten, although there was the occasional smacking. But that wasn't the worst of it. I simply felt miserable all the time and I couldn't wait to be allowed home." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

"The world was divided into the good and the bad"

Feedback from those in one's immediate environment is important to everyone, especially to people who have been deprived of one of their parents, stigmatised and marginalised. The support of micro-communities is effective in alleviating hardship. Relatives of the convicts received many sympathetic gestures as well as financial help from neighbours, acquaintances, friends and former colleagues of the convicts. The convicts' families could count on the help of the majority of their neighbours in everyday matters: neighbours would take care of the children, support them with food and clothing, help with the housework, and in the evenings they provided work opportunities for mothers who had been left alone, or for the older children. Sometimes even emotional problems could be shared with a neighbour.

"Most of our neighbours were good people, and all of them expressed their sympathy. Those who lived in our immediate environment did not turn away from the family. In other words, they never refused to talk to us in the street because my father had been taken by the Russians. At Christmas we found a beautiful silver fir in the courtyard. On another occasion someone left a goose. We still don't know who it was from." (Zsolt Fekete)

"In our house there were three or four women who didn't go out to work, and all of them had a key to our flat. In the morning my mother fed me then left me in my cot and during the day these women popped in to change my nappy, feed me, and look after me. In my first three years I was basically raised by the women in the house, who called in or took me to their own place. It was also quite natural that if someone in the house made a cake on Sunday they would give us some." (Krisztina Lukách)

"The world was divided into the good and the bad. The bad were the Russians, the bad were the prison guards and my mother's boss, but the world immediately around me was not bad. We didn't have bad people around us." (Kinga Göncz)

Those who lived in smaller towns or villages were unable to keep their story a secret. On the other hand, they experienced more directly the sympathy of the people around them.

"I experienced nothing but sympathy. I felt a kind of supportive complicity everywhere I went. A kind of wink that meant 'It's alright, we know, but everything will be fine.'" (Margit Brusznyai)

"It was good that in the village it seemed that everyone felt sympathy for us. Perhaps they couldn't show it officially because it wasn't the right moment. But often peasants are in fact subtle enough to realise that children are not to blame. They also tried to help my mother in the shop where she worked." (Katalin Földesi)

"I didn't feel that our neighbours, my teachers, or anyone who knew him, regarded my father as a murderer. I think everyone knew him in Ózd, which was, after all, only a small town. It was a topic of conversation, and no one regarded

him as guilty. Other people simply felt sorry for him and shook their heads in disbelief." (László Kolozsy)

Those who were rejected by the majority of the people around them and who received no help lived a life of withdrawal and excommunication.

"Thinking back, many people changed and stopped visiting us. Perhaps there was one teacher who kept coming round. Looking back, everyone disappeared. Were they afraid? I don't know." (Anikó Gulyás)

The management in workplaces usually represented the official line, thus families could scarcely count on their sympathy. However, many former colleagues supported the abandoned families of the convicts. During the first months after the revolution money was collected regularly in factories, offices and certain intellectual circles for members of the families of those who had been arrested. Some people went on offering support even after the organised fundraising campaigns had ended and continued to help the families later on. Families who lived on casual work, or members of the families of commuters, only rarely benefited from workplace fundraising campaigns, owing to the lack of personal contacts.

"Among my father's former colleagues those who were willing to accept the fact that he had been a colleague visited us regularly. Sadly I do not remember his name, but I still remember one man's face and his briefcase. It was an old-fashioned leather briefcase with two buckles in which he always brought some sausages. He came for a long time. But nobody else did." (György Fenyőfalvi)

"After my father died, we didn't know exactly who but there were some doctors who collected money for a time, less than a year. It was about four or five hundred forints a month. This went on for about half a year but then it stopped. Why it happened, whether they were afraid or simply lost interest, we didn't know. Of course I learned about the whole thing afterwards. Still, it was a good feeling." (László Tihanyi)

"We received aid from many places. Sometimes they would bring money, on other occasions we received food from the Association of Writers. We also received aid from the Green Cross [a civilian aid organisation]. We had to collect it from the school on Marcibányi tér. We managed to live on donations like that." (Tibor Molnár)

Following the defeat of the revolution, colleagues, friends and acquaintances who had fled abroad sent parcels regularly, and occasionally even money. In addition to material help these parcels represented moral support and kept alive the feeling that those who had fled the country had not forgotten the people they had left behind.

"The parcels came filled with good soap and cocoa, perhaps from Vienna. I remember they had soap like nobody else had. And good chocolate too." (Péter Zsámboki)

"We received parcels from abroad for a long time. It was very important that they were thinking of us from somewhere outside. We were not left so much alone. We didn't feel that nobody gave a damn. We received a parcel once a year.

No more often than that, but there were very good and useful things in them. I was sent a jacket and ankle boots with zips, for example. Nobody in our neighbourhood had ever seen boots like those. And that, again, was typical of the strange, mixed state in which we lived, that we were a family without a breadwinner and as such the poorest—or almost the poorest—and at the same time we had the best biscuits around." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

There were always some friends or neighbours who could be relied on to evade the discrimination. Several of the interviewees described how their acquaintances helped them to save some of their belongings from confiscation. This created and strengthened a sense of complicity against the authorities. On rare occasions friendly officials also provided help: prior to confiscation they warned members of a family to move or sell their valuables, or to change apartments because the authorities were about to evict them.

"The sentence involved the confiscation of all property. I remember, for instance, that we rearranged the apartment. Our friends took away all the useful books. What appeared in their place were the collected works of Lenin in five different editions, Marx in five editions, and other such useless volumes. I remember the funny side of it: those idiots didn't realise when they came to confiscate our property that they were taking five editions of the same book by Lenin. Naturally, our books were returned to their original place afterwards. We had managed to fool them. The parcels we sent to the prison were not allowed to exceed three and a half kilograms. It was always my task to take them to the post office, where I had to ask the clerk to register the parcel as weighing three and a half kilograms when in reality it weighed five kilograms. I remember that it always worked, the man at the post office never protested. I remember it well because years later one postman pointed out that the parcel weighed more than three and a half kilograms. I felt seriously offended. I thought the man was stupid not to realise from the prison address what was the right thing to do." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

"We lived in a very nice flat in the centre of the city. The future wife of the judge who worked for the party committee at the time warned us that we should do something about the apartment because somebody at the party committee had got his eye on it and we were to be relocated God knows where, perhaps to one of the suburbs of the city of Győr. When my mother learned about this she changed flats with the help of one of her acquaintances. She got a one-bedroom freehold flat in a converted attic." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

As well as representing personal sympathy, gestures of solidarity also demonstrated that there was a limit to what could be imposed on people by means of intimidation. One local party committee, fearful of potential demonstrations, forced the family of one mother who had been killed in the fusillade at Salgótarján[1] to begin the funeral service earlier than planned. This meant

[1] On 8 December 1956 armed men of the restored power shot at civilians who were demonstrating for the release of arrested revolutionaries. Forty-six people died and around one hundred were injured in the fusillade.

that the residents of the village were unable to take part in the funeral, but after nightfall they placed a wreath decorated with the national colours on the grave. The family's relatives, who lived in neighbouring Czechoslovakia, did not receive permission to cross the border in time to attend the funeral. However, they managed to travel on a Slovak train that passed through Hungarian territory and the railwaymen stopped the train at this section for a few minutes so that members of the mourning family could meet. There were even prison guards who were willing to transfer messages between the families and the prisoners. Some widows, despite the harsh restrictions, managed to find prison or cemetery employees who revealed where their husbands had been buried.

The pragmatic and moral support provided by the community of fellow sufferers was also crucial. The strong bonds established during these times, like friendships formed in prison, proved to be enduring. Relatives of the accused and, following their release, fellow prisoners, visited one another regularly. They played an important role in helping the children understand and learn more about their fathers, and, as a result, about their own fate.

"In his book Imre Szász wrote many negative things about my father. He described him as a hefty man with a reddish beard, a right-winger, the son of a gendarme who had served in the previous political system—all implying negative qualities. I was greatly intrigued by this and wrote a letter to Tibor Rusvay, a teacher living in Vác, who was a friend of my father from college and like a second father to me. He taught me languages throughout my childhood and took me everywhere with his own sons, so he was a kind of surrogate father to me. I wrote to him asking what kind of person my father was at that time. He forwarded my letter to my father's best friend, József Vekerdi. Vekerdi answered "My dear Margit, every word is true, but in a positive way. He was indeed stocky, he was sarcastic, he was a leader, he was overwhelming, he was at the centre of any gathering—but these were good things. None of it was bad." (Margit Brusznyai)

"Some of my dad's fellow prisoners visited us upon being released. They helped me in my studies. They taught me German, mathematics and physics, and one of his fellow prisoners even supported the family financially." (Katalin Kósa)

"I was always found work by former 1956ers. I might even say that this was the only positive discrimination I benefited from." (Péter Zsámboki)

In the course of their secondary socialisation—mostly in school—the children of the convicts learned from the reactions of those around them that they were different from others. Some of the teachers not only accepted the official position, they even identified with it. Many, however, did not, or only pretended to, fall in line. When recalling their experiences in school our interviewees recalled both signs of solidarity and of rejection. Headmasters and party secretaries usually discriminated against these children openly, while some of the teachers punished and embarrassed them in the most unexpected situations. However, in private the majority of the teaching staff showed solidarity with

them. At the beginning of 1957, when, albeit sporadically, social resistance still existed, these children were shown open support by some of their teachers. For example, the children of three arrested revolutionaries were sent on an exchange holiday for several months to East Germany from one of the elementary schools in the Csepel district of Budapest. With the strengthening of the terror, however, support, in this context as well, became informal. Fewer and fewer people could, or dared to, counter the machinery of power, but even then they found opportunities to express their sympathy for the revolution and towards the children of the 1956 convicts. While they had the opportunity, the majority of teachers provided help to their students in their studies and supported them in smoothing over school conflicts.

"Interestingly, the school was always tolerant. In my remaining one and a half years at secondary school—from the end of the third year and all through the fourth—they never made me feel that my father was a political prisoner, or that he was an enemy of the political system." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

"At school, the fact that my father was in prison never resulted in disadvantages, only advantages. They made exceptions for me. I could get away with more than the others. On one occasion I had not done my homework. When it turned out that I didn't have it done the teacher said it was fine, I was let off the homework because my father was in prison. Something like that. It wasn't even a secret, there was no hushing up the fact that my father was in prison. This happened back in the first year in the spring of 1959." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"The teachers showed a great deal of solidarity towards me. On one occasion one of my classmates made some kind of unkind remark about my father. He called him something like a killer. I was quite a ruffian and I beat him up quite badly. Of course, I should have been punished severely. My form teacher summoned me to her room and I told her, in tears, what my classmate Tamás had said to me. The poor teacher must have been in a terrible quandary. According to the official version, she should have told me that Tamás was right, but instead she began to comfort me. She kept telling me that Tamás hadn't meant to hurt me, he was just repeating what he had heard from someone else. Then Tamás went out of his way to apologise to me." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

Besides moral support some teachers provided financial support to their poorest students, and in such a tactful way that it did not offend the child's pride. Some children, however, did not accept the help, perhaps because they saw it as humiliating.

"My teacher asked me to help her with the cleaning on Sundays. There really wasn't much work but even so I had breakfast and lunch with her, and in the afternoon she always gave me something to take home. We got on very well with each other. She treated me almost like family." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

"Every morning she made a show of giving me elevenses, but I didn't want it. She wanted to appear generous. She called me up to her desk and gave it to me. I don't know why, but I didn't want it. Perhaps it offended me. I don't know." (MARGIT BATONAI)

We cannot be sure of the teachers' motives, but the recollections suggest that those children who had well-known fathers whose revolutionary activities were regarded as positive received the greatest sympathy and support. Solidarity in this case, beyond providing help to an innocent child, might also be expressed in the form of respect for the child's parent. Other children experienced less sympathy, and they mainly remember those teachers who were neutral towards them. However, there were schools where certain teachers humiliated the children of the 1956 convicts, making their situation more difficult.

"It was terrible how in the school where I had been loved until then—there had been the occasional upset but I had always been liked—they made me stand in the middle. All the other children stood together. Apart from me there were a few other children who were treated in a similar way, and the children were told that anyone who talked to the bastards of reactionary jailbirds in the future would be sent to the headmaster because such children subverted the young." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

"One teacher said to me that he would make me sit in the dustbin because that was where I belonged. There was no particular reason. I had simply been disobedient but he said I took after my parents, or perhaps after my father, and I belonged in the dustbin like him. I could never improve my grades with certain teachers who had this kind of attitude towards me. New teachers who treated me with more sympathy didn't care whose child I was. Although I think they wouldn't have protected me in public, nor would they have stood up to other teachers on my behalf, they were never unkind to me." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

Whether teachers displayed solidarity or neutrality towards these children, when it came to further studies they were able to help only in exceptional cases. Children had to include in their CVs, and teachers in their references, what had happened to their fathers. If a teacher failed to do this, he or she might even face dismissal. Even so, there were some opportunities to express personal solidarity in the form of calling students' attention to possible methods of finding ways around the restrictions.

"They were always so kind. They treated me with special concern. Perhaps they even devoted more time to me than to other children. For example, one of the teachers asked about my dad and tried to comfort me, saying that things would be alright, that when I was older…, etc. They said all sorts of things to me. I felt that they were very kind to me. On the other hand, they also said that I could not continue my studies because no school would accept me. And they were right, I wasn't accepted. I couldn't get in anywhere." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"In 1959 I sat for an entrance exam for agricultural school. I knew that I did everything well, I knew the answers to all the questions and I was certain that I would be admitted. And then the letter came saying that I had been rejected. My grandfather went to see the director, whom he had known under the previous political system. And the director said, 'The child did well but unfortunately I cannot admit her. You must accept that. She should try to apply to a less prestigious school, and afterwards, if at the age of sixteen she can

find a job and she applies to evening school, they are bound to accept her.' So I applied for the school of shorthand and typing. I left with excellent grades." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

We also found later examples of how children circumvented official decrees and even made a firm stand against the authorities. One teacher, by using his connections, managed to enable one of his students to further her studies despite the restrictions. Others made no mention of a father's association with the revolution in their school reports.

"I know that my headmaster at elementary school was a good friend of the Csoma Kőrösi secondary school. One day I was told that I had to apply to this particular secondary school. On the first day there a teacher came in to tell me that I was sitting in the wrong place and that I should be in his class. He later became my form master. These things had been decided over my head. Then the same teacher told me that he would be a father to me in my father's place, and that if I had any problem I was to tell him. His name was Imre Béla Tóth. He and the school's party secretary took a great risk by not including my father's prison sentence in my personal file." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

As the years passed the attitude of contemporaries and classmates changed significantly compared to the early years of the Kádár era. Following the defeat of the revolution, older children faced more open reactions. At that time many people's memories of the revolution were still vivid. Silence did not erase those memories, nor was it possible to keep the events of the revolution secret. Shared experiences usually prompted support, but sometimes the child of an executed or imprisoned father was mocked by his or her classmates, some of whom were forbidden by their parents to make friends with the children of "traitors and jailbirds". However, those who began school later, once the revolution had already become taboo, started to behave secretively in an attempt to adjust to their family's attitudes. They experienced a similarly reserved attitude on the part of their classmates.

"I was in the same class as László Mansfeld.[2] He and I never talked about what had happened to us. We both kept quiet and didn't draw attention to our situation. But the others did talk about it. There was a kind of emotional co-operation, and it later turned out that the majority of our classmates were on our side or sympathetic towards us. But not openly. When we went back to school again the majority spoke always of the revolution, only a few of them referring to it as a 'counterrevolution'. In other words, it wasn't a bad thing to be part of this crowd. We were not ostracised." (TIBOR MOLNÁR)

"I had a friend whom I will never forget. Her name was Jusztina Klukk. Her family was very poor, but they were very nice people. They took care for me, encouraged me, and always asked my grandparents to let me go and stay with them for a break. They were sympathetic towards my situation and sided

[2] The younger brother of Péter Mansfeld, who was sentenced to death in 1958 and executed in 1959 at the age of 18.

with me. The problem was that there were many others who were cruel and most of them did not dare to make friends with me. Everyone was really afraid." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

"There were taunts and name-calling. In the end we took every whispered conversation and every chuckle as evidence of hostility towards us. It may have had nothing to do with us, but this attitude became deeply ingrained in us, so we tried to keep our distance. We tried to stay where we didn't experience such things, or my twin sister and I would stay in a corner of the corridor until the beginning of the next class. We were not willing to make friends and kept ourselves to ourselves. So we lived quite a restricted life." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the atmosphere of general reticence, students in secondary schools and schools of higher education rarely asked themselves what had really happened in 1956 and what secrets their classmates or friends might have from that period.

"…and then the situation changed dramatically. I had attended an elementary school where my family and everything was regarded as bad. When I began secondary school it all changed. And it involved 1956. I was in the first grade when one of my schoolmates made me talk about these stories, about the prison and all the things I could remember. I experienced then, for the first time, that people were interested. And I also felt that in that context it was more positive than negative." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

Since at the time of the retribution the majority of the children were still in their infancy they did not have to find work until the years of the political thaw. Those who had to look for work immediately after the revolution were usually unsuccessful if they applied for jobs in their own hometown. In other settlements, however, there were directors who employed them.

"My mother and I moved to the town of Pécs because we had relatives there. Before long we went to see the president of a co-operative, who said to my mother: 'Look madam, I don't care what your husband did, who he was, or anything about him. I'll take the boy on as an apprentice.' He said he was not interested about the past, all that was important was that I was honest, that I was willing to learn, and that I would do my job." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

Later on there were usually no obstacles to getting work, but it proved difficult to gain promotion or obtain positions of leadership. Only a few sympathetic and brave directors or colleagues dared to keep disadvantageous information a secret.

"Somebody at my workplace helped me later on by not forwarding my personal file. This man was on my side. He didn't want my secret to come to light. When I began to teach it turned out that I didn't have a personal file, so I had to write a CV. I asked one of my colleagues what to put in it. She said '*That* will have to be included!' But I didn't include it. Despite this she was kind and didn't tell anyone. When one of my classmates from the eighth grade became the school secretary I was terrified that she would betray me. I would certainly have been sacked." (KATALIN KÓSA)

Colleagues usually displayed a neutral attitude and remained silent either out of tact or indifference. The people in question also kept quiet. It was not unusual for the child of an executed person or a convict to work alongside another young person of similar fate, or with a 1956 convict, without being aware. Despite getting on well with each other, these people only learned during the 1980s that they had been concealing a similar secret all that time.

Amidst the hardships, the religious gained strength from their faith. Several interviewees, however, mentioned that help requested from the church was denied them. It is well known that during the Kádár era the churches were under permanent surveillance. Clergy were often forced to make compromises that ran counter to their faith and their profession. The majority of priests did not dare to take risks and declined to provide open help.

"I am sure that my mother was greatly disappointed in the church. I think she must have had some trust or hope that the church could do something about my father's sentence and that he would be sentenced for only a few years. She never imagined what would actually happen!" (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"We knew that he had been executed on 14 January. My mother then went to the Lutheran priest and to the Calvinist priest to have the bells tolled. The Lutheran priest refused to do it. My mother came home in tears. As she was Lutheran she found it natural to have the bells tolled in both churches. The Calvinist priest, however, agreed to do it. He was, of course, asked who the bells were being tolled for, but they couldn't do much to him since he was old. He even told them my father's name. But he was the only one who dared to make a stand for him." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

Others, however, enjoyed the regular support of certain ecclesiastical communities for years. One form of assistance was taking children on holiday. Occasionally the communities were also able to alleviate existential problems. The most precious help, however, was providing opportunities for secondary school studies, since ecclesiastical schools usually admitted children from religious families who were not allowed to continue their studies in state-run institutions. In these communities the father's acts were not regarded as shameful, and children were made to feel protected against discrimination.

"There was a nun who taught us German. In his farewell letter my father requested that we be educated by the Benedictines. Due to a shortage of places my elder brother was not admitted to Pannonhalma, the most prestigious Benedictine secondary school in Hungary, but to Győr instead. For about half a year we received free lunches from the Benedictine dining hall." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

"When one of my brothers finished elementary school my mother went to the bishop of Szombathely to ask for help, since my brother had not been admitted to a state-run school even though he had good grades. Bishop Sándor Kovács recommended him to the Benedictines of Győr. From 1962 he attended their school. There was a year when we both studied there: he was in the fourth grade when I started my first year. I remember only one special favour that we

received: in return for our help in heating the school we received some reduction in our tuition fees." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

After finishing secondary school the sons of convicts were to gain further experience of stigmatisation. Boys who reached conscriptable age during the first years of the Kádár era were not drafted into the army, since it was said that sons of traitors should not bear arms. Some accepted this decision with relief, but in the value system of a provincial family this may have been seen as a cause of shame.

"My brothers could not be soldiers because the family had been stigmatised. In the army, as everywhere else, wounds were inflicted on us because of this business." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

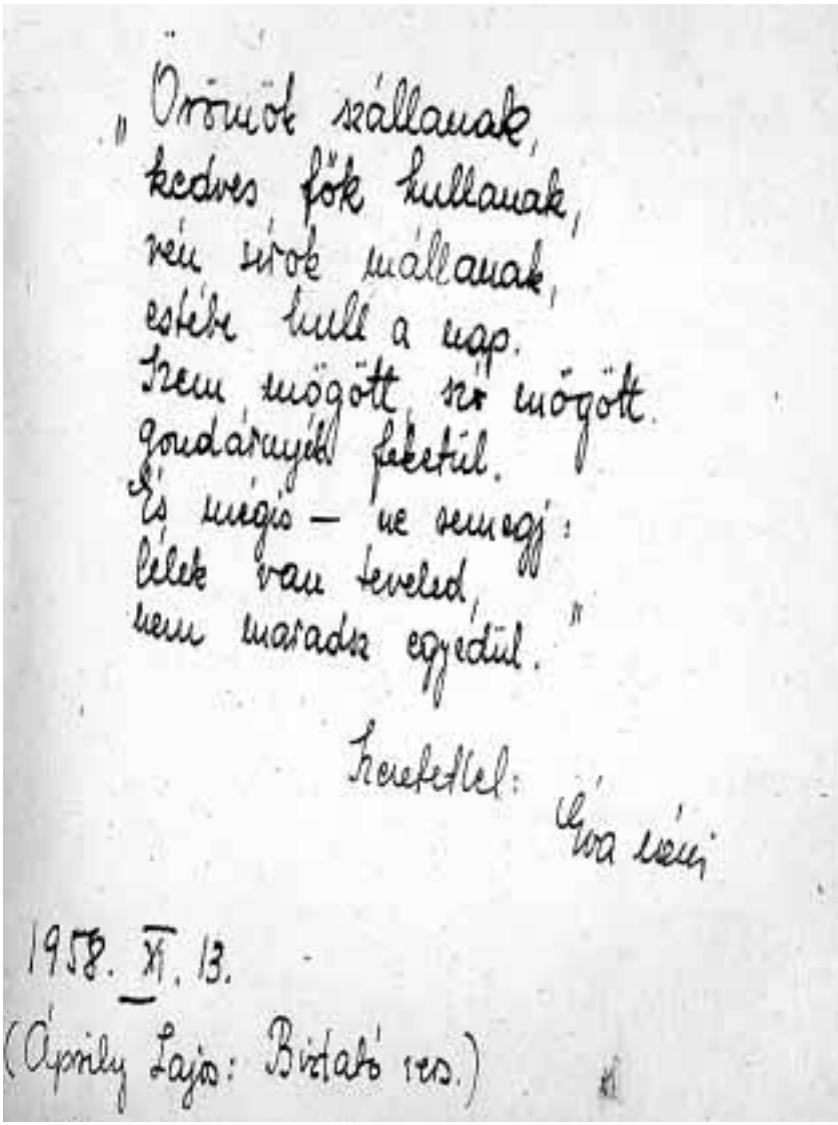
In later years there was no official discrimination, but the boys' superiors, by way of a warning, made them feel that their difference was still remembered.

"The army officer singled me out and said with great animation: 'So the truth is out!' Then he went on in a condescending way: 'You are a class enemy, and now you're going to get what's coming to you. You'll be locked up and sentenced, and I'll have you kicked out!' In other words, he said all the things I had been afraid might happen to me—that I would be kicked out of the university for instance. Anyway, they always liked to play this game, making it look as if it depended on them and as if they had some influence. The university didn't pay much attention to us, but we didn't know how things really stood. So there I was, devastated. I felt it was bound to happen and that it had been a mistake that I had been admitted to the university. Now they would get me and that would be it. It was terrible!" (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

It can therefore be concluded that while members of the families of the 1956 convicts were subject to official discrimination, in the private sphere they met with support more often. Representatives of the official viewpoint not only accepted the propaganda and behaved accordingly, they also took the opportunity for personal revenge. Some wanted to conceal by their diligence the fact that they themselves had been compromised in the days of the revolution. The majority, however, remained silent and behaved in a neutral way. A considerable part of society, however, supported and helped those who were stigmatised, out of humanitarian reasons or as a matter of conscience, or as a result of their resistance to the existing political system. Former colleagues who supported the revolutionary activities of the convicts felt it to be their duty, in the changed political situation, to give some kind of support to the relatives the convicts had left behind. After the retribution that followed the revolution, those disillusioned with the politics of the previous years could no longer be misled, and even if they did not directly counter the authorities they expressed their opinions at least by silent sympathy. Those who had made compromises occasionally helped perhaps to ease their own consciences.

With the easing of the repression, the social solidarity of the early years gradually lost its intensity. By the end of the 1960s and early 1970s indiffer-

ence and disregard became increasingly general. A generation had grown up socialised for silence and for conflict avoidance. These people did not even look to the past but refused to acknowledge the discrimination against participants in the revolution. Those who wished to receive authentic and detailed information about the past usually came up against silence on the part of the people around them.


„Örömök szállanak,
kedves fők hullanak,
vén sírok málланak,
estére hull a nap.
Szem mögött, szív mögött
gondárnyék feketül.
És mégis – ne semmi:
lélek van veled,
nem maradsz egyedül."

Szeretettel:
Éva néni

1958. XI. 13.
(Áprily Lajos: Bizalom vers.)

XV.

THE PRESSURE OF DUALITY

The identity of an individual is shaped in the course of confrontation. We have seen how the children of the 1956 convicts became aware of their stigmatisation and how they experienced the fact that the political authorities and certain people in their immediate environment labelled them as socially undesirable.

The father figure and the relationship of the child to his or her father play an important role in the formation of the child's identity. In the case of the children of the convicts their experience of stigmatisation and the way in which they related to, and coped with, the blemish on their social identity that they wished to hide from the outside world were a decisive factor in the emergence of their personal identities. The way in which they dealt with their situation depended partly on the father and what he had done, and on the way in which they related to his conviction, and partly on the wider social context and its positive or negative reactions. Abrupt separation from the father meant a huge shock to the children, and later on the absence of an imprisoned or executed father often resulted in inner conflict. Later on, their need to create their own identity as teenagers highlighted the extremely patchy nature of their information about their fathers. In finding answers to the fundamental question of whether their fathers had been heroes, and whether they were innocent or guilty, it was the family who could provide the children with most help. According to the child's, as well as the adult's, logic and sense of justice, it is those who do wrong who must be punished. Thus these children were forced to ask themselves again and again whether the fact that their fathers had been punished implied that they were indeed guilty. And if they were not guilty, why had they been sentenced and executed? Such was their insoluble dilemma, and the younger they were the fewer points of orientation they had to help them to the right conclusion.

The shaping of a child's identity is also influenced by the outside world and the signals coming from the child's immediate and wider environment. The lives of those growing up in the Kádár era were characterised predominantly by a double socialisation and a double system of values. There was often an irreconcilable contradiction between the values represented by society and those represented by the family. When it came to assessing the revolution there was usually a clash between the private and the official worlds. This contradiction

between personal experience and the official viewpoint gave rise to tension in most families, regardless of the extent to which they identified with the ideals of the revolution. Children surrounded by contradictions were forced to make a choice. It is hard for anyone to have to choose between the often contradictory values transmitted by various contexts and to decide which is right and which is worth following. In the lives of the interviewees the significance of such decisions was heightened by the fact that it was not only general and philosophical questions that were at stake. Their fathers, and therefore their own self-esteem, were involved.

"In my case it was pride"

Those whose families accepted and approved of the father's activities and who spoke of them to the children as values to be preserved and examples to be followed, found it easiest to make their choice. These children grew up with a stable system of values in an open, sincere atmosphere, that is, in the security of a family in which they were always given an answer to their questions. They accepted the path chosen by their fathers, and the ensuing consequences.

"In my case it was rather pride. Not only in the early years, when many people showed open solidarity and sympathy, but also later, when things were judged much less favourably. I was never embarrassed about it. I was rather always proud that my father had been in prison. I regarded it as being in some way normal." (Katalin Litván)

"It was natural that my father was in prison. Today one would talk about it differently; one would have a different attitude. But then it was natural. It had to be like that. Perhaps also because where we lived in Budakeszi, on the outskirts of Budapest, quite a lot of the men had spent a shorter or longer time in prison. It is hard to explain because it is so illogical, but this state was evident to me, so evident that I found myself wondering at what age I would have to go to prison. I know it sounds strange but sometimes I thought to myself that it wouldn't be good to go at the age of five, or perhaps even at twenty, because at that age one is still such and such; or it wouldn't be good later because one would already be such and such. These thoughts occurred to me again and again because it was such a natural part of people's lives to leave for prison." (György Fenyőfalvi)

The majority of adults who held to the ideals of the revolution had the strength to make a conscious effort to raise their children to oppose the official system of values and propaganda. The children adopted the double language almost naturally and learned the skills they needed in order to minimise confrontation. It was clear to them that for the sake of their futures they had to make compromises, and that this could be done without denying their own values.

"I was drilled from a very early age—so it became second nature to me—to believe that the existing conditions in our country were not natural. I had my share of double education, as did many others. They started it so early in

my case that the values I saw at home became my standards. I almost felt sorry for those who were left to the school. In that great jungle there must have been an enormous sense of insecurity in having to establish one's own view of the world and having to reach a firm conviction about things without any signposts being provided." (MÁRTA REGÉCZY-NAGY)

"That was our portion. Such was life, and there was no changing anything. It seemed so natural to me. It was also natural to hear the kind of things they said at the celebrations of the Communist Youth Association, and it caused us no heartache. We knew very well that the people at home were right. Everyone knew that. As we were growing up we had no real problems accepting this double-heartedness. Everything had its place. There was one truth there and another at home. I learned it, I recited it for them, and that was that." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

The supportive community of those in a similar situation and those adhering to similar ideals strengthened the family's values. The experience of belonging together gave families strength, helped them in orientation and kept them from uncertainty.

"At the age of six I was already clearly aware that there had been a revolution in Hungary that had been defeated. There was almost no family among our acquaintances who had not been involved in some way. I can't say when, but somehow the picture emerged in my mind that there were many people in the same situation as we were and that this was nothing to be ashamed about." (MÁRTA REGÉCZY-NAGY)

"I had a picture that came from home that could not be undermined by the school. It was obvious to me that my field of reference was not only my family but this wider circle as well. I don't remember this ever being challenged." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

For those growing up in religious families there was nothing new about the duality of revolution-related communication: regardless of 1956 they had already been taught to hide their faith and philosophy from the outside world. Duality was therefore natural to them.

"My parents occasionally explained: 'That is what they teach you, but this is the way things are.' They talked in particular about abusing religion. So we knew what Communism was, who the Communists were, and who the secret police were. And we knew that what was happening was not good, that it was all a lie. In my eyes my father was completely and entirely innocent." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

Church schools had a unique role in helping children find their way among the different value systems. These schools promoted values and attitudes that were different from the official line. Here children were taught to avoid situations in which they were likely to come into conflict with the authorities, and were thus given help in fitting in.

"Rather than shutting us off from the world their method prepared us for real life, for the kind of lives we would face. They wanted us to fit into a society

whose values were different from those promoted by our school. They told us that we had to accept things as they were but that somehow we should still uphold our own values. They did not educate us to be against society but rather, if I can put it like this, to live in harmony with a society in which we would, although not inevitably, face conflicts. In other words, they taught us to have a certain sense of reality. They oriented us towards professions in which ideological questions were less likely to surface, such as the arts and the teaching profession." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

"I didn't take the other kind of education seriously. That was *them*, but we lived according to a different kind of order. I was already going to catechism classes and attended church, so I was able to live with the two, like many others. It was there, at the Franciscan secondary school, that, along with the others, I finally realised that what we heard and saw was not the reality." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

Children who understood what had happened to their fathers and why, thought of them with pride and blamed the convictions on the baseness of the system. The possibility of their fathers being guilty did not even occur to them. Emotionally and intellectually they identified with their fathers. They saw their fathers as an example to be followed, and at turning points in their lives they oriented themselves according to what they imagined their fathers would have thought or done.

"I was always proud of my dad and I always thought that what he did had been done for his country, for the homeland, and, in fact, for us. It fills me with pride that he at least did something for his country, so I go to the cemetery with my head held high." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"Mum told us every evening to pray to God for daddy because daddy would come back. He was only inside because he had done good for Hungary. He did what he did for the Hungarians, and he was a great man. He wasn't the kind of man to run away, or to emigrate just to save his skin. My daddy was not only a very tough man but a truly remarkable one as well. All in all, he was a great man." (MÁRIA BALI)

"I BEGAN TO BE CONFUSED"

Those whose trust in members of their family was not shaken eventually found a way through the labyrinth of the outside world. When they came up against contradictions between what they had been told by their families and information received from the outside world it was obvious to them that it could only be the outside world that was lying. Even if there was silence around them concerning the events of 1956, and even if they received no deliberate counter-education and therefore understood little of the situation, the tension caused by the clash between the two value systems was eventually alleviated and they were able to find a place in the world for themselves and for their fathers.

"I was about ten or twelve years old when I began to be confused. One

would hear one thing from the outside, from the Communists, and the direct opposite from one's own family. I had learned from the newspaper and the radio—which was always on at home—that what had happened in 1956 had been a counterrevolution, the work of scoundrels who wanted to overthrow the state. So they had committed a crime. At home they didn't say that it wasn't a counterrevolution, but that it wasn't a crime. I decided to believe my family. Why would they lie to me? They were the kind of people who would not lie to me about such important matters, especially in connection with my father's death. They told me that my father had done nothing. At first this confused me. Why had he been hanged for nothing? Then I began to separate the two. I didn't believe the things that came from outside. *They* were lying. Instead I believed what came from inside the family." (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

"At the time, of course, there was a great deal of brainwashing going on about 1956 but I always had my father beside me to counter it. At the age of thirteen I didn't have much to do with politics, nor did I later on. However, I always knew that my dad had been right and that he had died for a just cause. I never changed my opinion about him. I was always on his side because I knew that he had done the right thing. He did what, in those times and under those circumstances, he had had to do. I never had any doubt about that. I knew that what the *White Book* [an official propaganda publication that represented the revolution as a counterrevolution and falsified events] said about them was a base lie." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"For me, my father came directly after God and very often in first place instead of God. It would never have occurred to me to question what he said. My father said that the whole world was wrong. I was utterly astonished by the unjustness of the whole thing because I felt, and in fact knew, that it was completely unfair and that my father was a hero. I was proud of being dangerous, even though I was such a little mite, because I was the child of a hero. It was this that kept me going." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

When members of the family were not able to offer a different system of values from the official one, children lost their sense of security. Obviously, the official propaganda was effective in their case. They regarded the revolution as a counterrevolution and in many cases even believed that the events in which their fathers had participated were worthy of condemnation.

"In those days the whole 1956 business was a complete secret and nobody said anything about it. Since I didn't know anything to the contrary I went along with the official view." (FERENC Z.)

"Look how they presented 7 November.[1] We recited poetry on the stage and meanwhile my father had been executed. It was something I was obviously not aware of as a child. I always loved performing on 7 November and I was praising something that had scarred my entire life. We believed the tale

[1] During the Communist dictatorship the anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia was an official holiday.

about our liberation by the Soviet troops and it still amazes me how naïve we were. Because we believed it, we really did. I began to feel the contradiction as early as secondary school." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

If the father's activities were not known, and if the mother was able to take a stand for her husband but not for the revolution, children were left to struggle with the choice of standpoint by themselves. Those whose questions were left unanswered by the family and who received no help in finding their way faced an almost insurmountable dilemma. However, it was hard to live with the thought that their father was guilty and the resulting tension had to be relieved somehow. One method of doing this was to create a myth and to turn the father into a hero.

"I deified my father and I never thought of him as guilty. Perhaps my father was God for me, I don't know. From the radio and documentaries, and from the *White Book*, came all the demagoguery about how the counterrevolutionaries were murderers and killers. And if you hear something like this for long enough you begin to believe it. I believed in my father, that what he had done was good, but in reality I did not believe in the whole business. All that was in my mind was the myth of my father, that he was an honest man. Others may have been murderers, they may have done all sorts of terrible things, but my father had not been involved, that was certain. My father was not a murderer so I was not the child of a murderer." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

Another possible way of solving the contradiction, a way that was followed by those who did not even try to understand what had happened, was to reject explanations but to preserve a positive image of their fathers and to think of them with concealed pride.

"It wasn't clear why it had happened at all and who had been right. I didn't really think about it. I knew that the people had revolted and that the existing society had tried to quash them. It was like another historical event that I had learned from my book. Some had protected the castle, others had attacked it, and they had tried to sort each other out according to their beliefs. I didn't give much thought to whether it was positive or negative. I only knew that my father's hands had not been stained with blood, that my father had not harmed anyone. Anyway, I saw my dad as different from those who had been shooting in the streets or who had been involved accidentally." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

In their childhood these people did not form a picture, either of the revolution or of their fathers, that approximated to reality. However, in adulthood—and particularly after the change of political system—they had access to increasing amounts of information and today most of them have developed for themselves a mature and positive image of the events.

"I heard a great deal from my grandmother about my heroic father, which I didn't really understand. I mean I understood it, but the feedback, from the school for example, was strange. How was it that at home they called him a hero, while at school I heard something completely different and in addition

sensed a huge silence behind things. I'm not saying I had an identity crisis, but I think I was really confused about all this." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

One's assessment of oneself and of one's parents is the result of a long process that can undergo many modifications. For the children of the convicts it was particularly difficult to make a decision about these matters. Several people's lives were marked by a permanent duality. On the one hand, they are proud of their fathers. On the other, they continue to be angry with them because of their absence and cannot accept the fact that their fathers abandoned them.

"On the one hand, you're proud that he stuck to his beliefs. He believed in it, he thought it was so, and he acted accordingly. And in my eyes that's a good thing. But today, forty years after 1956 and having lived through all the consequences that it had for the family, I don't think it's good. I think that for someone with a family it is, to a certain extent, irresponsible to get involved in such things. The risk is so great that someone with three children cannot afford to get involved. No matter how proud I am of him and how good it is to think of him and talk about him, how he remained constant even in such times, objectively I have to say that in some sense by doing this he destroyed his entire family." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

Besides the values transmitted by the mother it was of great help to the children in assessing their father's activities if they received answers to their questions directly from the father himself. Mention can be made here of cases in which those who had been sentenced to death described, in a farewell letter or during a last encounter, how they did not consider themselves guilty but were to be executed in spite of their innocence.

"I never believed that he was really guilty. If he had been he wouldn't have written in his farewell letter that he didn't know why he had been sentenced to death." (MARGIT BATONAI)

"Do not despair that your father is being charged with murder and treachery, or that he is in prison. The Good Lord sees it, and you must know that I am innocent and that I love my country and the Hungarian people. God bless you all!" (Excerpt from a letter by LAJOS GULYÁS, sent from prison.)

"Even from my handwriting you can see that I am not afraid of death. I am not anxious and I am not trembling. No one has been afraid so far. Everyone has died heroically. Sweet Jesus has also given me strength and abundant grace to help me bear my fate. You know that it is glorious to die for the truth. Christ also had to die because he upheld the truth in the face of tyranny and corruption." (Excerpt from the farewell letter of ÁRPÁD TIHANYI.)

Several people saw proof of their fathers' innocence or heroism in the fact that, following the defeat of the revolution, their fathers did not emigrate, arguing that they had done nothing for which they could be sentenced.

"My dad said that he had done nothing, so why would he leave. He would not go and abandon us." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSKY)

"When the borders were opened and many Hungarians emigrated my

father could have left because a car came for him. A black Volga car arrived and the people in it told him 'Look, you have two children, one of them is ill, you have a wife, the border is open, everybody is leaving.' And my father said 'Then who will be hanged? I am not leaving.' And he even said to me that if he had to do it all over again he would do everything in exactly the same way. He never regretted it!" (MÁRIA BALI)

The wider environment could also play a crucial role in establishing a positive image of the father. Spontaneous reinforcements from this sphere helped the children in forming judgements and provided protection against the loss of their sense of security.

"Many people, even strangers, came up to me in the street to tell me in private that my father was a very good person, that everybody loved him, and that they felt sorry for him because this was not at all what he deserved. I don't think this was just politeness, because I never asked anything of them." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

"I knew why he had to be in prison. It was because he wanted something else, something better, something new. Even as a child I gathered from fragments of conversations that he was not guilty, that he had not killed anyone, that he had not stolen, and that he was not an evil person. He just wanted something different. I knew it without being told explicitly. But I also knew because in the hospital I sometimes heard the nurses and doctors talking to each other. I don't remember anyone condemning him for what he had done. Or I don't think so, or I would have recognised." (MÁRIA BALI)

Negative feedback, or the fear of rejection and stigmatisation, resulted in insecurity. Perhaps deep in their hearts the children were loyal to their fathers but were not strong enough to stand up in public for what they had done. For many of them such situations were preserved in the form of humiliating memories.

"On one occasion my form teacher asked where my father was. I don't remember what it was he wanted exactly, nor why he asked me in front of everyone since he knew very well where my father was. This was not the form master who had explained about the Kossuth coat of arms. He stood up and in front of the whole class asked: 'Where is your father?' I knew very well, and I also knew that he knew. Then I said very firmly and bluntly that I didn't know. It was humiliating that he was asking me when he already knew, and that he asked it in front of everyone else. I can't explain why I felt ashamed because of it, but I did." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

"I was embarrassed because I knew that when they heard the word prison people thought of far different things than politics. They generally thought of common criminals. I was really afraid that they would start asking all kinds of questions. What would I say? How would I explain why this had nothing to do with such things and what the difference was? And would they believe me or not?" (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

If the widow of an executed prisoner was in such a state of fear and denial

that she was unable to tell the truth, her children continued to wait for their father. If the mother treasured in herself the memory of her husband but was unable to share it with her children, the truth eventually emerged from certain sentences overheard from adults, or from some discovered letter or document. This came as a shock, and if not even this broke the mother's silence there was no one to help the child choose among the various possible ways of evaluating what they had learned. If the children were also without their own memories of their father, they were left alone with the burden of their difference and accepted the official viewpoint not only with respect to the revolution but also where their fathers were concerned. The children condemned their fathers and regarded them as guilty, and they themselves felt shame or guilt because of it. This feeling was particularly devastating in the case of those who, because of their own inner insecurity, were especially anxious about the judgements passed on them by the people around.

"After I learned that my father had been executed I was really ashamed. If he had been executed he must have committed some horrendous crime. If someone is given a sentence like that, he must be guilty of something terrible. Even later on I didn't see him as a hero or as someone who had changed history but as someone who had abandoned his family. Events like these change the course of history, but I still saw in them my personal tragedy. People with children are first and foremost responsible for them, and only afterwards for the fate of the country. To abandon a family in such a hopeless situation can be seen as something condemnable. Somehow I had the feeling that politics should be done by people with no family. I still cannot forgive him entirely." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

Such people continue to have a simplistic, uncertain view of their fathers even today. They grew up in fear and were left alone with their secret. Dread became an inherent part of their lives, and the father's death branded them for ever with a sense of distrust, the incomprehensible and overwhelming sensation that if such a thing could happen once it could happen again. These people still cannot move beyond their personal pain and loss and are still critical of their fathers.

In many cases we encountered incomprehension and withdrawal when we asked people to evaluate the father's activities. Presumably the mechanism of denial was most effective in their case: they virtually refused to address the question of why their fathers had been convicted. They did not know in their childhood, and they still do not know today, what happened to their fathers in 1956. Perhaps they do not even want to know.

"All I have of him is the pain. I was very little at the time and I didn't know what it was that they wanted to achieve in the end. I heard about it from many different places, from the television and radio, everyone talked about it differently." (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

"I cannot feel proud about it because such pride involves spending ten or fifteen years in prison for the ideal of 1956 and getting away with it. But what

can I say? I lost my father, and my mother had to suffer twice as much as other women. That's really something to be proud of!" (FERENC Z.)

The children of those executed on the charge of participation in lynching were in the most difficult situation, since killing is such a serious offence. Although there was usually no proof to support such charges, and thus the death penalty should not have been imposed even under the existing laws, many are still uncertain about their fathers' innocence. They live with a feeling of guilt: they are permanently on the defensive, waiting for proof.

"Three young men were executed out of the thousand who were in the crowd. Just three were picked out of the thousand who were there, and they pointed the finger at them saying they had done it. And that was that. Any fool can see that this isn't on. I just can't accept it. Picking any three from among so many people. It's just incomprehensible to me. And not just to me, to anyone. Even if there is a popular revolt such things are just not on. But if anyone had seen that it was those very three men, then I would accept it." (VALÉRIA KOLOMPÁR)

Conflict resulting from a dual system of values emerged most often at elementary school, where what had happened in 1956 was officially referred to as a counterrevolution. Children, and particularly those in the lower grades, instinctively tried to meet the expectations of the school and trusted their teachers. It is therefore natural that the school's orientation towards the Communist children's movements and Socialist ideals left its mark on them. When parents who did not believe in the propaganda became aware of its effects on their children, they interfered immediately.

"One day I came home from elementary school where I had been told that Kádár was a very, very good man. When I repeated this at home my father started yelling. I remember seeing something like desperation in his face. So what was I to believe? I remember him standing up and waving his arms about. He told me how Kádár had come to power on the back of the Russian tanks, and that he was a scoundrel. This is what has stayed in my mind—the Russian tanks and the fact that he was a very bad man. But this was enough to give me a direction in life." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

"At parents' evening, one of the teachers talked about the celebrations for 7 November, and with a smile she said what a nice poem I had written about Lenin and how I had even recited it. My mother came home and asked me what kind of thing I had written. I replied that I had written a poem about Lenin, about how he was a hero and had fought for the workers. 'Just listen', my mother said. I don't remember exactly what she told me. All I know is that it was ten o'clock at night and I still wasn't in bed, and she talked and talked and talked. She told me I didn't have to believe everything I heard at school and that Lenin was not a hero. She said I had written a poem praising someone who had had a part in my father's death. Things suddenly fell into place. She was putting things a little more harshly and a little more frankly than usual. Things started to make sense." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

We can only guess at the teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the revolution. On the basis of their own experiences or personal values, some of the teachers also opted for conflict avoidance. In spite of the fact that 1956 was part of the official curriculum, these teachers left the subject out or glossed over it quickly and briefly without saying anything meaningful. Some children, however, encountered teachers who dared to voice opinions that differed to a greater or lesser extent from the official version. Such exceptions in their school life left their mark on these children, since they reinforced what was said at home.

"My history teacher at vocational college said everything that he had to according to the curriculum. One must bear in mind that teachers didn't really dare to say what they really felt because, obviously, it was in their interest to avoid being kicked in the backside. Even so he mentioned one or two things that sounded slightly, but only slightly, controversial compared with what I had heard before. Then it occurred to me immediately that I was still right to believe my family. I'm not suggesting he said anything definite. He just implied things. Others would perhaps not have noticed anything. But something struck me. I felt that this man didn't mean what he said. He might perhaps have said more, or might have said it differently, but he couldn't." (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

"One of my teachers talked only about the fighting, about how there had been fighting here. As far as I remember he said in a roundabout way that he raised his hat to the boys who had done such a good job. He probably didn't dare go into details about it. But he didn't think much of the Communists." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

One testing situation was when people had to give an official account of their family background in the form of a curriculum vitae. What our interviewees had written about their fathers, and the formulas they had chosen to use, depended partly on what they knew of their fathers' fates and partly on what phase the consolidation of the political system was in when they had written their CV. Those who completed elementary school a few years after the defeat of the revolution, when scrutiny and punishment on the part of the political power were more severe, remember that it was compulsory for them to include mention of the imprisonment or execution of their fathers in their CVs.

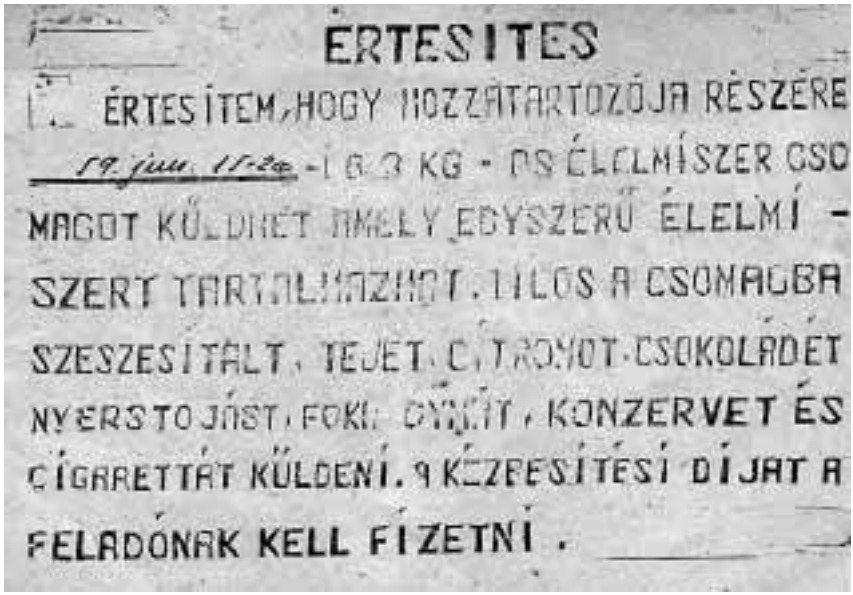
"It was obvious that his profession and that fact that he had been executed had to be included. But I didn't feel I had to write anything else." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"I always had to include the fact that he had died under sentence." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

The most obvious solution was for them to say that their fathers were dead. This was done by those who did not know what had really happened. However, most of those who were in a situation to keep the reality a secret in such a way were writing their CVs well after the retributions had taken place. As the dictatorship softened and scrutiny became less stringent, revealing one's past was no longer an official requirement.

Thus we can conclude with some certainty that the temporary or final loss of their fathers was the most traumatic experience in these children's lives. In many cases it resulted in severe identity problems. The children had to grow up bearing this huge mental burden in a lying world that forced them into silence. Not only was asking questions officially forbidden, it was also pointless since the answers were never more than half truths or distorted versions of what had actually taken place.

Édes, Kicsi Bogaram! Nagyon boldog voltam hogy eljöttél utánam Zalaegerszegre. Köszönöm hogy virágot is hoztál és hogy velem gondoltál minden este 8kor a harangszókor. Írj Édes mindenről és mindőtökről. Magadtól sokat írj, Anyuról, Apukáról, Ilusékről és a gyerekekről. Nagy szeretet és puszi Lalon elfelejtve. Sokat gondolok mindőtökre külön is. Apuka hogyan érezi magát? Lacika hogyan fejlődik? Gyuri ka milyen iskolás? Balika hogyan tanul és a sorsa hogyan van? Kicsi tanul-e rendesen? Zsófika hol van és mit dolgozik? Miről éltek Édes? Ez pe a legfőbb, amire nem szabad gondolnom, hogy egészségünkre nagy szükségünk van, vigyázz magadra nagyon. Anyu és Apuka egészsége és hangulata hogyan van? Nagyon szeretnék, hogy



ÉRTESITES

ÉRTESITEM, HOGY HOZZÁTARTOZÓJA RÉSZÉRE

19. juin 11-2ó -1 6.3 KG - OS ÉLELMISZER CSO

MAGOT KÜLDHET AMELY EGYSZERŰ ÉLELMI -

SZERT TARTALMAZHAT. TILOS A CSOMAGBA

SZESZESITÉLT, TEJET, CITROMOT, CSOKOLÁDÉT

NYERSTOJÁST, FOKH. GYÜMÖLCSÖT, KONZERVET ÉS

CIGARETTÁT KÜLDENI. A KÉZBESITÉSI DÍJAT A

FELADÓNAK KELL FIZETNI.

jú. 30.

Édes! Föl vett levelet, bár az előbbiből tudtad, hogy Rózsi P. hozza. Solyomról és velük azt várt, ami történt. Tavaly most szüretelsz, az nagy dolgokat. Ma csak vagyok és lélek. A gyerek kavicsjátszik, Palkó 4, Gyurka 5 órakor. Palkó rettenetes a lótás-nótás fölött. Szombaton utazik Lucska nő, hogy elvigyék Lőfi hegyét Tátra szobájába Könyörög, még nem tudom, hogy sikerült. Vacska tavaly, dobrudzsa az egész. Hamburgert, mit kérsz és mindenből egyet, dolgozd a rubi nélkül. Nyár, szerda, Klacik jól vannak, én most tudok aludni,

nem.

Föl sok mélységgel, rokonszenvvel üldöz, csókolunk mind. Te csak nagy puszi, nagy hűsa nyakadba, a nemet.

ELLENŐRIZVE

Lőfi
szeretettel Anyu.
Palkó
Gyurika

XVII.

TOGETHER AGAIN

As a result of the relative consolidation that had taken place, and with international acceptance of the system, the party leaders felt by the early 1960s that their position in power had stabilised. Restrictions became less severe and those sensitive to the political mood sensed amnesty in the air. During the partial amnesties of 1959 and 1960, first those who had been sentenced to less than two years were released, followed by those who had been given sentences of less than six years. Others were able to return to their families having been granted an individual amnesty. The majority of those with long sentences were released during the amnesty that took place in 1963. However, over one hundred revolutionaries, mostly those who had been armed and who were classed as public criminals, were kept in prison for several more years.

"When will he come back?"

We have seen how our interviewees preserve the sudden separation from their fathers as a painful memory, and also how the sentence exerted a decisive impact on their lives. It was therefore inevitable that the convicts' families permanently focused on the question of release and that their fathers' return occupied the minds of all the children. Those who were too young to be able to remember their fathers had to rely on what they were told by members of their families, on photographs, and on their own imaginations to build a picture of him.

"There was a photograph of my father on the desk, but it only showed his face. And when my grandmother said that if daddy came home he would teach me to ride a bicycle and to swim I suddenly burst out crying: 'How will he play with me when he hasn't got any legs?'" (Krisztina Lukách)

Depending on the amount of information that was shared with them some children were aware of the possible time of their fathers' release. If the issue was not discussed with them, they were left alone to face not only their fathers' absence but the burden of an uncertain wait.

"When we went on holiday I spent the whole time sitting on a tree waiting for my father. I became a past master at waiting. But no one could tell me when he would come back. Nor did they realise that they should have told me that we would be informed in advance when he was coming back. They should

have said something at least to stop me being permanently on the lookout for him." (Zsuzsa Mérei)

Some of the children were so young at the time of the arrest that they barely knew their fathers at all. For them the waiting was tinged with apprehension. What would he be like? How would he behave towards them?

"I remember being afraid when we talked about him coming home. I was apprehensive, partly because we got along so well at home, and partly because I had come across many bad fathers. Another reason was that in the end I had no idea what kind of person daddy was. Of course, mum always loved talking about him and it was clear that she loved him a great deal and wanted him home. But in reality I still didn't know what kind of man he was. I was afraid that someone would somehow upset my world. Mum, for example, never smacked me. As far as I knew fathers smacked their children. I was afraid that a man would come who would start hitting me. But it soon turned out that he was a really nice bloke." (Péter Zsámboki)

Many were told of, or sensed, the approach of the long-awaited event, but after being disappointed several times they did not dare to believe the signs or what they were told, but only believed it when they saw it.

"There was a noticeable change. The last half-year, when my mother began waiting for him to return, was certainly completely different. But we didn't really want to believe it would happen. We told ourselves that they were just making promises, that it would just be empty words like before, that nothing would actually happen. We didn't take it seriously and we didn't believe it. We said that we would only believe it if dad himself knocked on the window." (Sarolta Rimán)

"It was hard for dad to get used to everyday life"

Only a few people knew in advance the exact date of the release. Some were only informed at the last moment, and most were taken by surprise by the father's return. All the interviewees recalled feeling surprised, deeply moved, relieved and delighted at seeing their fathers again.

"I can't begin to describe how I felt when he phoned me in hospital. I couldn't think straight. Then he said that he would soon come and fetch me with my mum. It was so unbelievable that he had been in prison up until then, and now he was coming to fetch me. I'll never forget that feeling. I put down the phone and just stood there, as if paralysed or under a spell, and after about an hour my mum and dad came. I caught sight of my father. He was very thin and was wearing dark glasses. His eyes had become weak in the dark cell. He gave me a hug and kissed me and told me that they would take me home." (Mária Bali)

"One day in March 1963 my father came home on his own. So there was no going to meet him. He just appeared at home on a nice, sunny morning and

there was no one at home. I was at the neighbour's house and saw him walking down the road in a light green suit. 'Hey', I said, 'That's my father!', and I jumped over the fence. He was so happy to see me. He had brought lots of chocolate and a big bag of sweets. He must have bought them on the way home so he would have them when he arrived. It was quite strange that in the end no one was home. One of the neighbour's children ran to my mother's workplace. This was the first and only time I ever saw my mother running. She ran all the way and was out of breath when she got home. The next thing I remember is the following day, when he was pruning the lilacs. He wore a tatty old reddish tracksuit. He had no other clothes apart from the suit that he had worn to come home." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

"His release came as a great surprise to me. I have no idea whether my mother suspected it or had been informed. I remember distinctly that one afternoon I came home from school and went into the kitchen. My father was there in the kitchen. He was standing behind the open door so that I wouldn't see him. I just saw from my mother's face that something had happened. Then I looked around and saw my father behind the door. He had lost his hair." (SÁNDOR K. KERESZTES)

Family members daydreamed for years about the convicts' release. They imagined a happy life with their husbands and fathers, but the euphoria caused by the father's arrival was only short-lived. The longed-for but drastically altered situation gave rise to new conflicts, which everyone found hard to cope with. Husbands and wives, fathers and children had to get to know one another anew and learn to live together once again. The men had spent a long time away from their families. All of them had changed considerably, and many had become alienated from those they had left behind.

"After six years and five months in prison he returned to real life with us in our tiny flat, where we were watching television, listening to the radio, coming and going, getting ready for school, laughing. For a long time he found this disturbing. He even told mum that it was no good, something would have to be done about it because his family and other people were driving him crazy. He didn't mean it unkindly. It just took him a while to get used to life in the outside world. Besides, they also had to get to know each other again." (MÁRIA BALI)

"It was hard for dad to get used to everyday life. At home he had to learn to be with his family again. We all had to get used to each other, and it wasn't an easy situation. I remember how my mum was always watching my dad very closely, and dad watched her closely as well. They were always on the look out to see how the other would react. In other words, their life together didn't come naturally at first." (ÉVA Z.)

"It was strange. Although we had visited him in prison, talking to him behind bars for twenty minutes every three months was far from ideal. It was strange that we had to make friends with each other. But I think it happened

very quickly. Initially I must have been a stranger to him, and he was a stranger to me. But I think we became friends very easily and afterwards everything was as if he had never been away." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

Besides love, the father traditionally represented discipline in the family. It was disappointing for the children when their long-awaited fathers suddenly began to make demands and have expectations of them. Together the parents could devote more attention to their children's upbringing, including the question of discipline. This caused problems, particularly if the children were in their difficult teenage years.

"My father didn't really know who we were. He knew us only from what he'd been told about us. It wasn't really that important to me to live up to his expectations because emotionally we were not on the same wavelength, nor did his demands help the situation much. Although he tried to avoid making things hard for me by not involving me in what was going on, this only ended up making things more difficult. Understanding requires the willingness to find common ground, which was lacking in our case. We just skirted around each other." (TIBOR MOLNÁR)

"This person arrived completely out of the blue, without any warning. He kept making demands and was only interested in results, but at the same time kept telling me how much he loved me." (ZSUZSA MÉREI)

"It was hard to come to terms with the fact that there was another person imposing discipline and making demands, to whom I was accountable for this and that, I don't know. I mean, we had a father again, which was a very, very good thing, and we were really glad, but it was also strange and difficult for us. Dad wasn't bad-natured but he still kept a strict eye on us. They had more time to deal with us, and all this made the atmosphere within the family more severe." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

Disagreements between parents and emotional and other conflicts again represented strange and difficult experiences for the children. In families which, before the arrest, had followed a traditional division of labour, and in which, during the father's years in prison, the mother had taken over the role of breadwinner, the husband had difficulty accepting the changes on his release.

"Conflicts within the family increased, partly because the two of them couldn't get used to each other for a while. We only started to become a family when he was released from prison." (TIBOR MOLNÁR)

"You got used to there being one person around when you were a child. It was like getting to know a stranger. Someone who had just moved in with us. It was very strange and very difficult. From that moment our basically quite idyllic and routine—but not in the bad sense of the word—family life became a source of permanent conflict. My mother's routine, as she had established it by herself, following her female logic and ideas, was changed drastically. My father always wanted something that was not necessarily the same as what my mother wanted. The family atmosphere was eventually full of conflict and became very tense." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

During the years of imprisonment in many cases the family fell completely apart. In some cases the marriage had begun to deteriorate even before the revolution. Other women were unable to cope with the conflicts arising from stigmatisation, and the marriage ended in divorce. In other cases it proved impossible to recreate an intimate family atmosphere on the husband's release and the couple decided to continue their lives separately. In the course of our research we came across only one such case, but from the recollections of others we know that this was not a unique phenomenon.

"In some respects things got worse. The father who left had protected me, but the father who returned needed my protection. Although I was only young, I realised immediately how family relationships had changed. I think they must have talked seriously about divorce. I even think they had talked about it earlier, during the prison visits. This drove me mad." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

The released convict did not always prove to be an ideal father: he was often tired, anxious, sad and sometimes irritable. He also struggled with the problems created by the new situation. His everyday life was burdened by the difficulty of finding work, by surveillance, and sometimes harassment, by the police, and occasionally rejection by those around him. Getting a job again was the hardest task. The majority were not allowed to return to their previous workplaces even if the management was ready to take them. On release they could usually find positions as unskilled workers. Even if they managed to find a job that matched their qualifications they were usually soon dismissed on the basis of unreliability or a similar excuse. A very few utilised skills learned in prison to find work, and some lived as freelance translators.

"The fact that he had returned home and was looking for work, that he had all the hardship of starting his life over again, took over everything. Where could dad find work? One idea was to return to his former workplace, to which he was quite strongly attached and where he had the support of his former colleagues. Others got to know about it and forbade it, even though they were expecting him there. Then he went to the foundry. Well, a foundry is no easy place, nor is it easy to work there. It took him a while to get used to it. I remember him having difficulty adjusting. He was tired. He was often splashed by hot metal and burned." (ÉVA Z.)

Following release several of the men were placed under police supervision. For a certain time they were not allowed to appear in public places and could leave their homes only with the permission of the police. Others had to report regularly to the local police station. Surveillance often continued after this supervision had ceased.

"Until the end he remained under police supervision. No matter how strange it sounds it was so. Even when he moved to Pécs he had to report to the police every week. They came to question the neighbours regularly about what kind of friends my father had, where he went, who he visited, and when he returned home. When I married a Polish girl at the age of twenty-seven they

almost made a political case out of it, implying that he had persuaded me to do it so that I could take part in the Polish uprising." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

"The police supervision started immediately. This meant that he wasn't even allowed to go to church or any other public place. He went to work, then he came home. That was it. The police station was in the neighbouring village. He had to go there to report every weekend for about a year and a half. But he turned the tables on them. Sometimes he came home from work on horseback, and when this happened he got on the horse on Sunday morning, wearing his best clothes, and rode through the village to report to the police. The effect this produced was the direct opposite of the effect a man usually makes when going to report to the police: the most elegant of gentlemen riding through the village. By contrast, the policeman came to our house at dawn and beat on the window to see whether he was at home. He took his job seriously, coming to wake my father at night. He must have been a real busybody." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

Some of the convicts were broken by their years in prison and the subsequent harassment and threats. They concluded from what had happened that it would be wise for them to keep their distance from anything that had the slightest connection with politics. They withdrew into their private lives, especially if the majority of their former acquaintances turned their backs on them.

"Afterwards my father and mother became completely withdrawn. The atmosphere at home changed entirely from what it had been before 1956. My mother, particularly, was worried that my father would be taken away again sooner or later. That's why she held my father back to some extent. She kept reminding him of 1956 and prison: 'You'd be better off keeping a low profile!'" (ZSOLT FEKETE)

"The thing was that when he came home there were a few of his old acquaintances who supported him, and that's the only reason why he was able to find jobs, even in workplaces that were beneath him. But there were several people who wouldn't acknowledge him and who crossed the street when they saw him." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

Not everyone could be intimidated, however. Many kept up friendships they had formed in prison, they met regularly and helped each other. In these circles they addressed political issues openly, often exposing themselves to further punishments. These people preserved the memory of their comrades, visited the graves in which they were believed to be buried, kept the ideals of the revolution alive, and participated in the activities of the opposition or became its leaders.

"At that time they were free, so they spoke differently. But their bitterness and their memories would come to the surface. On one fiftieth birthday celebration the whole prison was there. At least sixty people who had been together inside. The next day every one of them was summoned by the police and asked what they had been doing at the Balis' house." (MÁRIA BALI)

"Within a few months of the launch of the Charter 77 movement in Prague

my father created an initially small team that operated according to his ideals, that is, in a directly democratic way. It was the core of the democratic opposition and they undertook huge risks and hardships." (László Donáth)

On their return from prison there was usually no change in the way that fathers communicated with their families. Unless members of the family were unwilling to bring up the subject they talked mostly about their amusing experiences and about friendships they had formed in prison, deliberately or subconsciously embellishing their narrative about the years they had spent inside. Some also talked about their activities in 1956. Even if they did not discuss their role in the revolution in detail, talking about it helped to alleviate their children's fears, since they saw that their fathers had not been broken but were proud to acknowledge what they had done.

"I had been longing for him to come back, and I remember how happy I was. So was he. As a child I sensed nothing of what he had been through because he was so happy and I had got back a kind, loving father. I had absolutely no inkling of the kind of mark it had left on him. Later, when our life together began again, not a day passed without him remembering something. His mind was always busy and things were always occurring to him, which meant that he shared many of his experiences with us. He ruminated about such things every day." (Márta Regéczy-Nagy)

"I didn't have the impression that he was a broken, punished man. I felt that he had spent time in prison unjustly, that his punishment had not been for a real crime. I think he must have felt and thought just as he had done before he went to prison, so he didn't say things like 'That's what you get for…'" (Katalin Litván)

"I do not remember any long, deep conversations. What had happened was all around us. As I grew up I learned more and more details as I came across various things in the flat. My father always told me as much as was needed. He always answered my questions. I remember—it must have happened when I was a teenager—that when the topic of the 180 days he had spent in solitary confinement had been brought up, I couldn't stop thinking about it for days. I was shocked and felt sorry for him. I tried to imagine myself in his situation. I would have found it unbearable. Later on my mum gave me the letters he had written from prison. They were a huge but pleasant surprise to me since they showed my father as a husband, a family-loving man with deep feelings, who was concerned about his wife. I know I read the letters many times before someone explained the secret messages they contained." (Krisztina Lukách)

In families in which the revolution was a taboo subject the father usually wanted to forget what had happened once he had been released. These families chose silence, thus the events and what had prompted them continued to be hidden from the children. The sharing of the experience could, of course, have been hindered by several other factors, such as the psychological condition of the father, the nature of his prison experience, and his difficulties in adjusting to everyday life.

"The family as a whole tried to achieve a feeling of calm and somehow to forget. My father didn't tell me about what he had done in 1956. All I know about it I learned only afterwards and from other sources, from remarks made by others." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

"At the time I didn't know whether he was an innocent victim or not. Now I know that he was innocent of all the charges brought against him. My father didn't tell me this for a long time after his release. Their theory was that we didn't need to be burdened with such things, because this would spare us from certain conflicts. For a long time I didn't even want him to talk about the events of 1956. I don't know why but I had somehow had enough of it. I knew what had happened, that he had been sentenced, and I also knew that he was home again, and apart from that I wanted to forget the whole business." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

Following their long absence, initially only a few fathers were able to create an intimate parent-child relationship. This required far more patience, attention and energy than in an average family.

"It was such a good feeling that the family was back to normal and that he was there. We went to the cinema and went on lots of outings together. He was more difficult to approach, of course, because I was nine when he was put in prison and almost thirteen when I got him back. Our relationship was not like it had been when I was little." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"He was an entirely different person when he came out. When he came out of prison I was very close to him. He loved me very much, and I loved him. I knew that prison was no bed of roses, but I only understood what it had been like when he came out and told me about it. We were besotted with each other, and very, very close. There was a kind of link between our souls, I don't know how to describe it." (MÁRIA BALI)

"It was during the last ten years of our life together that a full and deep intellectual relationship was established between us alongside our family and emotional ties. We had many discussions about our future and there is no denying that this had a very important influence on my life." (LÁSZLÓ DONÁTH)

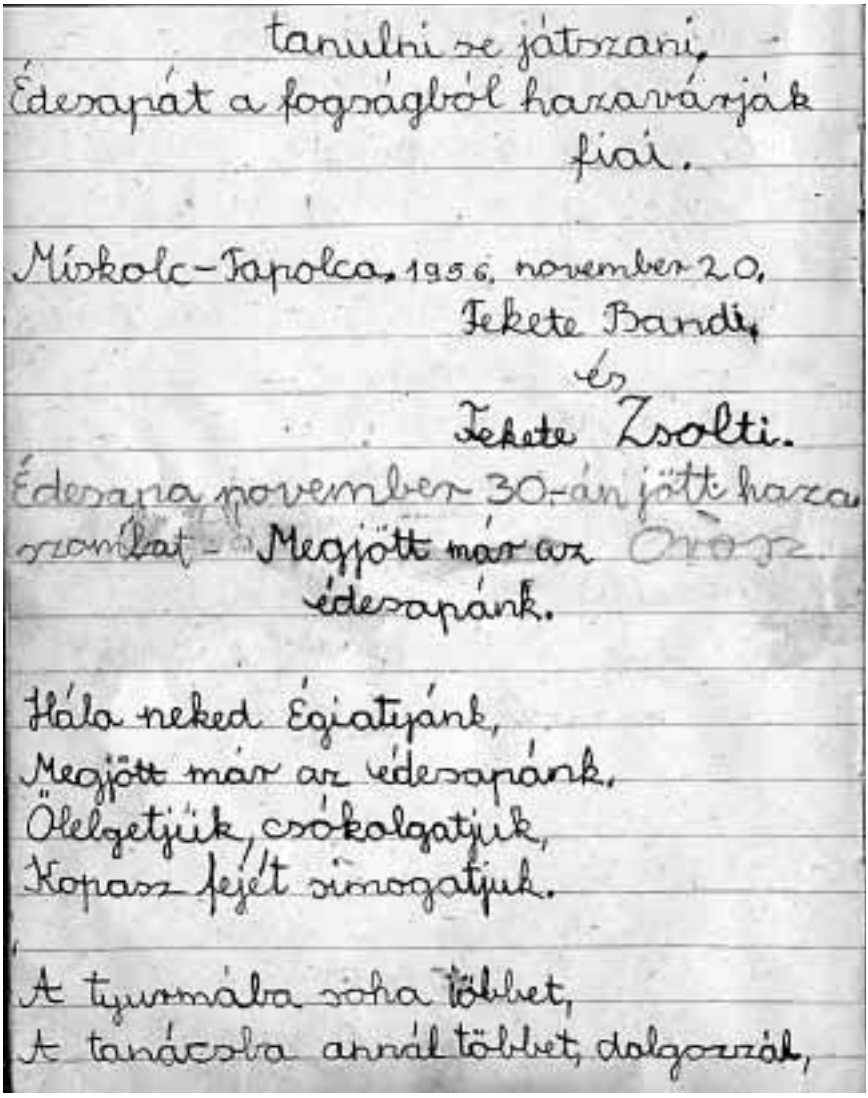
Financial difficulties were only alleviated if fathers were eventually able to find work. Over the years the families' financial circumstances became more stable and their standard of living gradually improved. However, the retribution put an end to the careers of many of the convicts. They spent their whole lives marginalised and frequently suffered humiliation. Prison destroyed the health of many, and in many cases this was perhaps the reason why they did not live to see the longed-for change of political system.

"There wasn't one single, spectacular change, like someone going from a blue room into a red one, where everything was entirely different. There were changes in lifestyle instead. We bought a piece of land, and from then on working on it was a daily activity. This was a change in as much as it provided a new source of income for the family." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

"In the end we lived modestly and with a certain amount of security. Those were good years, before mum was ill and after my father had returned from prison. I remember going on holiday together, family outings, being together." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

"My father's physical health also suffered in prison. He died in 1967 of a tumour that developed because he had been beaten with a truncheon in the prison. On one occasion he had fainted after being beaten in the abdomen. That's probably why the tumour developed." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

"1989 was a very great year. My sister and I went to the funeral of Imre Nagy. All we could think about was that our father deserved to have been there. It was one of our main topics of conversation. It was also a benchmark by which to judge people and their relationship to 1956. It was central to our lives. It was cruel of life that our dad had not lived to see this time." (PÉTER ZSÁMBOKI)



tanulni se játszani,
Édesapát a fogságból hazavárják
fiai.

Miskolc-Tapolca, 1956. november 20.

Fekete Bandi,
és
Fekete Zsolti.

Édesapa november 30-án jött haza.

szerkesztő: Megjött már az Orosz
édesapánk.

Hála neked Égiatyánk,
Megjött már az édesapánk.
Ölelgetjük, csókolgatjük,
Kopasz fejét simogatjük.

A tyúrmába soha többet,
A tanácsba annál többet, dolgozzál,

Szívünk lelkünk akor örül igazán,
Ha belépsz a müegyetem kapuján.
Édesapát 1957 február 20-án ujból
elfogták, szerdán, délután 4 órakor.
Édesapát 1957. Március 28. délután

4 órakor az ügyészségre szállították.

Zászlós honvéd
a szabadságharcból
1848-49

Rákóczi kuruc
vitéze.
1703-1711.

Hunyadi János.
1397
1456

ISKOLA ... FŐGRA...
ELLENŐRIZVE
1956 ... 14/3 ...

Bp. 1956. I. 6.

Aranyos, drága
Édesapám!
kuldom az iskolá-
un készült fényké-
met Iskolai kötény-
n, munka közben
ost szünet van csak saj-
s rossz az idő. Most
agy sár van
Édesapám! Sokat gon-
dolok rád. Alig várom,
hogy ölelhesselek. Millió
puszit küld kislányod
kis Magdi

THE TURNAROUND

The opportunity to say a final farewell and to pay one's respects to the dead is a fundamental human need. Funeral services and the tending of graves help the living to come to terms with their loss and pain, and at the same time provide an opportunity for remembrance. Following the defeat of the revolution the new authorities considered even dead bodies and graves to be dangerous: it was not only husbands and fathers who were taken from their families, but bodies too. The executed were buried secretly in unmarked graves. The Kádár regime tried to extinguish even the tiniest germs of remembrance of the revolution and of those who had participated in it. They deprived the relatives of the executed of the basic human right to provide a decent funeral for their loved ones and to mourn openly. Relatives even had to grieve in secret. The fact that there were no coffins and graves to be seen reinforced the repression of emotions that was happening nation wide. For the relatives it also meant that the process of saying farewell could not be closed and that their grieving, which should have helped them to find peace, continued for decades. Relatives tried to preserve the memory of the executed, despite the fact that until as late as 1989 the authorities forbade all public forms of tribute and remembrance. There were many things that influenced the way in which loved ones were remembered, and all our interviewees had their own ways of keeping the father's memory alive.

"I YEARNED ALL MY LIFE TO FIND HIM ONE DAY"

In families in which things were not kept secret from the children the memory of the father was kept alive in the course of day-to-day life and all members of the family paid their respects on the anniversary of the execution or on All Saints' Day. This may have gone some way towards relieving the children's stress and easing their pain, even though the family could find no real peace.

"Every year on All Saints' Day we went to the cemetery. But we just wandered around; we had nowhere to go. This made the whole thing even sadder. There was one large, common grave where we laid some flowers, and that was it." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"Others went to the cemetery to visit their parents' grave, but we didn't. We went to the Carmelite church instead. In the crypt there was a small memorial plaque where we laid a wreath or lit a candle. On other occasions, when

we went to the family grave, we included my father in our thoughts. We didn't even need to imagine him, we just found it natural for him to be there. It was so natural that whenever we mentioned any members of the family who had passed away, he was among them. We did not need to think of him separately, because he was there." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

"We talked a great deal at home because I lived with my mother for a long time. We talked about my father almost every day. She didn't want me to forget him. Whatever she touched in the flat held memories for her. There was a photograph of my father on the bedside table and she often talked to it. We always remembered his birthday by buying a bunch of flowers that she put in a vase next to my father's photograph. She always told me something about him. Every story she told ended with her saying that she didn't believe my father was dead. She believed he was alive somewhere and would come home one day." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

Even those children who were unable to talk to anyone about their fathers found their own way to express their grief and developed their own ways of remembering.

"On All Saints' Day my brother and I always lit a candle. Our mother did not know about it. We lit it for our father. We went out to the shed and we lit a candle for my father. We didn't want to upset our mother." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

Many refused to accept not knowing where their dead were buried. The majority of women were determined to find out at any cost where their husbands had been buried. Those who tried the official route were turned away, but sometimes well-meaning prison or cemetery employees helped them secretly. Out of sympathy, or for a price, they showed the women the place where the bodies had been buried. Following execution those who had been tried in the same trial were usually buried next to each other and occasionally in the same common grave.

"We spent the whole day at the cemetery gates walking up and down. In the afternoon we went to the nearby restaurant, known by everyone as the "Spittoon", which was frequented by the gravediggers and goodness knows who else. We had one of my aunts with us. She sat me down with a drink of raspberry squash as a diversion. Then my mum was called aside. Someone pointed out the hangman and his assistant. I was really upset. The person who had called my mother aside told her that he had spent the whole night with my father in the condemned cells. It had also been him who had escorted my father at visiting times. They had talked through the night and he had been very surprised that despite being a simple joiner my father had been so well informed about world affairs. They had talked politics and had argued until his final hours. He assured my mother that my father had been at peace. He had not been angry with anyone and had behaved with great dignity. We learned from him that my father had not been executed in the morning, apparently because they were waiting for his appeal, which of course did not arrive. His body was taken to the cemetery early the next morning. A gravedigger showed us where he had been buried." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"My father-in-law knew someone who worked at the cemetery reception. He asked this person where the executed convicts had been taken to. We were told to go right to the last plot. We would recognise it because there were no grave markers there. An elderly woman emerged from the bushes and told us we had come too late because two people had just been buried. She said that one of the coffins had been slightly longer than the other. We decided that it must be the longer grave that belonged to us. We took care of those two graves for thirty-one years. We visited them regularly. We didn't care that there were policemen there. I waited until they had gone, laid my flowers and perhaps watered the plants, and then left. But my poor mother-in-law came into conflict with the police on several occasions because she was more assertive. When she was told to pick up the flowers, which were not permitted there, she refused. Sometimes the cemetery caretakers warned us that the police were there and we had to wait for a while. We stopped to talk to them and only when we saw the policemen leaving did we go to the grave. Eventually it turned out that he was not even in that grave." (Mrs GÁBOR BOSNYÁK, mother of ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

Despite it being forbidden these twentieth-century Antigones often visited plot 301 of the Rákoskeresztúr public cemetery with their children to lay flowers on one of the unmarked, overgrown graves. It is because of them that the authorities were never able to abolish the unwritten human right to mourn, not even by means of humiliation and intimidation. Even those who remained silent about the events, or who tried to forget what had happened to their husbands, occasionally visited the cemetery and tended the unmarked graves that they imagined belonged to their loved ones. Even if they occasionally took their children with them they did not tell them the real reason for the father's death. This was private grieving and not intended by most of them as a political action.

"At the time of the trial my mother spent several days in Budapest. Following the sentencing she went out to the cemetery. There were four fresh graves and there was a mounted policeman guarding them. Mum took some flowers with her but she didn't know where he was. She thought that he must have been executed then because sentences were carried out within forty-eight hours. She wasn't there when they were buried. When she had laid her flowers a mounted guard came and trampled over the grave. They visited the cemetery later, especially my mum who went there frequently." (MÁRIA MAGYAR)

"One of us went out there every week. There were always policemen or plain-clothed men keeping an eye on us. On important holidays they didn't even let us in or beat us and chased us away. They even took the trouble of going out on motorcycles or horseback to trample on the graves. If flowers had been laid, they threw them away. On every visit, and we still go even today, we have always taken flowers for five graves. The families have always looked after each other's graves. In fact, back then there wasn't much scope for tending the graves, since if it was too obvious they trampled over them. They could only be cleared of weeds. There was a small mound but there was no question of any kind of grave marker." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"...I FELT AN UNBELIEVABLE SENSE OF JUSTICE"

There are many ways of reading the symbolic act that marked the change of political system—the funeral of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs on 16 June 1989. And there are several ways of looking at its political significance. Our interpretation of these things will be exclusively from the point of view of our interviewees and their families. By way of background, however, we need to outline a few historical facts.

In spring 1988 the relatives of the executed leaders of the revolution and participants who had spent time in prison founded the Committee for Historical Justice. On 6 June a statement appeared in a number of foreign newspapers and was broadcast by various radio stations. They demanded, among other things, "the complete moral, political and legal rehabilitation of the—living and dead—victims of the retributions, a decent burial for those executed, and the erection of a national memorial". Despite the cruel actions of the police, on 16 June 1988, the thirtieth anniversary of the deaths of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs, several hundred people participated in memorial gatherings held in cemeteries and public places. On the same day, at the initiative of Hungarian exiles in France, a symbolic grave for Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs was consecrated in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris at a large-scale commemorative ceremony.

The pressure of the Hungarian and international public forced the authorities to make permanent concessions. According to Law Decree 20 of 1988 by the Presidium of the Hungarian People's Republic, which came into effect on 16 June 1988, "Those imprisoned for criminal acts committed against the state between 23 October 1956 and 1 May 1957, or for other acts related to counterrevolutionary activities, and those whose death sentence was commuted to imprisonment by an act of mercy will be exempt from all disadvantages related to the possession of a criminal record." Although this decree did not include those who had been executed, it allowed the possibility of applying for individual exemptions. On 23 November 1988, following lengthy preparations and procrastination, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's party committee gave permission for the burial of those who had been executed following the trial of Imre Nagy and his comrades, and for the exhumation of other executed convicts. At the end of the same year the Ministry of Justice began negotiations with those relatives who had signed the statement of the Committee of Historical Justice. Initially they meant to allow only private reburial by the families. However, when the signatories insisted on the demands of the statement the negotiations continued, this time with the participation of the leaders of the Committee of Historical Justice, who demanded the marking of the graves of all those who had been executed and possibly the exhumation of their remains. In accordance with a secret decree issued by the Council of Ministers, the exhumation of bodies from the unmarked graves and the identification of prime minister Imre Nagy and his colleagues Miklós Gimes, Géza Losonczy, József Szilágyi and minister

of defence Pál Maléter began on 29 March in plot 301 of the Rákoskeresztúr public cemetery in the presence of members of the families of the dead and of the Committee of Historical Justice. The first list of the 1956 political convicts who were executed between December 1956 and December 1961 was drawn up secretly in 1986 by historian János M. Rainer, on the basis of birth certificates found in the municipal archives. The list, which was amended as a result of further research, was published officially in May 1989, along with a request to relatives to indicate whether or not they wanted the body of the executed member of their family to be exhumed.

The memorial service was arranged to coincide with the thirty-fourth anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs, this time to pay tribute to all those who had been executed. The memorial service in Heroes' Square, and afterwards in the Rákoskeresztúr public cemetery, was one of the largest mass demonstrations for decades. Hundreds of thousands of people paid their respects and dozens of émigrés returned home for the first time to attend.

The majority of our interviewees did not participate in the central ceremony. Several of them, as a result of many years of propaganda, did not realise the significance of the event or did not believe in its sincerity. Others were kept at home by decades of routine fear. The absence of those who lived outside Budapest was, in some cases, due to a lack of money. Nevertheless, everyone followed the events on television. The ceremony—the spectacle, the speeches, the enormous crowds and, most significantly, the reading out of the list of victims—was extremely moving. It was finally being declared publicly that the victims had not been guilty. Those who had died or who had spent years in prison had been innocent, and everything that the people in power had maintained for decades had been a complete lie. With the public acknowledgement that such injustice had been done the victims were absolved and suddenly, at least officially, their stigmatisation came to an end. This, although very belatedly, gave rise to an enormous sense of justice.

"Now his name had been cleared in the eyes of the whole world. Justice had finally been done by means of publicity, television and history, and they had been exonerated. My dad finally felt that he was free. Now he could open his mouth and talk about what had happened. He had not been ashamed about it before but had been unwilling to talk about it because it had still been a black area in his life." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

"I was one of the guards of honour on Heroes' Square. I took my turn twice. Iván Darvas, the popular actor who had been imprisoned for participating in the revolution, was smoking a cigarette next to me. I listened from inside the building to Viktor Orbán,[1] who said that the Russians should go home. I was over the moon. It didn't even occur to me that it was going too far, or that

[1] At that time Viktor Orbán, one of the speakers at the funeral, was a leading figure in the Alliance of Young Democrats. He was prime minister of Hungary from 1998 to 2002.

it was inappropriate. I was standing outside just when Miklós Németh[2] and his party arrived to lay their wreaths. They were standing at my feet, as it were. As they stooped in front of me I felt an unbelievable sense of justice." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"I had no idea it was going to be such a large-scale event. I went into work on the day of the funeral and went upstairs where the television was. I watched it for about twenty minutes then suddenly burst into tears. I asked to be allowed home. I went to my mother's and we watched right to the end together. As they were reading the list of names and we heard my father's name come up I felt an amazing sense of justice. So after all my father was not *that* kind of man." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

The reburial was a ritual of remembrance, absolution, and, at the same time, peacemaking. The participants broke down the taboos and shattered the false memories imposed by the system on society. Many regarded the speeches that were delivered from beside the catafalque as the first real proof that those who had participated in the events of 1956 were no longer stigmatised as enemies.

"I was just watching and could hardly believe my ears. I was shocked by the tone of the speeches and the previously unheard of outspokenness. It was then that I began to believe that something would really change. I swear to God I was overjoyed. I'm thinking here first of all of Imre Nagy, and of course of the others as well, but above all of the fact that due respect had been paid to the dead as everyone deserves. Not only him but all the others too, everyone who was now no longer charged with the crimes that they had been and because of which they had had to die. Facts had come to light that made it obvious that it had all been a groundless lie and nothing other than revenge on the part of the authorities. I remember that it was Iván Darvas and László Mensáros [who had also been imprisoned for his role in the revolution] who read out the names of those who had been executed." (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

"Finally it was made known in the village what had really happened and that they had not in fact been executed because they were criminals but had been innocent. We learned that much at least." (MÁRIA MAGYAR)

"At last, from that moment I really had a father. An emotional bond was formed between us. Before I had only known that he had existed, but from that moment on I also felt it. Finally it was being said that they had not simply been killed, that they were not simply any old revolutionaries but martyrs for the nation." (IMRE FARKAS)

The funeral service on 16 June brought to an end the long years of silence, amnesia and repressed emotions. The trauma involved in recalling a deeply buried event is well known. For many it was a huge shock to have to face once again the long-repressed tragedy that had been condemned to oblivion.

[2] Miklós Németh was the last prime minister of Hungary before the change of political system.

"It was terrible to watch the video tape. I was devastated, I had to go to hospital. It is terrible to learn where one's father is buried after so many years and so far away from one's country. Finally we could visit his grave and lay flowers on it. There are no words to express this feeling." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

"I was so moved and so happy, and at the same time bitter because the old memories had come to the surface. The memories had gradually become quieter and at the burial suddenly everything came to the surface, so healthwise I found it hard to bear the whole thing. I even had a mild heart attack afterwards." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

Those who had accepted the official line and who were ashamed of their fathers' crimes now felt guilty. None of them talked about this feeling, although occasional remarks made it obvious. It was hard to come to terms with the fact that they had believed in lies for so long and had condemned their own fathers, whom they now learned all of a sudden had suffered and died in spite of being innocent.

"AT LAST I COULD VISIT MY FATHER'S GRAVE"

In accordance with the request of his family, Imre Nagy was reburied on 16 June 1989 in the same grave in plot 301 from which his remains had been exhumed. By this time plot 301 had been transformed into a tended garden of remembrance. The earthly remains of Miklós Gimes, Géza Losonczy, Pál Maléter and József Szilágyi were laid to rest nearby in the newly created plot 300. As a tribute to other victims who were unidentified at the time of the ceremony an empty coffin was also laid in the ground.

The majority of victims executed in the national prison had been buried in unmarked graves in the nearby public cemetery. The exhumation of the bodies and the identification of the dead took place only at the request of the relatives. The search for people who had been executed and buried in different cities (Miskolc, Győr, Kecskemét, Szekszárd, Székesfehérvár and Kaposvár) was sadly not always successful. Some prison cemeteries had been decommissioned without notifying family members and today there are fields or houses on these sites. Two of our interviewees, representing the relatives of those executed in connection with events in Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár—Lajos Cziffrik, Gábor Földes, Lajos Gulyás, Antal Kiss, Attila Szigethy, Árpád Tihanyi, István Török, László Weintráger and Endre Zsigmond—left no stone unturned in their attempts to find the bodies of their fathers and comrades. When they found out, with the help of the democratic opposition in Sopron, that these men had been buried in the nearby village of Sopronkőhida, they organised a symbolic funeral for them on 15 June 1989. Their fight for exhumation involved numerous letters and personal meetings with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, and one of them even participated in the work of investigation and exhumation that lasted until the summer of 1990.

"In Sopronkőhida a symbolic plot of land was marked out with black rib-

bons and ribbons in the national colours. Members of the Sopron opposition created a grave out of stones and placed a cross on it. I was told that it had been a complete mess. It had once been full of acacias but by that time all the trees and shrubs had been cut down. It had been used as a prison cemetery for a long time. Who would have thought that my father would have been moved ninety kilometres to this place? He had been executed in Győr and buried in Sopronkőhida. It was terrible standing there and not knowing whether he was really there or not. Then I wrote another letter to the Ministry of Justice asking that my father's remains be exhumed. In reply they wrote that since there had been a symbolic funeral I should be content to know where he was. They would do nothing. They wanted to hush the whole thing up. The nine families then met once again and we agreed that all nine families should request the exhumation and reburial of their dead. László Tihanyi wrote a letter in all our names and we all signed it." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

Following the central remembrance ceremony, besides being given a sense of moral justice the families of the executed, with the few exceptions mentioned, received back their dead after several decades. They were permitted to request exhumation and could decide how and where the reburial should take place. It was important to them at last to be able to provide their fathers with a decent grave where they could stand proudly without fear and with their heads held high.

"It gave us a great sense of justice that we no longer had to keep a low profile or be ashamed and silent about the past. Finally we could talk openly, and relatives of the dead could feel free to lay their flowers on the graves of their loved ones. The nation bowed its head before 1956 and we were no longer regarded as criminals." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"Thirty-one years later I could finally stand at my father's grave and I can go there whenever I feel the need to." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

The act of exhumation allowed the majority of those who had preserved the memory of their fathers, who were secretly proud of them and who could identify with them and their actions, to find a closure to their years of waiting and searching. These people described with powerful sincerity their feelings on finally learning where their fathers were buried. They were not deterred by the lengthy and painful procedure that accompanied exhumation and identification. They felt no revulsion, but even took the bones and skulls in their hands, searching for particular features of their fathers. They needed this kind of certainty for their peace of mind.

"I would never have believed how important it was to know where he was. I can't explain it. It was a shock to realise how much we needed to know where he was. I wanted to see it, nor was I afraid of the exhumation. The only thing I was afraid of was that perhaps we would not find him. It wasn't in any way horrible. Deep down there was an enormous sense of peace that we had him back. My mother wanted to hold the skull, which she did, and she wasn't revolted but just gazed at it. It may sound horrible but it wasn't, because he was

there. We'd been able to find him and it was as if he were laughing at us. There was a great sense of peace. It was very important to know for sure that he was there." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"I needed to hold something, to be there and to be somehow close to him. There is no question that those who were responsible for sending hundreds of people to their deaths are bastards and murderers. I still cannot really hate them, although I despise them. Nevertheless I have no hate in me that would make me take any kind of physical action. I didn't think it normal to try and understand this kind of tragedy without doing everything possible to find the murderers, in the same way as I was determined to find his body. I needed to do this in order to have a sense of the whole reality, to be able to say finally that these people were monsters and that because of them I had now to see my father here in a pot at the department of pathology where the bones were cleaned. I think I had to go there to strengthen myself for action. But I have to say that, thank God, it didn't work. I think there are certain boundaries one simply cannot cross. For me, not even this horror was enough to make me do anything." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

Others did not request exhumation. For them peace for the dead and their family alike was more important than certainty. They were not willing to face the shock and the possibility of further disappointment that went with the opening of old wounds.

"At the time of the reburial we became acquainted with the relatives of others who had been executed. They talked about what should happen. We agreed to meet again. We were going to meet to lay a wreath, and we agreed that on that occasion we would talk about what should happen next. When we met we decided not to ask for exhumation. Once they had been laid to rest they should remain there beside each other. And they are still there, all eight of them. They lie in two rows, rows seventeen and eighteen. My father lies next to Mecséri. Everything has remained just as it was." (MÁRIA MAGYAR)

"I said that we should not disturb the dead. They had suffered enough. Their memory would be preserved as it was. We had been going there since childhood to take care of the grave. But think about it. Think how we would have felt if they had dug up the grave and it had turned out that there was no one there or that it was somebody else. It would have been traumatic for mum and for all of us." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"We didn't want to disturb him. I trusted and believed that it was him who was lying there. We have a place for remembrance and a place to lay flowers—János Mecséri, 1920-1958. But my mother didn't live to see it." (ILDIKÓ MECSÉRI)

Most left their fathers' remains in plot 301, either because they wanted to leave them with their comrades in the earth that had held them until then, or because they saw the national garden of remembrance as ensuring a dignified resting place for their loved ones for ever. This decision expressed some kind of emotional identification with the revolution and the other executed convicts.

"He should be with his comrades. There lies his blood, his flesh, that is where he has been buried. Why should he lie in strange ground?" (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

"We will have been gone a long time, I think, while plot 301 will still be tended. Even when we're no longer alive, or even if something should happen to us and we aren't able to tend the grave, it will still be there, it has to be. He belongs there, he must stay there. And even when our children have died and no one knows who he was there will always be flowers and a grave marker and grass there. Plot 301 is a place that must endure forever." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

However, we did come across different points of view. Some people chose rather to rebury their dead in a family plot, mainly because they did not want the father's consciously assumed role in the revolution to be mistaken with that of executed convicts who had merely happened to be present at a mass demonstration where a lynching had taken place and who had been unlucky enough to have been singled out from the crowd in the course of the retributions.

Regardless of what course of action was chosen the reburial—the fact that their fathers rest in peace and with dignity after so many years—had brought peace of mind to all the interviewees. All of them maintained that the memorial service on 16 June 1989—and particularly the reading out of the list of names—the exhumations and the reburial of the dead, had helped them to achieve peace of mind. The walls of silence had fallen, the executed convicts had been acquitted of the unsubstantial charges, and the relatives were allowed to remember their dead and tend their graves legally. However, decades of conditioning did not simply disappear overnight. Those whose lives were dominated by fear for decades are still afraid.

"It was comforting to know that on All Saints' Day we could take flowers to the grave or light a candle there. Before that we had always lit a candle at the church. We can never accept what happened but there is some relief in knowing that a place has been assigned where we can go. But we are still afraid when we go since he was executed in spite of his innocence. At least I am still afraid." (MÁRIA MAGYAR)

"THERE IS NO COMPENSATION FOR SO MUCH SUFFERING"

According to a 1989 act of parliament on redress for the convictions that followed the popular revolt of 1956, the families of all convicts who were granted annulment of their sentences received one million forints from the state. According to a law passed in 1992, political prisoners were entitled to redress, in the form of either a pension or compensation vouchers, depending on the number of years they had spent in prison. The children of both the executed and the convicts reacted emotionally to the compensation, especially to its reception by the general population. Initially many did not even dare to submit an application, fearing that it would bring them nothing but trouble. Many doubted up until the last moment that they would actually be granted the annulment. In

several families, despite the fact that the process was regulated precisely by law, there were arguments about the amount each person should receive and why.

Interviewees whose fathers had been executed for alleged participation in lynching were not granted an annulment automatically. They were subsequently afraid to submit a petition for re-examination, partly out of fear that it would be rejected, and partly because rejection would, in the eyes of the world, prove their fathers' guilt. They did not have the courage to face further confrontation.

"Money doesn't make us happy. I don't mean that it wouldn't come handy, but for that much money it's not worth living through the whole thing again." (ERZSÉBET PEKÓ)

Those who were certain of the innocence of their loved ones submitted their petition in the hope that the outcome would serve as proof to the public as well. One widow was to be let down by justice once again, since she had to wait years for the official declaration of her husband's innocence and for compensation. She lived a bitter, lonely life, withdrawn from the world, and she continued to feel stigmatised. There was no one around her to guide her through the legal procedures with which she was unfamiliar. In her utter hopelessness a determined lawyer finally came to her aid. However, even after the annulment of the sentence she had to wait two more years before she could collect the compensation to which she was legally entitled. The indifference of the officials further increased her disillusionment and bitterness. This widow sadly refused our request for an interview with her child.

Sadly there was a general tendency within society for people to be envious of the compensation, largely because of the tough economic situation in the country. The social solidarity and sympathy that had been destroyed in the course of the last thirty years was not easily recreated.

"This country doesn't have money for this. I came across no one with a positive attitude, no one who said 'You deserve to live a little better now.'" (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

Only a few people in society shared the same thought—if not exactly in so many words—that was expressed in almost every interview:

"One million forints can never compensate for a man's life, for so much suffering." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

The convicts were publicly exonerated, the relatives were reassured, but nothing could erase from their minds the memory of years of suffering.

"For me, peace of mind will only come when I die. The whole thing lives in me. It is like something sitting on your soul. I wake up with it in the morning and go to sleep with it at night. I think of it every day, but there are no words to express it." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

Nyomatékosan kérjük a korábbi exhumálási és azonosítási kérésünk mielőbbi teljesítését.

Sopron, 1989. november 04.

Tisztelettel:

Czippán Lajos hozzátartozója: Szeidemann Ferencné, Martonvásár, Sági Endre u.

Földes Gábor hozzátartozója: Kalocsa Gárdonyi Géza utca 3.

Gulyás Lajos hozzátartozója: Gyékényes, Árpád u. 3.

Kiss Antal hozzátartozója: Mezőcsát, Táncsics u.

Szivárgó Károly hozzátartozója: Hajdúnánás, Kállai É. u. 1.

Tóth Gyula hozzátartozója: Pécs, Kórház u. 7.

Zsigmond Imre hozzátartozója: Zsigmond László 9226 Dunaszeget Dobrogovo u. 15.

Szigethy Attila hozzátartozója: Arvai Endréné Kisfalud 9341 Petőfi u. 4.

XXII.

fel az édesapától örjét.

Egyél magyon örülte is hustülötes Édesanyád
és Gyuszikára
kis szüleitekkel szemben soha sem legyél kíméletlen, mert az emberek azok nem érdemlik meg az önzetlenségét, amit nagyon nagy szívvel viseltek el orle.

Családjával mozgalmasan nyaralt, is sok sok örömet a R örökre szomorúvá vált Édesanyádnak is Bátyádnak igazában élet minden vígasza temi is sok legyél kötelessége, hogy fia legyél és az életben igen sok sok boldogságot kívánok neked.

Egyre nagyon kéjlek kisi Csuhám! Azal egyszer se foglalkozzál - se pedig a "Bélicika" ellen óvakodjál!

Jó ember, mozgalmas, dolgos, kőfogadó kisi mert onkel a viselkedésedből és magatartásából csak elégedettséget és örömet nyerjen a környezetedtől.

Gondolj sokat a Jézus nagyon, a tiszta és szeretö Édesapádra aki sem tudott sokat tőled apai szeretett nyujtani nagyon kívül álló okokból!

Szeretlek, nagyon szeretlek minden nap és ha nem az apai szívet kellene tanusságod meg nekem és felejtsd el nekem mert sok mindent azért is tettem, mert másképpen nem volt kiút.

Édes kisi Csuhám kívánom, szeretlek, imádlak és nagyon de nagyon sok is forró apai csókot küld Neked utoljára a Jézus nagyon és soha elnem múló apai szeretettel és imádattal forrón élelő és csókoló

szerető Apukád

THE LEGACY

In the foregoing chapters we have seen how the children of the convicts faced up to their unique situation and how they came to terms with the resulting conflicts. Today it has become clear to most of them what happened to them and why, and what examples can and should be followed from all that their fathers did in 1956. With respect to the taking of public or political roles, and to the revolution and the retribution, the standpoints they have adopted depend on the nature of the father's participation, on his conviction, and on his attitude following release.

"It was a hard lesson"

Those for whom events meant only pain and loss blamed politics for their fate. They either became withdrawn and bitter, or, acting on impulse, regularly voiced their opinions within their own circle while consciously avoiding politics and not assuming public roles. As a natural consequence of their resistance to the system they never joined any political organisations.

"I never joined anything political because back then I made up my mind that I never would. Because the wheel turns and one day you're declared a freedom fighter, then something happens and you're the biggest criminal of all. Even in school I didn't want to be a pioneer leader or a leader in any kind of group, not even the choir leader. I didn't want to be involved or to do things, because it just doesn't pay. This continued later on in my life. I'm not saying that I wouldn't offer help to someone in need. That's a different thing. But I don't get involved in politics. I express opinions only in front of people I know. So, it was a hard lesson." (Sarolta Rimán)

"The last thing my father said to me when we said goodbye was that I should never get involved in politics. There is not a single political issue about which I don't have an opinion, but I hold to what my father said." (Károly Szabó)

"Ever since I've had a mind of my own I've been against that system and against all such crazy systems. I'm opposed to anyone who claims infallibility." (Imre Farkas)

Those who had had a sense of responsibility for others instilled in them by their families and who saw their fathers' conduct as an example to be followed chose professions in which they could address human problems. If their fathers had not been broken by the discrimination but were proud of their revolutionary activities, and if within the family dealing with political matters responsibly was among the accepted and permanently reinforced values, children participated from the very beginning in the moves made by the political opposition, read and circulated samizdat publications or, as members of one of the parties involved in the change of system, began to be actively involved in politics.

"I have always been fighting for the rights of various people. I didn't do it on the level of politics, but it must have been down to my father." (KINGA GÖNCZ)

"I remember from about the end of elementary school hearing such warnings as 'Don't get involved in politics, son, because you'll either get a heart attack or you'll be hanged'. He tried to ease the tension with humour but I have no doubt that for him politics represented a life mission. He was entirely submerged in it but he didn't want to spoil the lives of any of us. It took a very long time, and an entirely new and structurally strange situation, before I was able to utilise my accumulated—in part professional, in part emotional—experience from my childhood and later." (LÁSZLÓ DONÁTH)

Eventually, however, even these people—with a few exceptions—abandoned politics. They were disappointed either because the change of political system did not meet their expectations or because they soon realised that they were not prepared or suited to be politicians.

"In 1989 the Alliance of Free Democrats were very radical and this appealed to me. At the time I thought my place was with them and that I could do a great deal among them. Then, after the 1990 elections, they began to hold back. Once they'd got their seats in Parliament they began to play a different tune. I even worked for the local council but I soon realised that no matter where I managed to get a foot in and no matter how much I approved of the ideals on paper, real life was different. Things didn't work out as I wanted. Politics was a forum for individual interests, and still is today. This applies to the country as a whole, and that's why the whole country is at a standstill." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"THEY WEREN'T AFRAID TO MAKE SACRIFICES"

With some exaggeration it could be said that there are as many readings of 1956 as participants in the events, or as people who discuss them. Evaluations of the revolution were influenced equally by family traditions, personal experiences, and the propaganda put out by the Kádár regime. During the 1980s an increasing amount of samizdat publications appeared that broke through the walls of silence and refuted the lies that surrounded the revolution, but these reached

only a few people. In 1989, however, a flood of recollections appeared. Participants in the revolution living either in Hungary or abroad, and relatives of the executed convicts, spoke about or wrote down their memories of what had happened. Relatives finally had access to the documents from the trials of the convicts and could find out what they had been charged with and how they had conducted themselves during the trial. These things either verified or modified their previous evaluation of the revolution. Those who had for decades seen 1956 exclusively as a personal tragedy chose not to consider the historical and political significance of the revolution, not even following the change of political system. They tried to distance themselves from everything that might disturb their hard-won peace of mind.

"No matter how much I dug around and searched, this is what had happened and I could do nothing about it. When you talk about it, it's like someone twisting a dagger in your wound. It is like your heart being torn out—I don't know how to describe it." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

"All I have of him is the pain. I was very little at the time and I didn't know what it was that they wanted to achieve in the end. I heard about it from many different places, from the television and radio, everyone talked about it differently." (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

Those who as children had believed in the counterrevolutionary propaganda but who were later open to contradictory interpretations realised, on reading the samizdat publications, that they had been misled. For some people, however, this realisation dawned only as a result of information they received after the change of political system.

"As soon as I was old enough to make up my own mind—that is, when I consciously thought through things and saw what had happened—I knew that it had been a revolution and not a counterrevolution. I was a teenager at the time, back in the Kádár era. Later on I lost interest. I didn't have many source materials. I had access to *Beszélő* [a leading samizdat magazine] and I met some of the men who were circulating it. I attended the Young Artists' Club, which was a very serious forum. There were social events at which I could meet members of the opposition and in their libraries I saw books that I could read about Imre Nagy and the cause of the revolution. I also listened to Radio Free Europe, partly for the Top Ten, but also for their political programmes. I devoured everything they said." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

"We have recently learned a great deal about it. But it was pointless showing my colleagues Péter Gosztonyi's book.[1] They still didn't believe me. When we commemorated 1956 at the factory, according to just two of the fifteen people, me being one of them, it was a revolution. According to the rest it was not. All they see are the lynchings. In the public consciousness it was nothing

[1] Historian Péter Gosztonyi left Hungary after the crushing of the revolution and settled in Switzerland. He wrote several studies and books on the revolution but they were only published in Hungary after the change of political system.

more than hot air, stupid people coming to the fore, and revenge. It was hushed up, no one talked about it. Here people don't think of it as a revolution and they don't believe that people in Western Europe look up to us because of 1956. Besides, when people go wild it doesn't mean they are stupid. I keep explaining this: I'm a kind of missionary among these people. There's no such thing as a people going crazy. When they revolt they do it for a reason. I'm sure that some of my younger friends, who sometimes ask me about this, do give it some thought. But it will take time." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

Those who were told as children what had happened, who were consistently raised to reject the official propaganda, have always striven to obtain further information. The facts that surfaced after the change of political system did not modify their existing image of the revolution, but rather strengthened it.

"It seems that I had a realistic impression of 1956 as I found nothing among the newly available facts that contradicted it." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"When the change of political system came about and facts came to light and things were said, probably the truth, I thought only how right I had been. I had not been mistaken. I clearly remember what I saw, heard and experienced at the age of ten. It strengthened my faith in what I hadn't shouted out publicly or painted on a placard, because if I had done so, they would have put me in prison." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

When evaluating the revolution and analysing events almost every interviewee described how, in the autumn of 1956, the Hungarian nation had revolted against the terror of the Rákosi regime and Soviet oppression. It had fought heroically for freedom and independence, but the fight, overshadowed by the interests of the superpowers, had inevitably been hopeless.

"This was the first brick to go when the wall of Communism fell. It became obvious that there was no unity of any kind. But I think the politicians of the time were pretty much aware of that and the hypocrisy of the West also dictated that that's what everyone here would want. The West are hypocrites now and I think they were then. How interesting that it was in 1956 that it turned out they didn't want Hungary to break away after all, or for there to be any unrest in the Russian Empire." (IMRE FARKAS)

"Knowing them, they couldn't have had a shadow of a doubt that it was heroic but vain. And those who took part, the people we knew, were all decent, honest people. Then what became of it? History has always been like this. There has always been this kind of retribution, and there always will be. It is the bad in human nature that decides what is punished and how things end. It's nothing extraordinary, but it's not very pleasant for those involved." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

They see the society's joining of forces as another positive aspect of the revolution and they feel sorry that they cannot find this unity today, but see only fragmentation instead. They condemn the recurrent waves of hatred that have appeared since the change of political system.

"For me 1956 was so beautiful and important, because people from all walks of life acted like brothers and friends to one another. It didn't matter if

a person was a gypsy, a Jewish doctor, the descendant of a baron or a worker, they simply said that that person was a human being. What really mattered was that after so many centuries the country should be free and independent, although we had no idea what would be the consequences. Now we know. They weren't afraid to make sacrifices for each other. They weren't afraid to make a stand for each other, and they put their personal interests to one side. I think that was beautiful." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

"For me the saddest thing is that the once beautiful unity of 1956 has now become entirely invisible. Imre Nagy and his men bore the burden of the revolution but now many question the role of Imre Nagy. In my opinion, no matter what people say, without them there would have been no 1956. Gergely Pongrátz[2] claims that the decisive moment in 1956 took place in Corvin köz, [the street] where he and his men fought heroically. But without Imre Nagy there would have been no Corvin köz. Or, more exactly, it would have been shot to pieces. The revolutionaries in Corvin köz weren't that powerful, and if Maléter[3] and his men had not joined the revolution, Maléter could have had Corvin köz shot to pieces. It was Imre Nagy who declared Hungary's neutrality and its departure from the Warsaw Pact, besides many other things that Gergely Pongrátz would not have been able to say, or at least with much less effect." (ZSOLT FEKETE)

Some people, however, uphold the role of the men on the street, contrasting it with the activities of the politicians and party opposition, whom they regard as insignificant.

"The sixth coffin is the most important. The others do not matter. That extra personal/impersonal one is the one that really matters. In the sixth coffin lies the nation. Who came to the fore as a result of the revolution, and who the five executed leaders were, is insignificant. I am still in doubt about whether it was the work of reformed Communists who, in spite of being labelled, like Imre Nagy, as 'reformed' were not entirely spotless as far as I'm concerned. After all, Communism devoured its own children. The revolution had the character of a popular revolt. We don't know the extent to which it was provoked in good or bad faith from within the party, or perhaps by the reformed Communists, who probably wanted something better and nicer despite all the mistakes. Today, both Communism and reformed Communism have proved to have failed. Today no one in their right mind believes in Communism." (BALÁZS BŐSZE)

Those in whom the fighting and the sight of the dead left the greatest

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[2] Gergely Pongrátz was one of the commanders of the largest unit of revolutionaries in Budapest, which fought in Corvin köz. After the revolution he emigrated to the USA. In his memoirs he wrote about his lack of confidence in the Imre Nagy government.

[3] Pál Maléter was an army officer and the minister of defence in the Imre Nagy government.

impression do not reject the fundamental goals of the revolution but they regard the events of the autumn of 1956—as a result of the negative aspects of any revolution—predominantly as a murderous, bloody fight.

"I think 1956 began with the intention of improving things and was not intended to turn out as it did. If 4 November had not happened, then things would have been problematic, just as there are problems today. Things are not black and white. We can't say that something is either right or wrong. People were fighting against each other, Hungarian against Hungarian. I regard 1956 as a great trauma for the nation and traumatic because it destroyed human lives. I found it traumatic to see the city shot to pieces and to have no way of knowing what would happen. I knew that there were hangings. It was on the news and it was horribly shocking." (ÉVA Z.)

The participants of the revolution made a sacrifice for the country and even their children suffered the consequences. It is reasonable, therefore, to ask whether the sacrifice was meaningful. Some described it as a futile struggle, since the demands were not realised. Others stress that as a result of the change of political system the country has become independent, although the political and economic changes have not been in keeping with the ideals of 1956. Several people see the long-term message of the revolution in the fact that the heroic action taken against dictatorship and foreign oppression left an indelible impression on people, despite the retribution. Thus, from a historical perspective, it was by no means pointless.

"Nothing was achieved, and if my old man was living today I'm sure he would say 'Son, it wasn't worth it.' These people were motivated by the fact that after the war everyone was relieved it was over. 'There's peace, so let's work, build houses, rebuild the country.' And this is what they did. They didn't know what it would be like if the Communists got into power, because what the Communists originally said was basically not bad. They said some very good things: that there should be equality, everyone should have clothes and shoes and a roof over their heads. The people were misled. They didn't know what the Communists were like. It was ten or fourteen years before they realised they had been deceived. Then came the revolution. Of course it made sense to them, and I can see how, at the time, it did make sense. But forty years later I don't think it is certain that this great sacrifice did in fact make sense. Nevertheless, the country can be proud of what these people did." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"They wanted a quieter, more peaceful, and above all happier world. All the wounds inflicted by the old system, all the sorrow, and a desire to change came to the surface. The revolution left its mark on the people who lived after the era of oppression because they still remembered it, even if they didn't dare talk about it openly because they knew what they would get for it. But in their families and in the company of people they trusted they must have talked about the things that had happened." (ZSIGMOND BOSNYÁK)

In recent years there has been a flood of newspaper articles and radio and

television programmes on the subject of 1956, differing in depth and truth content. The use of the revolution for daily political purposes, the acrimonious debates between various interest groups, and the controversy surrounding the granting of compensation have turned many people away from 1956. Several of our interviewees distance themselves from those participants in 1956 whom they feel are undermining the clear ideals of the revolution with their recent attitudes. For others the debates have increased their uncertainty concerning the evaluation of the revolution. Most of them react to the debates with indifference and have not taken sides.

"They have done a huge amount of damage by saying how bravely they fought when they didn't. They do things that are in direct opposition to the spirit of 1956. We have nothing to do with them." (IDA VÁMOS)

"I can honestly say that the programmes you see nowadays on television, showing footage that has never before been seen, I really don't care about them. I have become completely indifferent. I don't know how much truth there is in what is shown. It's interesting. It makes a difference who was doing the filming. I can film things either from my own point of view, in such a way as to blame someone else for everything, or from a different point of view. So I don't know what real historical justice would be. Perhaps I don't even care." (ENDRE LAJTAI)

Almost all the interviewees are dissatisfied with the official commemorations that have taken place in recent years. They do not regard them as worthy either of the memory of the revolution or that of their fathers. They take part less and less often in the official events, which they consider largely routine and shallow, and observe with increasing antipathy the dog-fights among the participants in 1956 and the contradictory evaluations of what happened. They would like the memory of their fathers and of the revolution to be preserved by society in a dignified way, and 23 October finally to be made a real holiday, free of political debates and backbiting.

"They are no longer heroes. What they did is in the past. Now everyone regards it as a nuisance when the subject comes up." (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

"I remember that it used to be commemorated in an intimate, family-like way. It was like a day of private mourning—I mean on 23 October the outbreak of the revolution was remembered, then on 4 November there was a day of mourning, and I remember that for a long time there were candles in all the windows. Then eventually there were no candles. People forgot. Now that it has become a national holiday, and because in the last five years there have been nothing but smears and expropriations—Who did it belong to? Who were they really?—the previously intimate myth has disappeared. Even people who probably had nothing to do with it have tried, and in fact managed, to make it their own." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"I am pleased whenever I see my father's name in print, but I have an aversion to those shallow, clichéd celebrations that resemble the old 7 Novembers [the anniversary of the 1917 Russian Revolution]." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"They simply make people hate even the mention of 1956. This should never have happened. It is certain that 1956 should never have been used as a ladder by anyone to get a position for themselves." (PATRÍCIA KÁLLAY)

Some regard it as inevitable that as a result of the repression participants in 1956 accumulated so much hatred and bitterness that they are unable to overcome their pain. They expect an objective evaluation from future generations and hope that with their help an image will be formed that can be shared by every member of the nation.

"It can only be given its place in history if those who were in any way involved in the revolution do not influence the investigations of historians." (LÁSZLÓ DONÁTH)

"Perhaps the next generation will have the chance to invent a different image of 1956, which they will create for themselves. I hope they do so. I really would like it to happen. It is something that is sadly lacking." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"I HAVE NO DESIRE FOR REVENGE"

The question of responsibility and accountability has occupied the minds of the convicts' relatives for decades. They have frequently asked themselves whether those who led the retribution, those who ordered the showcase trials, and those who delivered and carried out severe sentences, will ever be made accountable for their actions. Following the change of political system the question was aired publicly as to who, if anyone, could, or should, be made accountable for the crimes committed against the convicts and against society as a whole. Our interviews also answered the question of whether there is any desire for revenge among the victims of the retribution. Those involved naturally have different opinions. Nobody has forgotten, and some, mostly the children of the executed, are unable to forgive.

"I cannot forgive them for what they did because I can imagine what it must feel like to be taken there. One day they might open the door, escort me there and hang me, even if I did nothing or even if what I did was for my country, whether I was aware of it or not, whether I was a conscious revolutionary or just caught up in things. Especially if it's people who betrayed the country who kill me. Then it's even worse than if I happen to kill someone and am hanged. It's bad enough, but even worse if you're innocent. It makes no difference to me if they say they are sorry. I cannot forgive anyone. Besides, there is no one to forgive since no one has asked for forgiveness." (IMRE FARKAS)

The interviewees had differing attitudes towards the question of punishment. Some of them waited for years for the moment when they could avenge the death or imprisonment of their fathers. Their initial aggression became less intense with time and today they find the idea of accountability meaningless since revenge would only create further victims.

"At first, I can't say for exactly how long, I hoped that one day I would be able to take my revenge. I didn't think it through properly. I only felt the

desire for revenge and only wanted to live to see the day when I could avenge my old man's death. I was thinking mainly of the judges and the prosecutors, as well as the prison governor and even the hangman. These people had all been involved. They had been carrying out orders, but even so… Later, with the passage of time, I became calmer. When you really start thinking about it you see that it won't work, because these men might have children for whom it would be just as bad as it was for me. It would breed further revenge and I myself would be killed. This doesn't get you anywhere. It's a dead end, not a solution. Eventually you realise that there is nothing to be done. I must keep my anger to myself." (JÓZSEF ANDI)

"I have no desire for revenge because no good can come of anger. My answer is forgiveness, even after all that happened and even though he spent six years in prison. I don't have any desire for revenge, this 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth' attitude. Always looking for the guilty and taking revenge for what you have suffered is a vicious circle, only breeding conflict and hatred." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

Others need to apportion blame, but even they do not know who are the real wrongdoers. Or, if they do, they are still in the shadow of fear and do not dare to name them. Another reason why they refrain from taking a firm stand is because they do not believe that the real wrongdoers can be found. Following the debate that surrounded the so-called fusillade trials they see less and less point in tormenting such broken old men, who would anyway be acquitted since, after so many years, it would be difficult to find evidence against them. Nothing can change the past.

"Someone must be responsible, but who? Certainly not people like us. There are criminals, but one daren't name them. Perhaps one doesn't even know who they are. Those who signed the sentences are guilty, aren't they? Although they were just carrying out orders. Even so, in my opinion they should be made accountable. They deserve to be punished. But what can be done to them now? Nothing. They're not twenty-somethings any longer. All of them are old. Some are not even alive now. Well, I'm no one's enemy. Nothing can bring back the dead." (MÁRIA MAGYAR)

According to those with a religious faith, justice does not belong to human beings. Wrongdoers are accountable before a higher judge.

"In this respect our family was of one accord. My mum, my dad and I all thought the same. There must be some truth in the saying that suffering ennobles, because I never heard him using bad language or cursing anyone. He kept telling me that sooner or later everyone gets what they deserve. So one day you have to stand before someone, either your own conscience or God. He believed that one day everyone gets what they deserve." (MÁRIA BALI)

Those who were told as children about what was happening, who grew up in families where events were always discussed and evaluated, have their own firm opinions with regard to accountability. They consider revenge to be unworthy of the memory both of the convicts and of the revolution. For them, justice

means that people, despite the long years of silence, preserve positive memories about the role of their fathers in 1956 and talk with admiration about the stand they took. For them, the most meaningful things are public awareness, respect, and the preserving of memories.

"Those who suffered such things see the world more clearly. I mean, they have seen the other side as well. These people have just one responsibility, which is to ensure that things like that never happen again." (GYÖRGY ORBÁN)

"My mother wants no revenge of any kind. She doesn't want to punish anyone. This is the true spirit of 1956, because if we start along that road it will never end and we'll finish up being no better than they were. My mother has been contacted many times in relation to all this. She has received letters that read 'Dear Madam, I read in the newspaper about your husband. I was there at the time.' She has received letters from men who were in prison with him and from people who knew about his decisions during the three days when he was president of the council. In Veszprém it has become a tradition to give an annual award to one teacher and one student. Then there is a concert on 9 January, or the nearest weekend. Afterwards there is a candlelit procession to the memorial plaque. So the whole thing is very personal, which is wonderful." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

Beyond their fathers' exoneration children felt that justice had been done when, following the change of political system, their fathers were given public roles that were, to some extent, compensation for the injuries they had suffered.

"All these things meant a lot to my father. I don't just mean events on the scale of Imre Nagy's funeral, but the laying of wreaths at plot 301 and things like that, too. He felt that these were gestures of apology to him and to the cause as a whole. This was a consolation in his last days." (GYÖRGY FENYŐFALVI)

"Even his opponents respect dad. They ask for his opinion and listen to what he says. For me, this proves that dad has a firm point of view, which he upholds, while at the same time being tolerant of the opinions of others. Not because he accepts them the way they are, but because he is open. That's why people accept what he says even if it's not what they think. However, this works the other way round too. For some people he is not enough of a 1956er and for some he is not enough of a socialist, even when they're talking about the same issue. But he's sure of what he thinks. Dad's convictions haven't changed. He accepts things that are in harmony with his views. Those that are not in harmony he doesn't accept. Interestingly, even people who are seemingly distant from one another are connected to dad, including the anti-fascists, members of the Committee of Historical Justice, the 1956ers, and all the various organisations and factions. I feel that those who ask him for advice genuinely respect him, and that's why they turn to him." (ÉVA Z.)

Some of those whose fathers did not live to see the change of political system and the rehabilitation of the revolution and the convicts are working to bring to the public attention all that their fathers, and those who shared their fathers' fate, did and suffered. They consider it a moral obligation to erect a

worthy memorial to the convicts. They have wooden grave markers carved, they erect memorial plaques, publish books, and have created a foundation to preserve the memory of the revolution.

"The memory must live on"

The children of those who participated in the events of 1956 are now middle-aged. They now have to cope with the task of passing on their experiences and knowledge to their own families, of answering the questions of the next generation, and talking about the revolution and the retribution that is an important part of their past. Following the example set for them they use almost the same strategies as were employed by their own parents or grandparents. If they grew up in an open atmosphere they regard it as important to maintain the continuity of their personal history, so that their children too learn about the past. Within the family they have always commemorated the anniversary of the revolution, lit candles, talked about what the grandfather did, and occasionally visited the scenes of revolutionary events and plot 301. They have passed on their interest in the revolution and their pride in what happened.

"In my experience the story is a good way of conveying certain inherent values, which will be easier for the children to understand later. If children remember the story, then later on, when they are able to judge for themselves, they can form their own opinions. They will have a message stored within them. It is not a secret in our family. We are that kind of family. It functions as a point of reference." (György Orbán)

"We take that walk every year, even with my grandchild we take that walk. I paid attention to two things with my own children. I never forced them to do anything, if they wanted to be Pioneers they could be, but on 15 March [the anniversary of the 1848 revolution] we always listened to [Sándor Petőfi's patriotic poem] the *National Song*, and on 23 October I always talked to them about my mother. In other words, we always remembered the revolution. Now we have a little three-year-old lady in our lives, and on 23 October she went with us, and I told her that this is where great-grandad is, who… She didn't understand, but in five years' time she will, and I owe this much to them, to pass this on through the generations. No revenge, nothing, only the memory must live on!" (Ida Vámos)

"My son was very proud, because on 23 October the whole family was invited to the Parliament, and he was very happy, and he said that he was there instead of his grandad." (Mária Bali)

Those whose fathers had played an important role in the shaping of their identity placed particular emphasis on familiarising their children with the father's memory. And even if he did not become part of the family's everyday conversations, they chose a special occasion on which to talk about him.

"I brought up my own children always to respect this. We lit a candle every year at home to my father's memory, and we always spoke about him. They

have always been told about it so that they'll never forget. And I have also told them that if anything happens to me, they must tell it to their children." (MÁRTA SZELEPCSÉNYI)

"As my children were growing up they often asked about their grandfather. As a *present* we took my oldest son to the cemetery, to plot 301, when he was in the sixth grade. On the way there I explained everything to him bit by bit. We could see that he was slightly afraid because he had heard plenty of demagoguery. The one and a half hours it took us to get there, when I was talking with him, will always be precious to me." (KÁROLY SZABÓ)

Those who grew up among secrets and taboos mostly remained silent, and even if they took care that their children would not encounter the official evaluation alone they did not want, or did not dare, to discuss their personal involvement. This continued until the children forced them to open up by making certain remarks in condemnation of the revolution—usually repeated from what they had heard at school. If such conflicts did not arise the silence was broken only when the society-wide re-evaluation of the revolution took place.

"My mother had always asked me not to tell my children anything, and for years I didn't dare to. But when my fourteen-year-old son came home from school saying 'Look what those dirty counterrevolutionaries did!' I gave myself a shake and sat down to talk to him. I told him everything. I told him the truth and that his grandfather had been a wonderful person." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"When she was little she asked me why she didn't have a grandfather, and I always said that her grandfather was dead. At that time, when she was very little, I didn't explain to her that her grandfather had been hanged. But what was wrong with him? He was ill. I remember saying just that, that he had been ill. But when she was in the seventh grade and could understand more I told her that her grandfather had not been ill, that he had been executed. How come he was executed? Then I told her everything that had happened." (ANIKÓ GULYÁS)

"I think they were school age when things came to the surface. While they were at kindergarten we didn't talk about these things in front of them. In fact I don't know why we didn't talk earlier in front of them, why we kept it all a secret. Or rather we didn't keep it a secret, we just didn't talk about it, but it comes to much the same thing. I don't know, it's not as if we were ashamed about it. We never felt anything like that, not for a single second." (MÁRTA TÓTH)

"This is a lesson that should be learnt, this is what should be taught in schools. But that's not the way it happened, it was rather me who told him the truth. I gave him a book that he could read if he wanted to. But I have only recently started to talk to him about my father." (LÁSZLÓ KOLOZSY)

Those who knew virtually nothing until 1989 about their fathers' roles in the revolution have nothing to pass on. They did not investigate what happened and remain silent even today. They feel that they should be talking, but in the absence of an example to follow, and lacking sufficient knowledge, they procras-

tinate. Their argument is that their children are not mature enough to understand what happened. They are awaiting a solution from others, perhaps from the grandfather himself.

"I never talked about this to my son. I hoped that one day my father would sit down with him and that they would talk about it together." (MAGDOLNA FÖLDVÁRI)

For the younger generation the ideals and goals of the revolution belong to history. Most children, even those whose families were involved, are not interested in 1956. They live in a different world and look to the future. Every now and again, however, it turns out that some of them do preserve and treasure the memories.

"I told them about it when I thought, or rather felt, that they were ready. It was after the fifth grade, when they were old enough for me to talk to them. So now they know what happened to their grandfather. There wasn't anything negative about it in our family, I talked about it openly. The children felt no hostility towards their grandfather. But they could not imagine him behind bars: this is something you have to see for yourself. They have no particular questions. They aren't really interested and they don't give it much thought. Not because I have convinced them that it's not worth getting involved in politics but because there are so many things in the world that are more important to them. They are aware that it happened, but as to why it happened, and whether it had to happen or whether it could have been avoided, we didn't go into any detail. Children are not really interested about it at such levels. This is a different generation and they only know from what I have told them what it was all about and what I went through. They cannot feel what it was like." (SAROLTA RIMÁN)

"At the summer camp in Veszprém each of my children, unbeknown to the other, took their own team to the memorial plaque to show their friends. They met there. So they do keep this in mind. Last year, when one of them was in the fourth grade at secondary school, she told me she was amazed how silent her school friends had kept during the commemoration of 1956. They grew up at a time when 7 November and 4 April were still celebrated, and on these occasions there was always chatting in the back rows. Not by way of protest, but simply because these celebrations were boring and dishonest and the comrades were not popular. She said that it was heart warming that this commemoration was listened to in silence and with seriousness even by pupils who were in revolt against everything just to cause mayhem. The speech didn't come across as a cliché. She was proud when my father was mentioned, and above all that it was a moving and serious commemoration. So, it can still have an impact on a young person of today, who didn't experience what happened for herself." (MARGIT BRUSZNYAI)

"It is a very important legacy"

All the interviewed children of the 1956 convicts had become integrated into society. Sociologically speaking their lives have not differed significantly from the general trends of the 1960s and 1970s. It is certain, however, that with respect to the financial and cultural opportunities available to them they were at a disadvantage for many years. Stigmatised, and in conflict with the authorities, it took them longer and required a greater effort on their part to reach their goals, compared with the majority of society. If they were not permitted to continue their studies full time, they usually obtained qualifications or studied for a degree as adults, either at evening classes or on correspondence courses. They wanted to prove their abilities, both to themselves and to those around them. Like most people in the country, from the 1970s they made use of every available opportunity, they joined the so-called second economy, they kept livestock and took on second jobs. Most of them achieved whatever the average Hungarian citizen could aspire to: a furnished flat or a family house, sometimes even a car or a holiday home. When the authorities no longer regarded it as contrary to the public interest they were even permitted to obtain passports and travel abroad. In spite of the increasing opportunities and their achievements, however, they never forgot what had happened.

"It must have been good for those who didn't experience it as I did, who didn't know what I knew. I can't say that we are so penniless that we have nothing to eat, as we were when I was a child. We always have something to eat and clothes to wear. All right, we're not that well off. What we have is what we have earned during our twenty-five years of marriage. Anyone who didn't experience it like we did was perhaps happier about the previous system. We worked honestly for every penny we earned, that's for certain. But I don't give the whole credit to the party. Perhaps what can be said in their favour is that people had the opportunity to make ends meet. But I will never in my life forgive them for the fact that I lost my father. As long as I live I will never forgive them for that." (Mária Tomasovszky)

In the course of the interviews all our interviewees thought through consciously the effects on them and their families of what happened during the revolution. Each person drew their conclusions according to their individual position, how successful they had been, their personality and outlook. However, it is true for all of them that nothing and no one can compensate them for the loss of their fathers.

"If my father had remained alive, my fate would have been very different. There is no doubt that he would have supported me both emotionally and financially. The greatest loss for me is that he could not be present during the important moments of my life, when it would have been so good to be close to him. There is no financial compensation for that. No money can compensate for the fact that the father I loved and respected was taken from me. When I think about how much he would have loved his grandchildren and how many

things he could have taught them! This is the greatest loss. Of course, I would have been better off financially. My life would have been easier from this point of view as well. Perhaps I wouldn't have been so afraid and it would have been easier to continue my studies." (KATALIN KÓSA)

"The horror I had to live through as a child can never be erased. I have lived through it a hundred times and it was terrible. It was horrible. Every time I thought about it I cried at night. Now that I can visit my father's grave I'm again living through a period when I often cannot sleep at night when I remember the terrible thing that happened to him. So now this terrible image has begun to haunt me once again." (MÁRIA TOMASOVSZKY)

Those who already lived in poverty and deprivation and whose standard of living was worsened by discrimination talked mainly about the repression they experienced. Those whose families were unable to compensate for the disadvantages they suffered and who were not able to keep up their former standard of living evaluate their lives in a similar way.

"I can't say that we suffered great persecution because of what happened to my father, but we were never able to compensate for that disadvantage." (KATALIN FÖLDESI)

"Now I feel at a great disadvantage because I didn't have a good education. Perhaps I could have studied more, that's a different thing. But maybe they wouldn't have accepted me anyway. Who knows? But even if they had accepted me they would have found some way of stopping me form completing the course I chose. Not necessarily an arts course, although I had leanings towards the arts. It is certain that if I had studied, my life would be entirely different now because I still feel that my greatest disadvantage is that I completed only eight grades at school." (LÁSZLÓ FÖLDES)

Those who, despite the hardships and with the support of their families, developed their own inner strength and managed to overcome the obstacles in their way, are duly proud that they were able to prove to all those around them their talents, strength and endurance.

"All in all I can say that, beyond the tragedy, the whole thing developed my personality in a positive way. When I felt that things were hard or that I was not being allowed the same privileges as others, it always made me determined to show the bastards what I was made of. I'd get that degree, no matter how hard they tried to stop me. There was simply no other way of achieving a sense of justice, other than by proving your worth. Then you could get on no matter what they did to try and stop you." (LÁSZLÓ TIHANYI)

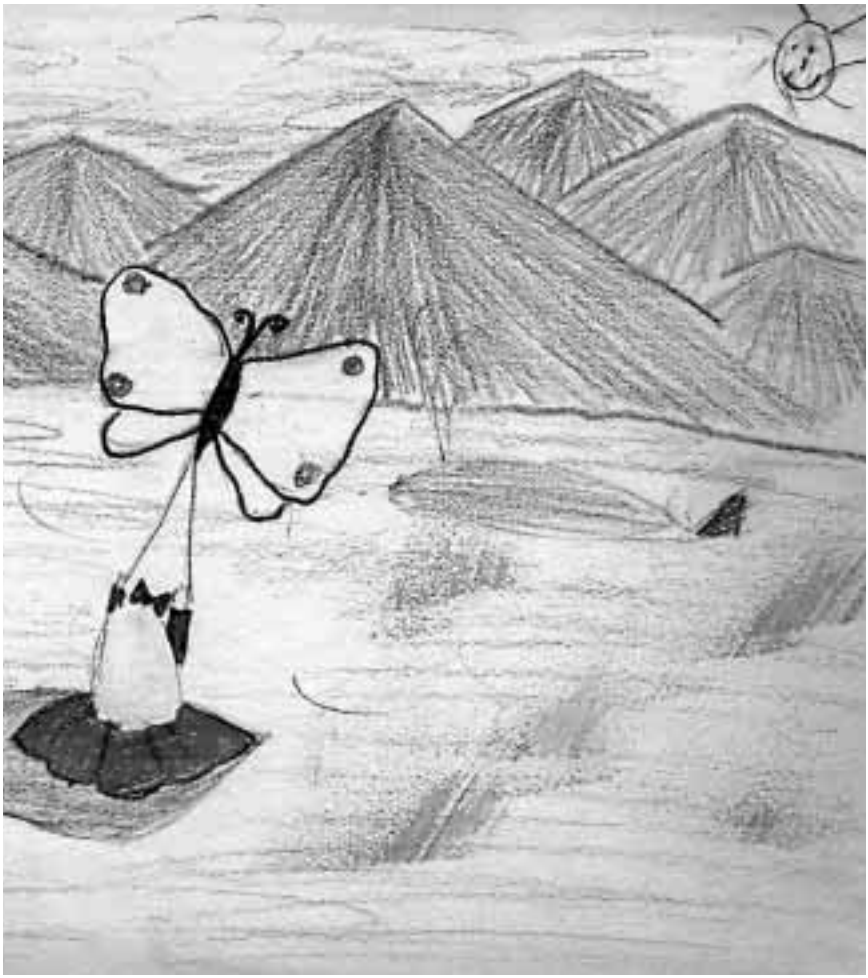
"I was defiant. I'd show them! I was a hard worker and very productive. I had to complete my college course with distinction because I had to show that I was the best there. If they told me to do so much, I did more. I feel that I'm an honest person who has achieved everything by her own strength and who has lived decently. I've always wanted to prove that I'm worth as much as the next person." (IDA VÁMOS)

Those whose fathers returned and who, with the help of the family and those around them, were able to come to terms with what had happened, regard the values that they were presented with as examples to be followed as a positive aspect of their fate. Their parents' faithfulness to their principles and to one another lives on in them as an example to be followed.

"Although members of the families suffered from the imprisonment of fathers and husbands, my life, although hard, became richer. It was an important experience that while my father was in prison and our lives were so hard we were much much closer to one another. For me, this is a very important legacy." (KATALIN LITVÁN)

"I think that because things were accepted entirely naturally at home, and because there was a strong, positive attitude, I was not left with any traces of injury or pain. If any advantage came of it, if we may say so, it was the positive attitude that gives inner strength and power. It came from knowing that I had such a family, such parents, who could endure even this and survive it with heads held high, and from knowing that I could not be less than them. The strength and endurance it gave me are values I certainly have and will continue to have, and they help me in many ways." (KRISZTINA LUKÁCH)

In the course of the interviews we saw many individual lives that shared similar, and even identical, features. The interviewees talked about their childhood experiences and about the revolution and the retribution. They recalled the most painful moments of their lives, their fears, their lonely suffering, as well as those values—the parents' faithfulness to their ideals and their actions—that gave them strength in difficult situations. We learned about the discrimination meted out against them by the political authorities, about society's gestures of hostility, and the social solidarity that compensated for their stigmatisation. Through the individual stories we have seen the duality that characterised everyday life in the Kádár era, the institutionalised fear and silence, and the world of forgetting and taboos. We have also seen how, as a result of the change of political system in 1989, a re-evaluation of memories and personal histories is taking place. The children of the convicts, depending on their psychological and social capacities, have largely come to terms with the traumas that they had endured. Their experiences have turned into remembrance and their personal tragedy into memories that influence their day-to-day actions and the attitudes that they pass on to the future generation. Thus the personally experienced past has become part of the collective remembrance and of the recent history of Hungary.



XXIV.


Rákóczi
vitéze.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE INTERVIEWEES

József Andi was born on 18 March 1946. After completing elementary school he was unable to continue his education. In 1960 he found work in a Budapest cloth factory. He was not conscripted into the army. He wanted to further his education by attending evening classes at technical school but was not permitted to do so. He worked in a factory until 1968, after which he became a lorry driver. He married in 1965. His wife was also a factory worker. He divorced in 1982. He has two daughters from this marriage. He remarried in 1992 and his second wife works as a secretary. Between 1989 and 1997 he was a member of the Alliance of Free Democrats, and between 1990 and 1994 he was a member of a local council in Budapest. He regularly visited plot 301 with his mother and brothers, and, as a result, was even beaten up by the police at the beginning of the 1960s.

His father, József Andi, was born in 1924, in Pusztahencs, to a family of agricultural workers. After completing six grades of school he became a domestic servant then volunteered as a soldier. From 1946 he was a laboratory technician. In 1950 he applied to serve in the People's Army and after completing officers' school he became an officer in 1952. Prior to the revolution he served with an air corps in Budapest. On 2 November 1956 he joined the revolutionary National Guard in Csepel and led one of the units. He and his men blew up the roads leading to the centre of Budapest. After the crushing of the revolution he was demoted to the reserves and worked as a machine operator until 6 May 1957, when he was arrested. On 14 December 1957 the Military Court of Budapest sentenced him to death for leading conspiracy and damaging social property. On 4 March 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 6 March 1958. The family did not have the body exhumed and his remains rest in plot 301. In 1994 his son Károly carved a wooden grave-marker for the grave.

His mother, Ilona Tripsánszki, was born in 1921 in Nyírbátor to a family of artisans. In the 1950s she was an office worker at the Ministry of Defence, then a housewife. After her husband's arrest she was only able to obtain jobs that involved hard, physical work. She later became a stock clerk.

His brother Károly (b. 1950) completed secondary school and works as a self-employed fitter and tiler. His other brother, Attila (b. 1953), completed college and is a department head at a transportation company.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Mária Bali (Mrs Ivanov) was born on 30 July 1951 in Budapest. She suffered from infantile paralysis and spent many years in hospital. She trained as a porcelain painter. In 1973 she got married in Bulgaria. She works in Sofia at the Hungarian Embassy. Her husband is an economist and they have one son.

Her father, Sándor Bali, was born in 1923 in Újdombóvár to a family of day labourers. After completing six grades of school he became a farm worker. From 1946 he worked for the Standard Electricity Company as a tool fitter. On several occasions he was rewarded as a Stakhanovite [a worker who regularly surpassed production quotas and was specially honoured]. From 1946 he was a member of the Communist Party. In 1956 he was elected president of the company's workers' council. He was one of the founders and leading figures of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest. As a workers' representative, he negotiated on several occasions with the Kádár government. On 11 December 1956 he was arrested in the Parliament, then on 16 December, following a protest by Budapest workers, he was released. On 13 March 1957 he was rearrested. On 27 March 1958 the Municipal Court sentenced him to twelve years in prison for conspiracy. On 24 November 1958 the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was released in 1963 and found work as a fitter. As a result of illness contracted in prison, he died in 1982 after several months of hospital treatment. Almost four hundred people attended his funeral, among them several former political convicts.

Her mother, Mária Szorcsik, was born in 1927 in Budapest. She worked as a milliner until her marriage, after which she became a housewife. In November 1956 she became a factory worker. In spring 1957 she publicly opposed a speaker at a factory meeting who condemned the revolution, as a result of which she was dismissed from her job and had great difficulty finding employment. Following her husband's arrest, the family was moved into temporary accommodation.

After completing secondary school, her brother Sándor (1950-1983) worked as a driver. He died of leukaemia.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Margit Batonai (Mrs László Fülöp) was born on 18 May 1949 in Szekszárd. She grew up in Budapest. She worked as a shoemaker, then as a home-worker in occupational rehabilitation. Her husband was a painter and decorator. He died in 1996. She has one son and one daughter.

Her father, László Batonai, was born in 1927 in Cegléd, the son of a cattle dealer. He began training as a stonemason but did not complete his course. He worked as an unskilled labourer and farm worker. He was interned in May 1945. In 1948 he was conscripted. From 1950 he was employed as an unskilled worker and was a member of the Hungarian Workers' Party. On 1 November 1956, along with his younger brother István, he applied to join the revolutionary National Guard. Until 4 November they manned a checkpoint on the road to Lake Balaton. In early November they found two machine guns, which they hid. They were both arrested on 14 January 1957. On 22 January 1957, after a summary trial, the Military Court of Budapest sentenced them to death for concealing weapons and ammunition. They were executed on 5 February. At the request of his family, the remains of László Batonai were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Judit Kovács, was born in 1929 in Decs to a farming family. She was an unskilled factory worker. After her husband's arrest, her children were supposed to be taken into care but she refused to allow it. She remarried after her children were grown up.

Her sister Judit (1951-1994) was a worker, and her brother László (b. 1952) is a driver.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Zsigmond Bosnyák was born in Budapest on 1 December 1954. Because of financial difficulties his parents were unable to live together. Following his father's arrest, he and his mother lived with his paternal grandparents. He worked as a qualified lathe operator, then as a deliverer. He was conscripted in 1975. In 1993 he became a security guard but was dismissed in 1994.

His father, Gábor Bosnyák, was born in 1930 in Mezőtúr, the son of unskilled workers. He was a farm labourer, then from 1945 he was employed in Budapest as an unskilled worker. In 1950 he was conscripted into the army where he continued to serve as a non-commissioned officer. On 7 September 1955 he was discharged at his own request and became a worker. Between 23 October and 4 November 1956 he was a revolutionary squad-leader. He took part in the siege of the Hungarian Radio and the fighting in Corvin köz, and was then ordered with his unit to defend the editorial offices of the newspaper *Szabad Nép*. From early 1957 he worked in Jósvafő. He was arrested on 28 May 1957. On 21 October the Municipal Court sentenced him to twenty years in prison for conspiracy and robbery. On 21 April 1958 the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty. He was executed on 24 April 1958. At the request of his family, his remains were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in plot 301.

His mother, Ida Silye, was born in 1926 in Jósvafő, the child of day labourers. She worked on the land rented by her family. From 1948 in Miskolc, then from 1950 in Budapest, she worked as a domestic help. She married in 1954 and in early 1957 they moved in with her parents in Jósvafő. Following her husband's arrest, she returned to Budapest with her son. Until her retirement she worked in various sweet factories as an unskilled labourer. The family regularly visit plot 301.

The interviews with Zsigmond Bosnyák and Mrs Gábor Bosnyák were conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Balázs Bősze was born on 31 December 1946 in Sopron. He applied to study Hungarian literature and librarianship at Budapest University but was rejected because he had attended the Franciscan secondary school in Esztergom. He worked as a supervisor in an institute for handicapped children, and was then employed by a petrol company in various towns. Later he became a stock clerk in an industrial co-operative in Sopron. He became an active member of the Communist Youth Association and led an art club in his home town. In the late 1970s he joined the Communist Party. In 1990 he obtained a technical qualification. In 1994 he earned a degree from the Sopron branch of the Theological College of Győr. From 1992 he worked as an RE teacher at an elementary school, then in a Protestant lyceum and secondary school. His poems have appeared in various anthologies, and in one joint and two individual volumes. He married in 1980. His wife is a trained nurse and they have three children.

His father, Gábor Bősze, was born in 1901 in Sopron to a family of workers. He completed studies at a school of trade and commerce. He began work in Sopron as a traffic manager for a railway company, then qualified as a railway officer. During the Second World War he was a station manager, then in the 1950s he was a supervisor for the railway company's trade department. He had a strong religious faith and was therefore unwilling to join the party, as a result of which he was demoted. In November and

December 1956 he took part in distributing the gifts sent by Austrian railway workers. In 1957—probably on the basis of individual revenge—he was arrested and interned. One year later he was released. His workplace would not take him back and he was pensioned off. Then, under his wife's name, he worked on the market as a weigher and collector of stall rent. He was a member of the Sopron Catholic Society. During his internment his health seriously deteriorated. He died in 1967.

His mother, Terézia Mészáros, was born in 1905 in Sopron to a family of railway workers. She completed elementary school. She was a housewife, then from 1958 took a job. She died in 1984.

His sister Klára (b. 1932) graduated in history and librarianship from Budapest University. His brother Gábor (b. 1934) emigrated in November 1956 and works as a photographer in Austria.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Margit Brusznyai was born on 18 June 1954 in Vác. She lived first in Veszprém, then after the revolution in Vác. She graduated in 1977 as a choir leader and music teacher from the Academy of Music. She was a singing teacher at a secondary school in Vác, then worked in the music department of the municipal library. Since 1987 she has taught at the Vác music school and leads several choirs. She married in 1974. Her husband is a housing officer in Vác and was on the local council as a representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats. They have two daughters.

Her father, Árpád Brusznyai, was born in 1924 in Derekegyháza. In 1949 he graduated in Ancient Greek, Latin and history. In 1950 he was awarded a doctorate. He worked at the Institute of Classics and Philology, but in 1951, when his brother, a Catholic priest, was interned, he too was dismissed from his workplace. For a while he taught Latin and Greek at the Vác seminary, as well as music and singing. From 1952 he taught at a secondary school in Veszprém. During the revolution he was president of the revolutionary council of Veszprém county. In his speeches he always stressed the importance of discipline and the maintaining of order. He prevented aggression on several occasions. He issued a decree on the partial distribution of land from agricultural co-operatives and the return of land collectivised by force. He had the assets of the Young Workers' Association and the Hungarian Workers' Party frozen. He was arrested on 25 April 1957. On 19 October 1957 he was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Military Court of Győr on a charge of conspiracy. On 7 January 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty. This was partly due to a letter written by the party secretary of Veszprém county and the head of the administrative department, in which they demanded a more severe sentence. He was executed on 9 January 1958. At the request of his family, his remains were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Ilona Honti, was born in 1930 in Budapest. Her father was an army officer and later a cantor. She qualified as a laboratory assistant. She married in 1953. After the revolution she lived with her parents in Vác. After her husband's execution she was dismissed from the secondary school where she worked as a catering director. She obtained work at the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. From 1981 she was a housekeeper for a Catholic priest.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi and Adrienne Molnár.

László Donáth was born on 5 December 1955 in Budapest. When his family was deported to Romania, he lost the sight in one of his eyes as a result of illness. Between

1974 and 1979 he attended the Lutheran Theological Academy. In 1985 and 1986 he taught Judaic studies and theological ethics at the University of Heidelberg. From 1979 in Budapest, and between 1981 and 1985 in Borsod county, he was a Lutheran deacon, and from 1988 he was a Lutheran minister in Budapest. From 1994 he was a parliamentary representative. As an independent he belonged to the parliamentary faction of the Hungarian Socialist Party and was a member of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights, Minority and Religious Affairs. His wife is a teacher and librarian. They have two daughters and a son.

His father, Ferenc Donáth, was born in 1913 in Jászárokszállás to a family of intellectuals. From 1930 he was a law student in Budapest. He was a member of the Communist Student Movement and the illegal Hungarian Communist Party. In 1937 he was one of the organisers of the March Front**,** a democratic political group formed in the second half of the 1930s with the participation of writers inspired by folk traditions and anti-fascist groups. Their demands included land reform and democratic policy. In 1939 he was present at the founding meeting of the National Peasants' Party. In spring 1940 he was arrested and conscripted into a non-combatant labour corps. In spring 1942 he was discharged suffering from a pulmonary haemorrhage. He took part in the resistance and was one of the leaders of the Hungarian Front, an anti-fascist alliance of Hungarian democratic parties, formed in May 1944. From March 1945 he was involved in the carrying out of land reform as secretary of state at the Ministry of Agriculture. He was a member of the Central Executive of the Hungarian Communist Party and a member of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party. He was arrested on 15 February 1951 and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. After his release in 1954 he was assistant director of the Institute of Economic Sciences. In 1956 he joined the party opposition led by Imre Nagy. On the night of 23 October 1956 he was elected—in his absence—as secretary of the Central Executive of the Hungarian Workers' Party, but on 24 October he resigned, along with Géza Losonczy, because he did not agree with the executive's assessment of the revolution and the armed intervention. On 1 November, as a member of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Temporary Executive Committee, he played a role in organising the party. On 4 November he fled to the Yugoslav Embassy along with his family, from where, on 22 November, they were deported to Romania. On 15 June 1958, as an accused of the second order in the Imre Nagy trial, the Supreme Court sentenced him to twelve years imprisonment for leading conspiracy. He was released as a result of an individual amnesty in April 1960. After this he was involved in economic issues and agrarian history. From the 1970s he was a highly respected personality in the emerging opposition. In 1979 he was president of the editorial board of the *Bibó Festschrift*. In 1985 he organised an opposition conference. He died in 1986.

His mother, Éva Bozóky, was born in Budapest in 1923 to a family of intellectuals who had moved there from Transylvania. In 1950 she obtained a teaching degree in Budapest and became a journalist. She married in 1949. In 1951 she was arrested along with her husband and released in 1954. Their third child was born during their internment in Romania. After their return she worked as a librarian, journalist and Lutheran preacher.

His brother Mátyás (b. 1950) is a horticulturist, and his brother Ferenc (b. 1956) is a doctor.

The interview was conducted by István Javorniczky.

Imre Farkas was born on 21 July 1956 in Budapest. After his father's execution he was brought up by his maternal grandparents in Kisar. He returned to live with his mother at the age of fourteen. In 1973 he qualified as a lathe operator. From October 1974 he worked for half a year in East Germany. After this he was a pump operator in Százhalombatta, then worked as a loader in Budapest. From August 1977 he worked in the oil refinery in Százhalombatta. In 1979 he was conscripted into the army. He married in 1985. His wife is of Polish origin and teaches German at a secondary school. They have one son.

His father, Imre Farkas, was born in 1929 in Budapest to a family of workers. After the war he spent two years as an apprentice to a tinsmith, then worked alongside his father. In 1949 he joined the police but after one year was discharged for health reasons. He worked for three years in an iron and metal works, then as a tinsmith. He was caught up in the events of 1956 by accident. On 26 October 1956 he went on personal business to the police station, where the officers of the then occupied headquarters were being disarmed. One of them lent him his pistol, which he returned the next day. He got into a van heading towards his flat. The van was full of armed men who were intending to arrest the president of the local council, whom they accused of shooting a revolutionary on 24 October. While searching for him they caught sight of András Bordás, a well-known Stakhanovite, and they chased after him. One of the men, József Nagy, shot at random and killed Bordás. At the trial several witnesses stated that Imre Farkas had attempted to stop Nagy from shooting. On 19 March 1957 he was arrested, and on 14 June 1957 the Municipal Court sentenced him to death for conspiracy and murder. The Supreme Court qualified his action as voluntary manslaughter rather than murder and commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. The public prosecutor appealed against the sentence, and on 20 February 1958 the Supreme Court restored the original sentence. He was executed on 28 February 1958. His body was not exhumed and his remains rest in plot 301.

His mother, Sára Eszenyi, was born in 1926 in Kisar to a farming family. After completing elementary school she worked as a clerk. After her husband's execution she remained in Budapest with her daughter and got a job in a cloth factory.

His sister (b. 1953) studied at evening school to become a nursery-school teacher.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Zsolt Fekete was born on 11 August 1948 in Sopron. In 1951 he moved with his family to Miskolctapolca, then in late 1958 to Budapest. At his parents' insistence, after leaving secondary school he began studying chemical engineering at the Budapest Technical University but he did not complete his course. After working at Lake Balaton he continued his studies for half a year at the Technical University. Eventually he graduated in 1974 from the College of Catering in Szeged. He worked in Budapest for a food company as a technician, then as works manager. He left the job in 1979. After this he was a newspaper vendor, a cleaner, and a group manager in his brother's cleaning company. He married in 1975. His wife was a shorthand typist. They divorced in 1978. Since 1993 he has been unemployed and lives with his parents.

His father, László Fekete, was born in 1918 in Csősztelek (Romania), the son of a farm steward. After his father's death in the 1930s the family settled in Hungary. He graduated from the Ludovika Military Academy and became a lieutenant in 1940. He took part in the military operation to recapture Transylvania for Hungary, then served on the Eastern Front. At the end of the Second World War he was discharged due to ill

health, after which he continued his studies in metallurgical engineering at Sopron University. In 1946 he joined the Social Democratic Party, but when it amalgamated with the Communist Party he was expelled. He obtained his degree in 1949 and became a university lecturer, then, when the university was reorganised in 1951, he moved to the Technical University in Miskolc. In 1956 he represented the student body in the university's student parliament and became the vice-president of the workers' council of Borsod county. On 5 November 1956 he was taken, against his will, to Uzgorod (Ukraine), from where he returned on 30 November. He was arrested on 20 February 1957. On 20 January 1958 the Borsod County Court sentenced him to one year in prison for participation in a movement to overthrow the democratic state order and for provocation. After his appeal the Supreme Court annulled the sentence. After his release in 1958 he worked in the Institute of Metallurgical Research in Budapest, where he remained until his retirement in 1978.

His mother, Mária Kovács, was born in Sopron to a family of railway workers. She completed secondary school and was employed as an office worker. In Sopron she worked in public administration. From 1951 she worked at the University of Miskolc. From 1958 she worked in a refrigerator factory in Budapest and at the Budapest Technical University.

His brother Andor (b. 1947) obtained a degree in forestry engineering from the University of Forestry in Sopron. He was an entrepreneur, then a landscape gardener.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

György Fenyőfalvi was born on 9 February 1954 in Budakeszi. After leaving secondary school he was not admitted to university and found work with a construction company. From autumn 1973 he worked for the Social Security Office. From February 1975 he did two years military service. He graduated in social insurance studies. He works as a tax advisor and accountant. At the time of the interview he was deputy manager of Social Security and was a correspondence student in law. He is divorced and is bringing up his son from his first marriage. His second wife graduated from college. They have one son.

His father, Antal Fenyőfalvi, was born in 1919 in Szolnok to a family of railway workers. He studied law for two years, then passed four special exams for railway workers. From 1939 he worked for the Hungarian State Railways in various positions, mostly in the east of the country, and from September 1945 he worked at a railway station in Budapest. In 1945 he joined the Social Democratic Party but took part in no political activities. In 1956 the workers' council at the railway station elected him as station manager. His tasks included ensuring the smooth operation of railway traffic and the functioning of the nation-wide telephone network. He also participated in organising the food supply for railway workers, the public, and hospitals. On 8 March 1957 he was arrested. On 31 October 1957 the Budapest Military Court sentenced him to ten years in prison for negligence in the handling of public assets and active participation in the overthrowing of the democratic state order. On 3 February 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was released in 1963. With the help of former fellow prisoners he bought land on which he and his family grew fruit. He was employed by a construction company in an administrative post. He played an important role in the work of the Committee of Social Justice. His health was seriously damaged by his time in prison and he died in 1993.

His mother, Anna Szmozsanicza, was born in 1920 in Újdávidháza (Ukraine) into a farming family. She completed secondary school and was a clerk for the Hungarian

State Railways. She married in 1942. After her husband's arrest she could only get menial jobs. She later worked as a seamstress.

His brother István died during the war due to lack of medical treatment. Following the arrest of their father, police proceedings were launched against Antal (b. 1942) for concealing firearms, but no charges were pressed. They tried to prevent him from continuing his studies but he was eventually admitted to the Franciscan secondary school in Szentendre. Their poor financial situation meant that he had to abandon his studies in the third grade and he worked as an unskilled labourer for years. He completed secondary school and college studies at evening classes and became a works manager. Henriett (b. 1946) completed secondary school in Szentendre. She is a draftsperson and has lived in Germany since 1971.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

László Földes was born on 15 September 1952 in Budapest. After his father's execution he was taken into care. Five years later his mother removed him from the institution after their housing situation was settled. After completing elementary school he was employed in several workplaces as an unskilled worker. From 1976 he was a propertyman in a Budapest theatre. In the 1970s and 1980s he had links with the democratic opposition. He married in 1993. His wife is an arts graduate and they have one son and one daughter.

His father, Gábor Földes, was born in 1923 in Budapest, the child of restaurateurs. After graduating from theatre school he became the director of a Budapest theatre. From 1950 he was director of the Kisfaludy Theatre in Győr, and between 1951 and 1957 its artistic director. In 1945 he joined the Communist Party. From 1953 he was a follower of Imre Nagy's reform policy. On 23 October 1956 he established the Petőfi Circle in Győr, of which he became president. On 25 October 1956 he delivered a speech in support of the policy of Imre Nagy and Hungary's sovereignty. On 26 October he was elected president of the council of Győr intellectuals, then went to Mosonmagyaróvár to calm the lynch atmosphere created by the fusillade in front of the border patrol's barracks. He saved three officers from being lynched. On 27 October he was entrusted with the political supervision of the transmissions of Győr Radio. After 4 November he tried to keep the spirit of 1956 alive with articles in the newspaper *Hazánk* (Our country) and at various cultural events. After 20 November he was arrested three times, and each time released. On 3 May 1957 he was arrested for a fourth time. On 10 June 1957 the Győr County Court sentenced him to death on the charges of leading conspiracy and murder. On 21 December 1957 the Military College of the Supreme Court acquitted him of murder but confirmed the previous sentence. The presidium refused his appeal for clemency and he was executed on 15 January 1958. His body was buried secretly in the prison cemetery in Sopronkőhida. His remains were exhumed in 1990, and in 1991 they were laid to rest in plot 300 of the public cemetery in Rákoskeresztúr.

His mother, Irma Ungvári, was born in 1931 in Hidvég (Romania) to a working-class family. In 1941 they moved to Budapest. From 1952 she worked at a Budapest theatre, then at the Kisfaludy Theatre in Győr. With the help of former colleagues and friends she was given jobs at various Budapest theatres following her husband's execution. From 1963 she was a hairdresser at a Budapest theatre. At the end of 1988, along with relatives of men accused with her husband, she initiated the search for the graves of the executed convicts and the demand for the exhumation of their remains.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Katalin Földesi (Mrs Béla Síkhegyi) was born on 24 November 1953 in Esztergom. Before the revolution her father moved to Szeged and her mother moved to Kübekháza with her and her brother. She studied economics at vocational secondary school. Due to their difficult financial situation she was unable to continue her studies. She found work at the National Savings Bank and completed several professional training courses. At the time of the interview, she was an operations supervisor and deputy group leader. She married in 1976 but later divorced. Her ex-husband is a carpenter. She has one son and one daughter.

Her father, Tibor Földesi, was born in 1923 in Szeged, the son of a gardener. After completing elementary school he studied at trade school. In November 1944 he was conscripted into the army. In Germany he became a Soviet prisoner of war and returned home in August 1945. He was employed as a skilled worker, then trained as an electrician and radio technician. He worked at an aeroplane and machine tool factory in Esztergom and later became director of the electricians' division in an industrial cooperative in Szeged. In 1956 he was a member of the presidium of the Szeged Revolutionary Committee. His task was to supervise the financial affairs of the State Security Office, where he brought to light various abuses. He had radio transmitters dismantled that had been functioning to disturb Western radio broadcasts, and provided the committee with one large-output and one small-output radio transmitter. At the same time, in order to prevent atrocities he hid in his flat the former governor of the Szeged prison. On 4 November he delivered firearms for the revolutionaries from the border guards at Röszke for protection against the Russians. Later he helped in collecting back the weapons. On 23 November he fled to Austria, and from there to West Germany. There he got in touch with an emigrant organisation, which requested him to make a report on the Soviet military forces in Hungary. He returned to Hungary in December but was unable to accomplish his task because he was wanted by the police. He therefore returned to Germany. On 24 March 1957 he was arrested while crossing the border once again. On 2 November 1957 the Military Court of Szeged sentenced him to fifteen years in prison for leading conspiracy and on other charges. On 30 January 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty. He was executed the following day. His family did not request the exhumation of his body and his remains rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Katalin Haág, was born in 1929 in Kübekháza to a family of workers. She completed six grades of school and worked as a shop assistant in Esztergom and Kübekháza. Her parents helped her a great deal when the family was left without a father.

Her brother Tibor (b. 1950) trained as a carpenter, then completed his secondary-school studies at evening classes. He found work at the prison in Szeged. After completing college he became a prison education officer.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Magdolna Földvári (Mrs Péter Felkei) was born on 2 March 1950 in Budapest. Between 1954 and 1957 she lived in Miskolc with her parents and grandparents, who supported the family throughout. In 1968 she completed secondary school in Budapest. Her secondary school did not support her application to further her studies. From 1968 she worked for Hungarocamion, and from 1991 for other transportation companies, as a business sales person. She obtained a language qualification and completed various professional training courses. She married in 1975 and divorced in 1980. Her ex-husband is a lorry driver. She has one son.

Her father, Rudolf Földvári, was born in Budapest in 1921 to a family of workers. After completing elementary school he became an errand boy and trained labourer. From 1940 he was a mechanic and assistant works manager. He joined the trade union movement while still an apprentice. In 1942 he was a soldier and was made a prisoner of war after being captured by the Soviets. He was released in 1945. He joined the Communist Party. From 1948 he was head of the propaganda department of the National Trade Unions Council, then deputy leader of the cadre department of the Hungarian Workers' Party. From 1952 he was first secretary of the Budapest Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, a member of the Budapest council and a member of the Central Executive and the Politburo of the Hungarian Workers' Party. Between 1953 and 1957 he was a member of Parliament. In March 1953 he was a member of the delegation that represented Hungary at the funeral of Stalin. Between 13 and 16 June he participated in negotiations between the Soviet and Hungarian party delegations in Moscow. Because of his criticism of the work of the Central Executive, and of Rákosi himself [the head of the Communist Party], he was moved to the provinces in 1954. Until autumn 1956 he was first secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. On 24 October 1956 he declared his support for the workers' council of Miskolc. He became a member of the county workers' council and on two occasions he led a delegation to Budapest to talk with the government. On 5 November the Soviets took him to Ungvár, from where he returned home on 17 November. Until mid-December he was chairman of the county workers' council, then until March 1957 he was chairman of the county council. He then left Miskolc and became a mechanic in the Red Star Tractor Factory in Budapest. On 15 March 1957 he was expelled from the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. He was arrested in May 1957. On 18 July 1958 he was given a life sentence by the Supreme Court for leading conspiracy, with no possibility of appeal. In 1961 he was released after an individual amnesty. He returned to his former workplace as a mechanic and then became a technical supervisor. He has translated several technical books. He retired in 1981. At his initiative, a society of members of 1956 workers' councils of Borsod county was founded in 1990, and since 1992 he has been a member of the Imre Nagy Society.

Her mother, Magdolna Szekula, was born in 1920 in Budapest to a family of workers. After completing elementary school she was unable to further her studies. She worked as a seamstress and later as an administrative assistant. Following her husband's arrest she returned to manual work. She retired in 1975.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Kinga Göncz was born on 8 November 1947 in Budapest. She graduated in Szeged in 1972. From 1972 she worked in various hospitals as a psychiatrist. Since 1991 she has been a university lecturer in Budapest. Since 1994 she has also been director of the Partners Hungary Foundation. Her husband is also a psychiatrist and they have two children.

Her father, Árpád Göncz, was born in 1922 in Budapest to a family of intellectuals. He gained a law degree in 1944. In February 1944 he was conscripted into the army but in 1945 he escaped from his unit, which had been ordered to Germany. He participated in the resistance. He was captured several times by the Soviets, but on every occasion he managed to escape. From 1945 he was a member of the Smallholders' Party. Between 1946 and 1948 he was secretary to the party's parliamentary faction and the personal secretary of Béla Kovács, the party's first secretary. After the dissolution of

the party in 1948 he worked as an unskilled labourer, as a welder and fitter. Between 1951 and 1956 he was a soil protection technician, then an agronomist. During the revolution he was active in the Hungarian Peasants' Association. Following 4 November he took part in writing the memoranda of the Hungarian Democratic Independence Movement (a cover organisation for the intellectual resistance that followed the defeat of the revolution) and in forwarding the documents to the Indian Embassy. In February 1957 he helped to forward abroad the only existing manuscript of Imre Nagy's writings from 1955 and 1956. He was arrested in May 1957. On 2 August 1958 the Supreme Court sentenced him to life imprisonment for leading conspiracy and for treachery, without the possibility of appeal. In April 1960 he participated in the hunger strike by prisoners in the Vác national prison. He was released as a result of an individual amnesty in 1963. He worked as a technical translator, then in 1964 for an agricultural company. He attempted to complete the studies he had begun before his arrest at the University of Agriculture in Gödöllő but was not readmitted. From 1965 he was a freelance writer and translator. From the beginning of the 1980s, he took an active role in preserving the memory of the revolution and in investigating the historical truth. He was a founding member of the Network of Free Initiatives (the first organisation of the democratic opposition, from which the Alliance of Free Democrats was born) and between 1988 and 1989 he was the party's chargé d'affaires. Between 1989 and 1990 he was a member of the party's national executive. He was a founding member of the Committee for Historical Justice and was later its vice-president. In 1989 and 1990 he was president of the Hungarian Writers' Association and was then made its honorary president. From May 1990 he was a parliamentary representative. Between May and August 1990 he was president of the National Assembly. From August 1990 until August 2000 he was president of the Hungarian Republic.

Her mother, Mária Göntér, was born in 1923 in Győr to a family of intellectuals. In 1944 she completed training as a social worker at the University of Economics. She married in 1947. Between 1945 and 1952 she was a social worker. After 1956 she worked first as an unskilled worker then as an office worker.

Her brother Benedek (b. 1951) is a civil engineer, her sister Annamária (b. 1954) is a horticulturist, and her brother Dániel (b. 1956) is a psychiatrist.

The interview was conducted by István Javorniczky.

Anikó Gulyás was born on 25 June 1947 in Balatonszepezd. The family lived in the village of Levél, then, after her father's arrest, in Lébény. In 1965 she completed secondary-school studies in Mosonmagyaróvár. For more than ten years she was employed as an office worker in Lébény and Győr. In 1992 she qualified as an accountant and began to work for a company. She married in 1974 and was divorced in 1983. She has one daughter. She married again in 1984. Her second husband is a chauffeur. In late 1988, along with relatives of her father's fellow convicts, she initiated the search for the graves of the executed and the demand for the exhumation of their remains.

Her father, Lajos Gulyás, was born in 1918 in Kisújfalu (Slovakia) to a farming family. He began studying at theological college in Losonc, Slovakia, and after 1938, when territories in which ethnic Hungarians were living were reannexed to Hungary, he completed his studies in Pápa, Hungary. From 1942 he was a priest, first in Gellér then in Balatonszepezd. In November 1944 the Hungarian fascists interned him for taking part in the resistance. In 1947 he was chosen as a candidate for election to Parliament by the Smallholders' Party in Zala county. In 1948 he was offered a vacant seat

but resigned his candidacy. From 1948 he worked as a priest in Levél. In 1956 the family obtained a passport for emigration to Czechoslovakia, where they had inherited a small estate. However, they were not permitted to settle there. He arrived back in Levél on 25 October 1956. The next day, following the shootings in Mosonmagyaróvár, he risked personal injury in order to save one of the officers at the border patrol's barracks. He then delivered a speech in which he upheld the importance of the rule of law. On 27 October he took part in the election of the national committee in his village but he himself held no position. On 3 November he was elected as a member of the district national committee, and on 10 November he was elected onto its executive committee. He was arrested on 5 February 1957. On 10 June 1957 the Győr County Court sentenced him to death for leading conspiracy and inciting to murder. On 21 December 1957 the Military College of the Supreme Court amended the charges to those of leading conspiracy and treachery and confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 31 December 1957. His body was buried in secret in the prison cemetery in Sopronkőhida. At the request of his family his remains were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in Levél.

Her mother, Gabriella Puskás, was born in 1918 in Nagydiószeg (Slovakia) to a family of railway workers. She was a teacher, but for a long time was employed as an office worker. In 1957 she was transferred from the school in Levél to Lébény. She died in 1987.

Her sister Ildikó (b. 1944) was not permitted to continue her studies at secondary school, so she took a two-year typing and shorthand course. She completed her secondary-school studies at evening classes in 1966. She was admitted to the medical university in Szeged but the Ministry of Health later reversed this decision. She and her husband moved to Kékestető. In April 1969 they travelled to Vienna and after a few months emigrated to West Germany where she studied medicine at university. Her sister Csilla (b. 1945) was admitted to the secondary school in Győr only in 1960, after beginning the second year of a two-year typing and shorthand course. In 1964 she applied to the nursing training college in Sopron, but her application was turned down. After this she completed training in healthcare in Győr and then worked in nurseries in Lébény and Győr.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Patrícia Kállay was born on 27 August 1950 in Szeged. Since her mother did not take care of her, her father placed her in the care of his future wife, Lívia Rátz, in the autumn of 1961. Between 1964 and 1967 she lived in a children's home. As a result of illness she dropped out of healthcare studies at vocational school and worked as an ancillary nurse. Following this she studied at a vocational school to be a turner, then a shoemaker, but for health reasons was unable to complete her training. After 1968 she was a nurse, an office worker, and later a trained worker. She has three sons from two unsuccessful marriages. Her third husband is an accountant. Both of them were given early retirement. They made a hard living doing casual work in Dávod. Later they moved to Budapest. She was a founding member of the Alliance of Free Democrats and the founder of this party's branch in Dávod.

Her father, István Kállay, was born in 1914 in Vác. His father was employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his mother was a teacher. He gained a degree in teaching typing and shorthand. He worked as a journalist in Transylvania, then during the war he was a correspondent in the Ukraine. After 1945 he taught in his own school until the nationalisation of all private enterprises. Later he was unable to find work that matched his qualifications. He was a member of the Smallholders' Party and was head

of the party's Szeged bureau. From 1953 he lived in Budapest with his family. He worked as a stage-hand at the Madách Theatre, then as a pump operator for the company that constructed the underground. In November 1956, at the request of his friend Géza Tözsök, he typed revolutionary leaflets and hid two pistols in his cellar. He was arrested on 12 March 1957. On 7 September 1957 the Budapest Court sentenced him to five years in prison for incitement against the state order of the People's Democracy and for concealing weapons and ammunition. After his release in 1961 he worked as an unskilled labourer then as a warehouse worker. He died in 1991.

Her mother, Rozália Búza, was born in 1929 in Tótkomlós into a farming family. Until 1957 she was a housewife, then following her husband's arrest she was an office worker. Her marriage quickly deteriorated and the children were looked after by their father.

Her sister Írisz (b. 1954) completed secondary school.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Sándor K. Keresztes was born on 31 August 1944 in Kolozsvár and was brought up in Budafok. In 1958, despite his excellent grades his elementary school did not support the furthering of his studies in a church-run secondary school. Eventually, after protests by his father who had just been released from internment, he was given the required support and attended the Piarist secondary school until 1962. Between 1964 and 1969 he attended the Budapest Technical University. In 1969 he gained a degree in civil engineering and in 1976 a degree in urban planning. Between 1969 and 1974 he worked in Győr as an architect, then until 1986 he worked for the construction department of the Győr city council. After this he was director of the urban planning department of the Northern Transdanubia Planning Company. In 1990 he was the government supervisor of the Bős-Nagymaros dam. From 1990 to 1993 he was minister for environmental protection and water. Since 1995 he has been chief architect of Northern Transdanubia. In the 1980s he participated in oppositional organisations and spread samizdat publications. He was one of the founders of the National Association of Large Families, and its president from 1988 to 1989. He was one of the founding members of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. From 1989 he was a member of the party's national executive and from 1989 to 1990 its vice-president. Between 1990 and 1994 he was a parliamentary representative. He married in 1969. His wife is a civil engineer and they have three children.

His father, Sándor Keresztes, was born in 1919 in Magyarókerek (Romania). His ancestors were Szekler noblemen. Between 1939 and 1943 he studied law in Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania). He participated in the work of the Hungarian National Community [a cultural and interest-protection organisation for Hungarians in Transylvania] and supported the Catholic social movements. After graduation he worked in the administration and as an assistant editor of the journal *Új Erdély* (New Translyvania). In the autumn of 1944 he moved to Budafok, to his wife's parents, to escape the approaching war front. He found work in the civil service department of the Ministry of the Interior. Following the fascist take-over, he was arrested. At the end of 1944 he participated in the organisation of the Democratic People's Party, which was then illegal. Between 1946 and 1949 he was a member of the party's executive committee. From 1947 he was a representative in the National Assembly and was secretary of the Democratic People's Party's parliamentary faction. In the summer of 1948 he was illegally deprived of his mandate and withdrew from public life. After losing his job he supported his family by

making stockings. From 1950 he was a money collector and stoker at a Catholic weekly. In 1953 he established an organisation that helped to find work opportunities for monks. Between 1953 and 1960 he was under police supervision. In 1956 he participated in the reorganisation of the Democratic People's Party. He played a role in establishing the party's organisation in Budafok. Between July and October 1957 he was interned in Kistarcsa. In 1962 he gained a law degree. Between 1963 and 1989 he was a legal expert for the St. Stephen Society [a society to promote Catholic science, literature and publishing]. He retired officially in 1980. In 1989 he was president of the organising committee of the Christian Democratic People's Party. Between 1989 and 1990 he was president of the party. Between 1990 and 1997 he was the party's honorary president. In 1990 and between 1994 and 1998 he was a parliamentary representative. Between 1990 and 1994 he was ambassador to the Vatican.

His mother, Erzsébet Rácz, was born in 1923 in Budafok. After completing nursing training she studied in Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania) to become a social worker. She married in 1943. From 1944 she and her family lived with her parents in Budafok. Her parents continued to support them for many years. Besides bringing up their eight children she worked as a stocking maker and nurse.

All seven of his siblings attended church-run secondary schools. Four of them obtained university degrees and three gained technical qualifications.

The interview was conducted by István Javorniczky.

Valéria Kolompár was born in 1954 in Kiskunmajsa. She did not attend school but worked as a trained labourer in a canning factory. After long illness and several operations she was given early retirement. Her husband, who was a driver, died in an accident. She has one daughter. **Erzsébet Kolompár** was born in 1957. She completed five grades of elementary school and works as a trained labourer. She lives in Kiskundorozsma with her sister. They received no compensation.

Their father, Mátyás Kolompár, was born in 1924 in Kiskunmajsa. He did not attend school. He worked as an unskilled labourer, a day labourer and vagrant artisan. Between 1946 and 1952 he spent several months in prison on three occasions for theft. After his release he worked as an unskilled worker in the construction industry. On 27 October 1956 a protest began at the cattle market in Kiskunmajsa, where crowds demanded the punishment of József Nényi, the former head of the collectivisation office, as well as of the president of the council and the party secretary. Neményi was taken from his home to the council building and was shut in the cellar. Later, Mátyás Kolompár brought him out and the crowd lynched Neményi in front of the building. Mátyás Kolompár was arrested on 26 November 1956. On 22 February 1957 the Kecskemét County Court sentenced him to twelve years in prison for voluntary manslaughter. On 28 September 1957 the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty on the charge of participation in the uprising and murder. He was executed on 10 October 1957. The site of his grave remains unknown.

Their mother, Rozália Kovács, was born in 1923. Four of her six children were born to her first husband. Following the execution of her second husband, the family had to leave Kiskunmajsa. They moved to Kiskundorozsma. She raised money to care for her children by begging and doing casual work. She died in 1980.

Their four siblings worked as casual and trained labourers. Three of them are no longer alive.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

László Kolozsy was born on 13 April 1950 in Ózd. He trained as a smelter. Despite being qualified as an engineering worker, he could only find employment in Ózd as an unskilled labourer, thus he moved first to Putnok then to Kazincbarcika to work. From 1976 he was an engineering worker in Ózd. In the 1980s he qualified as an electrical technician after completing a correspondence course. His wife is a nurse and they have one son and one daughter. In 1989 he appealed for the annulment of his father's sentence. The Supreme Court rejected the appeal in 1990. Then in January 1992, in answer to his request for a re-examination, the annulment was granted.

His father, István Kolozsy, was born in Ózd in 1913 to a family of workers. After completing elementary school he voluntarily joined the army's river patrol. He left the army in 1936 as a buck sergeant. During the war he was drafted for military service on several occasions. In November 1944 he was captured by the Soviets and returned home in November 1948. He worked at the Miskolc law courts until 1951, when he was made redundant. After that he was an office worker in Ózd then an unskilled labourer. After 23 October 1956 he was elected as a member of the factory's workers' council. He participated in the establishment of the local National Guard and on several occasions he did armed duty. On 29 October he participated in the arrest of police captain Zsigmond Cs. Nagy. While they were escorting him to the municipal workers' council several people recognised Nagy and he was lynched. István Kolozsy took no part in this. On 12 September 1958 the Military Court of Debrecen sentenced him to death for conspiracy and murder. On 17 October 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 22 October 1958. He was buried in Miskolc, although the site of his grave remains unknown.

His mother, Lenke Cservenka, was born in 1919 in Korompa (Slovakia) to a family of workers. In the early 1940s she was a dressmaker in Miskolc. In 1943 she married and went to live with her husband's family in Ózd. She worked at the Ózd metallurgical works. During the trial she and her husband divorced at the request of her husband. Later she remarried. She died in 1983.

His brother István (1944-1979) did his last two grades of elementary school in Miskolc, supported by his maternal grandparents. He was not accepted into technical school on the grounds of lack of space, so he trained as a smelter. From 1968 he worked on the construction of the Budapest underground. He died of heart-failure.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Katalin Kósa (Mrs Lajos Szendi) was born on 9 June 1943 in Budapest. After completing elementary school in 1947 she was not permitted to continue her studies. With the help of her relatives she found work as a gardener. In 1959 she was admitted to evening classes at secondary school. On 30 May 1961 she was adopted by József Fekete, her mother's second husband. After completing secondary school she studied at technical college, then taught practical studies at elementary school and completed the technical instructor's course at the Budapest Technical University. She married in 1965. Her husband is an electrical technician and engineer. They have three sons. In 1981 she tried to change her name back to Kósa but was given permission only in 1989. She regularly visited plot 301. After the change of the political system she and her husband joined the Independence Party. She is a member of the National Association of Political Prisoners and president of the Budapest branch of the Alliance of 1956ers.

Her father, Pál Kósa, was born in 1921 in Balatonfüred to a family of artisans. After completing elementary school, he trained to become a carpenter, then worked in

his father's workshop in Budapest. In 1942 he was conscripted into the army. He joined the Hungarian Communist Party. After 1945 he was secretary of agit-prop for a workers' district. He became a member of the Hungarian Workers' Party but was later expelled. Until 1953 he worked in a co-operative, then as an independent artisan. In the summer of 1956 he wrote letters to the government of West Germany and to various German organisations, in which he requested them to ban the Hungarian Communist Party, since it was an agent in the pay of Moscow. In 1956 he was a member of his district's national committee and president of the revolutionary committee. On 4 November he called the population to armed resistance and even obtained weapons and ammunition from a barracks. On 8 November they fought against the Soviet soldiers who had moved into their area of the city. On 11 November the national committee called the district council to negotiate about co-operation, and on 12 November the national committee appeared at the session of the council's executive committee, all of whom were arrested. On 15 March 1959 the Budapest Court sentenced him to death for organising and leading conspiracy, and for damaging public property. On 23 July 1959 the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 5 August 1959. At the request of his family his remains were exhumed in 1989 and laid to rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Irén Takács, was born in 1926 in a workers' district of Budapest to a family of market traders. After completing elementary school, she worked as a weaver. Before the revolution she was a machinist, then a warehouse worker. After her husband's arrest, her colleagues stood up for her and she was not fired from her workplace. In May 1961 she married one of her husband's friends and in the 1960s they emigrated to Denmark.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Endre Lajtai was born on 10 December 1939 in Budapest. On 26 October 1956 he participated in the march in Mosonmagyaróvár as a secondary-school student. In spite of his excellent grades, his secondary school did not support his application for higher education in 1958. Since he was prohibited from working in Mosonmagyaróvár he moved to his grandparents in Pécs, where he gained a qualification as a lift mechanic and electrician. He worked for the Pécs branch of the Budapest Lift Maintenance Company. In 1964 he was injured in a serious accident at work and after spending half a year in hospital he was moved to the Budapest branch of the company, where, until 1993, he worked as a mechanic and foreman. Meanwhile, in 1973 he completed engineering studies at evening classes at technical school. He married in 1966. His wife is of Polish origin and they have three sons.

His father, János Lajtay, was born in Pécs in 1911 to a family of railway workers. He gained a degree in Szeged, then from 1939 was a chemical engineer at the Institute of Military Technology. During the Second World War he was drafted as a reserve officer. In 1944 he became a prisoner of the Americans and returned home in 1946. In 1948 he moved to Mosonmagyaróvár where he worked as a chemical engineer. During the revolution, the workers' council of the Agricultural Machinery Factory, under his presidency, demoted several former leaders, and until late January 1957 they did not allow a branch of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party to operate within the factory. On 7 March 1957 he was interned in Kistarcsa for six months. After his release he was arrested again. On 14 April 1958 the Győr County Court sentenced him to six years in prison for conspiracy, and the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was released in 1961. Since he was unable to find work in Mosonmagyaróvár he moved to Pécs. He

worked in Komló and Pécs as a fumigator. He was kept under police supervision for many years. He died in 1978.

His mother, Jolán Jáki, was born in Pécsaranyos in 1914 to a family of teachers. After completing secondary school she married and was a housewife. After her husband's arrest she found work as a kitchen-maid.

His sisters Csilla (b. 1944) and Éva (b. 1948) attended secondary school in Pécs and were not prevented from furthering their studies. Csilla studied medicine at university.

The interview was conducted by Fanny Havas.

Katalin Litván was born on 9 October 1949 in Budapest. In 1973 she obtained a degree in civil engineering from the Budapest Technical University. She worked as a structural engineer, then from 1988 as a French translator. She was a founding member of the Alliance of Free Democrats and the party's administrator in Budapest's second district. She married in 1975. Her husband is an architect and they have two daughters.

Her father, György Litván, was born in 1929 in Budapest to a family of intellectuals. In 1950 he obtained a degree in history and political economy from Budapest University. He completed his military service in 1952. Until 1957 he was a secondary-school teacher and deputy-director of a technical school. Between 1947 and 1956 he was a member of the Communist Party and took part in the university movement, then in party education. In 1954 he joined the party opposition around Imre Nagy. On 23 March 1956, at the party session of Budapest's thirteenth district he was the first to demand publicly the resignation of Mátyás Rákosi, who was present at the meeting. As a member of the Petőfi Circle, he criticised the party's policies on several occasions. After the defeat of the revolution he joined the intellectual opposition and took part in the copying and dissemination of Sándor Fekete's political pamphlet, published under the pseudonym Hungaricus, and of the illegal newspaper *The Twenty-third October*. He was arrested on 18 October 1958. On 1 April 1959 the Supreme Court sentenced him to six years' imprisonment without the possibility of appeal. He was released in 1962. Between 1963 and 1971 he worked as a librarian and teacher in a Budapest secondary school. He then became a researcher at the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1981 he participated in the several months of illegal round-table discussions on the history of the revolution. In December 1986 he was one of the organisers of the illegal conference on 1956. He was one of the founding members of the Committee for Historical Justice. Between 1991 and 1999 he was director of the 1956 Institute. Since the late 1980s he has taught at the Institute of Sociology at Budapest University.

Her mother, Éva Gál, was born in 1928 in Budapest to a family of traders. She obtained a degree in history and Russian from Budapest University and became an assistant lecturer. After being dismissed from her post in 1953 she worked in the National, then Municipal Archives. From 1961 she was an elementary school teacher, then until her retirement in 1989 she was a curator at the Budapest Historical Museum.

Her brother Károly (b. 1954) is an economist and journalist.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Krisztina Lukách was born on 24 August 1956 in Budapest. After her father's arrest her maternal grandmother, friends and neighbours helped to raise her. She completed her secondary-school studies at the Franciscan secondary school in Szentendre. Since

it was almost impossible to gain admittance to fine arts faculties from church-run secondary schools, she studied tourism at the College of Catering and Tourism, despite her interest in history. In 1978 she graduated with excellent results. In the meantime she earned a degree in economy in 1983 by correspondence course. In 1987 she completed a religious-education training course and since then she has been an RE teacher in Budapest. Until 1990 she also worked in the tourist industry. In 1991 she was involved in organising the re-emerging religious education system in schools. Since 1992 she has worked as an economist in the Ministry of Education. She is an external contributor to a Catholic children's magazine and a journal of religious education.

Her father, Tamás Lukách, was born in 1923 in Vienna, where his parents had fled from the newly established Czechoslovakia. His father was a hussar officer and his mother was a nurse. After his father's death he and his sister were adopted by his maternal grandfather, thus in 1927 the family moved to Budapest. After dropping out of secondary school he became a motor mechanic at the Ganz Wagon and Machine Factory. In 1944 he volunteered for military service and was made a prisoner of war. He returned home at the end of 1945. He completed his secondary-school studies and became deputy director of the planning department at his former workplace. In 1956 he was president of the temporary workers' council at the Ganz Wagon and Machine Factory, then secretary of the established council. In April 1957 he was dismissed from his workplace, then on 13 May he was arrested. In December 1957 he was sentenced to eight years in prison. In April 1960 he participated in the hunger strike by the convicts at the Vác National Prison. He was released in 1962. He was a mechanic at the Csepel shipyard, then a technical overseer at the Óbuda shipyard. He completed studies in machine industry at evening classes and until his retirement in 1991 he worked as an environmental protection expert. After his wife's death he remarried in 1983 but soon separated.

Her mother, Éva Szűcs, was born in 1923 in Budapest to a family of workers. She worked as a clerk for the Hungarian Radio, then at the music department of the Filharmónia Company. After her husband's arrest, she was dismissed from her workplace and initially could only find work as a shop assistant. She suffered from poor health and died in 1975.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Mária Magyar (Mrs Lajos Kovács) was born on 4 April 1955 in Vejti. She completed elementary school and has since worked in agriculture. She married in 1971. She and her husband have a farm in Vejti. They have two daughters.

Her father, János Magyar, was born in 1934 in Révfalu. His parents farmed on the ten acres that they had received at the time of the land distribution. They did not join a co-operative. After completing elementary school, he was a pig-keeper, then a tractor driver on a state co-operative. In 1954 he was conscripted into the army where he became a driver. In early November 1956 his unit was ordered to take up position in Budapest. On 4 November they opened fire on a Soviet-Hungarian joint unit, then a member of the unit shot two plain-clothed members of the Secret Police. János Magyar did not take part in the shooting. On 12 December 1956 he was discharged and returned to his former workplace. He was arrested in January 1958. On 14 August 1958 the Budapest Military Court sentenced him to death for participation in the uprising and murder. On 13 November 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 15 November. The family did not have his body exhumed and his remains rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Gertrúd Rittlinger, was born in 1931 in Somberek to a farming family. She married in 1954. After her husband's arrest she and her daughter remained with his parents and worked on the family farm in Vejti, where she still lives.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Ildikó Mecséri (Mrs Géza Kiss) was born on 17 August 1948 in Győr. She completed elementary school in Esztergom and Győr, then after dropping out of secondary school she qualified as a nurse in Budapest. She married in 1969. Her husband is a horticulturist. They lived in Komádi, then in 1970 moved to Ózd, where she worked as a district nurse. They have two sons. In 1984 she applied for a passport but her application was turned down. In 1988 she and her family left the country and settled in Sweden. She revisited Hungary for the first time in 1991.

Her father, János Mecséri, was born in 1920 in Győr to a family of workers. After completing six grades of elementary school he trained as a mechanic and lathe operator and worked in a machine factory in Győr. In 1942 he joined the Social Democratic Party. In 1944 he was conscripted into the army. In March 1945 he and two fellow soldiers escaped from his unit in Germany and became American prisoners of war. He returned home one year later and worked at his former workplace as a team leader. He joined the Communist Party. In November 1948 he volunteered for officers' training school, then from 1950 to 1952 he studied in Moscow at the Stalin Academy. From 1954 he was in command of a battalion in Esztergom, with the rank of colonel. On 23 October 1956 he was commanded to send several of his units to Budapest to maintain order. In Esztergom he personally directed the restoring of order. On 30 October he was ordered to Budapest and the following day was appointed to the command of the Buda area. On 1 November he was ordered to use his units to block the roads leading to Budapest. On the same day he was appointed commander of the Government Guard. On 3 November he led the security unit that accompanied the Soviet delegation from Tököl to the Parliament and back. On the same evening he was arrested at the Soviet headquarters in Tököl as the commander of the escort of the Hungarian delegates. On 14 August 1958 the Budapest Military Court sentenced him to death for leading conspiracy. On 13 November 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 15 November 1958. His family did not have his body exhumed and his remains rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Etel Németh, was born in 1924 in Győr to a family of workers. Until her marriage in 1946 she was a weaver in a Győr clothing factory, after which she became a housewife. After her husband's arrest she was unable to find work for a long time. In 1958 they had to leave their job-related accommodation in Esztergom and moved to live with relatives in Győr. She was a trained worker, then an office worker. In 1967 she remarried. She died in 1978.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Zsuzsa Mérei was born on 26 March 1956 in Budapest. She graduated in psychology from Budapest University. She worked for ten years at the National Institute of Neurology and Mental Health. She married film director János Xantus in 1985. They have one child.

Her father, Ferenc Mérei, was born in 1909 in Budapest to a family of intellectuals. In 1927 he joined the Communist Party. Between 1928 and 1934 he was a student at the Sorbonne in Paris. After his return he worked as a psychologist. In 1942 he was

drafted into an army work unit in the Ukraine. In 1944 he escaped through the front and returned home as a captain in the Red Army. Between 1945 and 1948 he was director of the Municipal Institute of Psychiatry and a teacher at the Pedagogical College and the Eötvös College. In 1949 he was appointed director of the National Institute of Pedagogical Sciences. In 1950 he was dismissed from his position and expelled from the Social Democratic Party. Until his rehabilitation in June 1955 he was unemployed. In 1956 he was the teacher who headed the revolutionary students' committee at Budapest University. After the crushing of the revolution he joined the intellectual opposition and took part in the copying and dissemination of Sándor Fekete's political pamphlet, published under the pseudonym Hungaricus, and of the illegal newspaper *The Twenty-third October*. He was arrested on 17 October 1958. On 1 April 1959 the Supreme Court sentenced him to ten years' imprisonment without the possibility of appeal. In April 1960 he participated in the hunger strike by prisoners in the Vác National Prison. He was released in March 1963. From 1964 he was chief psychologist at the National Institute of Neurology and Mental Health, and director of the Laboratory of Psychodiagnosis and Clinical Psychology. Following his retirement in 1976 he and his students ran psychodrama workshops, and he participated in several social psychology research projects. In 1981 he was one of the participants in the illegal round-table discussions on the history of the revolution. He died in 1986.

Her mother, Vera Mayer (Mérei), was born in 1916 in Budapest to a middle-class family. She wanted to study medicine but as a result of anti-Semitic laws she was only able to continue her studies at the College of Remedial Teaching. Until she was able to find a post she worked as a volunteer at the Szondi Laboratory. After 1945 she joined the Communist Party, from which she was expelled in 1950. She taught first at the pathology department, then at the speech therapy department of the remedial teaching teacher-training college. After the defeat of the revolution she organised a collection for the families of those who had been arrested. She and her husband were members of the democratic opposition in the 1970s and 1980s.

Her sister Eszter (b. 1940) worked as a printer after completing secondary school, then studied French and Russian at Budapest University. She taught in a secondary school, then in the College of Foreign Trade. After completing secondary school her sister Anna (b. 1943) was a stage-manager in a theatre, then obtained a degree in Hungarian and librarianship from Budapest University. She is a director of the Hungarian Television.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Márta Micsinai (Mrs Ferenc Tam) was born in 1955 in Budapest. After her father's death her mother married István Noska, who adopted her, but she was brought up by her paternal aunt and grandparents in the village of Szárazd in Tolna county. She qualified as a printer, and from 1972 worked at a printing house in Szekszárd. At her workplace she was a trade union shop steward for ten years. She married in 1974. Her husband is a toolmaker and they have two daughters. In 1992 she took back her father's name.

Her father, István Micsinai, was born in 1917 in Perbete (Slovakia) to a family of agricultural workers. In 1947 his family was deported from Czechoslovakia. After completing elementary school he became a railway track layer. He completed his military service and then became a policeman. He left the police in 1951. He found work as a mechanic in the Csepel car factory. On 2 November 1956 he joined the National Guard

in Pesterzsébet. Under the leadership of a former fellow policeman, Sándor Láng, they arrested several people—Láng's enemies—and although Micsinai tried to hold back his drunken colleague, Láng shot Kálmán Turner, who had been involved in the founding of the local branch of the Communist Party. After the crushing of the revolution Láng fled abroad, thus the court punished Micsinai for the death of Turner. He was arrested on 24 November 1956. On 28 February 1957 the Municipal Court sentenced him to fifteen years in prison for voluntary manslaughter and concealing weapons. On 15 April 1957 the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty without explanation. He was executed on 18 April 1957. His family did not have his body exhumed and his remains rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Julianna Mogyorósi, was born in 1928 in Kiskunlacháza. She was a weaver. In August 1958—on charges of incitement against the government and abusing the Communists—she was placed under police supervision and was banned from the territory of Budapest and Pest county. In December 1958 the police supervision was lifted and in April 1959 the ban was removed. She moved to Kiskunlacháza and remarried. She died in 1961.

Her sister Julianna (b. 1948) lived with her mother and stepfather, then after her mother's death she lived in a state children's home. She is a laboratory technician in Kaposvár.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Tibor Molnár was born in 1946 in Debrecen. When his father was removed from his party leadership position and excluded from the party, on the party's orders he and his younger sister were cared for in the Mátyás Rákosi Children's Home in Budapest between 1950 and 1952. In 1964 he was conscripted to do his military service and for a year was a guard in a disciplinary unit. In 1969 he graduated from the Teacher Training Institute in Budapest. He taught in the village of Rád, and in the meantime obtained a teaching degree by correspondence course, then a trainer's degree from the College of Physical Education. He became a PE teacher in Vác. Between 1982 and 1985 he was a school headmaster in Nógrád, but as a result of conflicts with the leadership of the local council he left his job and since then has taught in an elementary school in Vác. In 1988 he was one of the founders of a forum for public debate in Vác. In the same year, he took the lead in the teachers' demand for a pay rise and became a member of the municipal council of trade unions. Since 1989 he has been a functionary in the trade union of teachers. He married in 1969. His wife is a teacher and they have three children.

His father, Zoltán Molnár, was born in 1920 in Debrecen to a family of workers. He trained as a mechanic. From 1940 he was an illegal party worker. He was conscripted as a solider and in 1944 became a Romanian prisoner of war. He returned home in January 1945. Until 1950 he was a party worker. He was the ministerial commissioner responsible for land distribution as well as the Communist Party's secretary first in Hajdú-Bihar county, then in Somogy county. In 1950 he was removed from his post and excluded from the party. He was then an unskilled labourer in Budapest and subsequently a works manager. Between 1954 and 1956 he worked for various literary and daily papers. In 1956 he was provincial secretary of the Association of Hungarian Writers, and between 23 October and 3 November worked for the association. He was arrested on 5 December. On 9 October 1957 the Supreme Court sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for conspiracy, without the possibility of appeal. He was released in March 1959. Until 1961 he worked freelance, then he became a journalist for the newspaper

of a transportation company. From 1963 he worked for *Élet és Irodalom*, an influential literary and political weekly. He retired in 1981. He published several short stories, volumes of reportage, and novels.

His mother, Irma Ónodi, was born in 1925 in Hajdúszoboszló. She trained as a shoemaker. She participated in the workers' movement and after 1945 became a party worker. During the 1950s she was an instructor at the party's school and worked for the party committee of Pest county. After her husband was expelled from the party they should have divorced on the party's orders. Although they did not actually divorce they separated until 1953. Until the revolution she was a member of the Hungarian Workers' Party. However, she did not join its successor party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and as a result, automatically lost her job. After that she had difficulties finding work. She was employed as an office worker, then until her retirement in 1980 she was head of the administrative department at a technical college. She died in 1988.

His sister (1948-1978) obtained a degree in adult education and librarianship, then worked as director of the Buda district library. She was killed in a car accident. Since completing secondary school his brother (b. 1955) has been employed in various workplaces as an semi-skilled and trained worker.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

György Orbán was born on 13 November 1950 in Nagykanizsa. After completing elementary school he studied at a Benedictine secondary school in Győr. He and his brother contributed to the cost of their tuition by working at the school. He completed his schooling with excellent results but since he saw no chance of being admitted to university, he became a trainee hand compositor in Budapest. A year later he was admitted to the department of law at the University of Pécs. After a year of military service he began his studies there and obtained his degree in 1976. He married as a university student and divorced three years later, after which he raised his daughter on his own. While he was studying he earned money as an unskilled worker. After finishing his degree he became a child welfare worker, then until 1984 he was secretary of a regional branch of a national artists' association. He organised intellectual circles and literary, art and social-historical debates. Between 1984 and 1987 he was the managing director of the Nyíregyháza theatre. In 1987 to 1988 he was arts officer for Pest county council, then the marketing manager for the Theatre Institute. Since 1991 he has been a marketing manager for a publisher in Budapest. In 1988 he joined the Hungarian Democratic Forum. In 1989 he left this conservative party and abandoned party politics. In 1981 he married for the second time. His wife was a theatre assistant and now works as a silversmith. They have one daughter and two sons. At his initiative, and with the family's financial support, a memorial plaque (made by András Lengyel) was placed on the wall of the former headquarters of the National Guard in Nagykanizsa.

His father, Nándor Orbán, was born in 1910 in Kecskemét to a family of teachers. He attended the Ludovika Military Academy and was made a lieutenant in 1933. He then served as an adjutant, first in Kecskemét then in Budapest. He was an outstanding athlete and won several international athletics titles. He finished fifth in the modern pentathlon at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In 1940 he and his unit participated in recapturing Northern Transylvania. From 1941 he served in Nagykanizsa as a captain and fought until the end of the war. Following four months in Bulgarian and Russian captivity in 1945 he was cleared of committing war crimes and accepted into the new army, but in 1947 he was demoted to the reserves and in 1948 he was forced to retire. He worked

as an independent haulier then as an unskilled labourer. In late 1951 he moved to Balatonfenyves with his family in order to escape eviction. In 1955, when he became a horse breaker at a state stud, they moved to Somogyfajsz. In Somogysárd on 27 October 1956 he stopped the crowd of demonstrators from harming the village party secretary. On 31 October the leaders of the national committee summoned him to Nagykanizsa, and the next day they appointed him as leader of the local National Guard. He saw it as his most important task to restore order and prevent atrocities. On 5 November the National Guard dissolved and their weapons were handed over at the army barracks. He was arrested in January 1957. On 16 July the Zala County Court sentenced him to fifteen years in prison for leading conspiracy. On 24 January 1958 the Supreme Court commuted the sentence to ten years. He was released in April 1963. He returned to his former job and in 1964 became the leader of the Siófok riding school. However, he was dismissed after a short time and kept under permanent supervision. For a brief period he worked as a trainer, then until his retirement he was a vineyard-worker. In 1970 he moved to Budapest where he was a rifle-trainer then a museum security guard. He died in 1981.

His mother, Zsófia Virágháty, was born in Vajdahunyad (Romania) to a middle-class family. In 1921 the family fled to Hungary. She completed studies at teacher-training college but after her marriage in 1938 she became a housewife. Following her husband's arrest, she was unable to find a job, and apart from occasional private tuition she had no income. She and her five children lived on her mother's pension. The authorities intended to evict them from their job-related accommodation in a flat in a run-down mansion, but as a result of the intervention of a lawyer friend they managed to keep their apartment. She died in 2002.

His sister Zsófia (b. 1939) was categorised as a class alien and was unable to carry on with her studies in Zala county. She therefore studied at a railway technical school. His brother Nándor (b. 1941) was in the National Guard in Nagykanizsa during the revolution. In January 1957 he emigrated to Yugoslavia with some classmates and currently works as a postman in London. Pál (b. 1947) completed secondary-school studies at the Benedictine secondary school in Győr and later qualified as an engraver in Budapest. He is a bookshop assistant and an active politician in the Alliance of Free Democrats. László (b. 1953) studied at the Piarist secondary school in Kecskemét but abandoned his studies after two years. He became a driver, a water and gas fitter, then a theatre maintenance worker in Budapest.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Erzsébet Pekó was born on 13 September 1948 in Kiskunmajsa. At the age of eight she was an eye-witness of the demonstration and lynching in Kiskunmajsa. From the age of ten she did casual work. After completing elementary school she was an agricultural worker for six years, then became a weaver in Bácsalmás. She twice won the title "Excellent Worker in Light Industry". For many years she was the trade union shop steward at her workplace. In 1993 she was one of the founders and leaders of the Loners' Club in Bácsalmás. She married at the age of 17 and divorced four years later. She has one son and one daughter.

Her father, István Pekó, was born in 1914 in Budapest, the son of day labourers. He was brought up by foster parents in Szeged. After completing six grades of elementary school, he became a day labourer. Between 1948 and 1950 he farmed on rented land of four acres, then worked on state farms and for construction companies. On 27

October 1956 he took part in the protest in Kiskunmajsa, at which farmers demanded, increasingly vociferously, the punishment of József Neményi, the former leader of the collectivisation office, as well as the head of the council and party secretary. István Pekó and others took Neményi from his home to the council building and shut him in the cellar. Later they brought him out to question him, but the crowd seized him and lynched him. The person who played a leading a role in these events escaped to the West. István Pekó was arrested on 12 January 1957. On 22 February 1957 the Kecskemét County Court sentenced him to eight years in prison for voluntary manslaughter. On 28 September 1957 the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty on the charge of leading conspiracy and murder. He was executed on 10 October 1957. He was buried in Kecskemét. The prison cemetery was decommissioned and the land developed in the 1970s, but the family only learned of this later.

Her mother, Piroska Mezei, was born in 1913. She married in 1943. Besides raising her six children she kept animals and grew vegetables. After her husband's arrest she became a cleaner and day labourer. In the 1970s she married for a second time. She received no compensation. From 1993 she lived in an old peoples' home and died in 1999.

Her sister was an agricultural worker and later a cook. Her three elder brothers also worked in agriculture, and her younger brother was a worker. Her elder brothers were not conscripted into the army after their father's conviction. Three of her siblings are no longer alive.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Márta Regéczy-Nagy (Mrs Dobri) was born in July 1957, one month after her father's arrest. From the age of one she was brought up by her grandparents in Putnok. In 1968—when they managed to obtain a flat of their own—she returned to her parents in Budapest. In 1981 she graduated from the College of Remedial Education. She works in the hearing department of a Budapest hospital. Since the 1970s she has been a member of the Budavár Lutheran Congregation and the Pasarét Calvinist Circle. It was there that she met her husband. She married in 1980. Her husband is an economist, who settled in Hungary from Kolozsvár (Romania). They have five children. She has regularly participated in activities to help Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. Her father-in-law, János Dobri, is a Calvinist priest. In 1957 he was sentenced to six years in prison in a trial in Transylvania in connection with 1956. He was released in 1963.

Her father, László Regéczy-Nagy, was born in 1925 in Budapest to a middle-class family with connections to the lower nobility. He began secondary-school studies at the Miskolc Calvinist secondary school, then from 1936 attended a military secondary school. In November 1944 he was made a second lieutenant. His unit was ordered to Germany, where he was taken prisoner of war by the English. He returned home in September 1946 and, as an officer returning from the West, he was not readmitted to the army. He became a warehouse clerk at the Actio Catholica aid organisation, then a private deliveryman. From 1948 he was a car driver for the British Embassy. From 1949 until his arrest he was the chauffeur of the British Ambassador. In 1951 his uncle was sentenced to death in a showcase trial. During the revolution László Regéczy-Nagy remained at his workplace and only returned to his family in mid-November. He helped the families of Embassy employees take refuge in the Embassy building, and delivered English officials by car to the central locations of the revolution. With the help of László Ravasz he became acquainted with István Bibó and he handed over Bibó's memorandum

to the British Ambassador. At the end of November, at the request of Árpád Göncz, he forwarded the only existing copy of the writings of Imre Nagy from 1955 and 1956 to the secretariat of the British Embassy. In November and December 1956 he acted as a link between István Bibó, Árpád Göncz and the British Embassy. In spring 1957 he went to Vienna three times on official trips to purchase food for the Embassy. He was arrested on 19 June 1957. On 2 August 1958 the Supreme Court sentenced him to fifteen years in prison for conspiracy and treachery, without possibility of appeal. In 1963 he was excluded from the general amnesty, but before the visit of UN secretary-general U Thant the president of the presidium granted him an individual amnesty. After his release he became an unskilled worker, then a freelance translator. He was a founding member of the Committee for Historical Justice and took part in organising the reburial of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs. Since 1988 he has been a member of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. From September 1990 he was head of department at the office of the Hungarian president, then adjutant to the president of the republic. In 1996 he retired with the rank of general. From 1996 he has been chairman of the Committee for Historical Justice.

Her mother, Márta Gál, was born in 1928 in Újpest, near Budapest, to a family of doctors. She studied for two years at medical university but—fearing discrimination because of her origins—she abandoned her studies. She married in 1956 and was a housewife. After her husband's arrest she was given employment at the British Embassy, first as a cleaner, then, after studying the language, as a secretary. In 1975 she was fired as the result of a decree issued by the Ministry of the Interior. From 1976 until her retirement in 1991 she was a professor's secretary at Budapest University.

Her sister Enikő (b. 1964) studied at the School of Commerce and qualified as an interpreter. She worked for the British Council and since December 1999 she has been secretary to the head of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Sarolta Rimán (Mrs Gábor Korom) was born on 26 February 1952 in Miskolc. She abandoned her secondary-school studies after two years and later completed technical secondary school by correspondence course. She was an office worker, then a saleswoman, and since 1992 has been an entrepreneur in Miskolc. She married in 1970 and divorced in 1995. She has two daughters and a son.

Her father, János Rimán, was born in 1920 in Prügy to a family of land workers. After completing elementary school he was an agricultural worker, then in 1939 he was employed by the Diósgyőr Ironworks as a mill-hand. Between 1941 and 1944 he did his military service. In the 1950s he was a widely respected skilled worker, but because of his open religious beliefs he was not appointed to the position of foreman. On 24 October 1956 he was elected as a member of the workers' council of the Miskolc Lenin Metallurgical Works. On 7 November he was elected as its president. Under his leadership the workers' council demanded the removal of the Kádár government and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. He abolished the positions of the factory's party leaders and Communist Youth Association leaders, as well as fired several Communist leaders. In May 1957 the Miskolc County Court sentenced him to fourteen years imprisonment for conspiracy. On 26 October 1958 the Supreme Court commuted the sentence to twelve years. He was released in 1963 and until his retirement in 1979 he was a mill-hand at his former workplace. He died in 1997.

Her mother, Matild Túrós, was born in 1925 in Mezőzombor to a family of land

workers. She married in 1945. Before the revolution she was a housewife, and after her husband's arrest she was a market trader. During the confiscations half their house was appropriated. They lived in poverty and both the maternal and paternal grandparents helped the family.

Her twin sister Éva obtained a nursery-nursing and teaching degree by correspondence course. She has lived in the United States since 1984. Her brother János (b. 1946) trained as a car body fitter. He obtained a teaching degree as an adult. He is director of boarders at a secondary school. He is a local government representative in Arnót.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Károly Szabó was born in 1946 in the village of Gyón. He completed elementary school in his native village. After his application to the school of forestry was rejected, he obtained a qualification as a water and gas fitter in Budapest. Since 1963 he has worked in this field. He married in 1968 and divorced in the early 1980s. He has three sons. He regularly visited plot 301, even before the change of political system.

His father, Károly D. Szabó, was born in 1924 in Ócsa to a family of farmers. After completing elementary school he worked on the family farm. From 1943 he was a tram conductor, then a carriage driver. On 28 October 1956 he was elected as vice-president of the local national committee in Gyón. He took part in organising the local National Guard. In his capacity as vice-president, he maintained order and safeguarded property in the village throughout. On 10 September, while he was negotiating in the council building with representatives of the district's party and council leaders about reinstalling former leaders who had been removed during the revolution, the villagers gathered outside the building to demonstrate. Although D. Szabó promised the safety of Miklós Biksza, the district Communist leader, Biksza felt threatened and fled after jumping from a window, injuring one of the villagers in the process. Biksza was subsequently beaten, then shot and killed with his own weapon, which he had dropped. The severe retribution that followed his death was monitored and encouraged by János Kádár himself. Károly D. Szabó was arrested on 17 August 1957. On 28 June 1958 the Pest County Court sentenced him to life imprisonment for leading conspiracy. On 12 January 1959 the Supreme Court increased the sentence to the death penalty. He was executed two days later. At the request of his family, his remains were exhumed in 1989 and laid to rest in plot 301.

His mother, Mária Sziráki, was born in 1924 in the village of Gyón to a family of farmers. She married in 1944. She was also involved in farming and sold dairy produce in Budapest. At dawn on the day of her husband's execution she went secretly to plot 301 to see where her husband was buried. During the confiscations that followed half of their house was appropriated, although she later repurchased it. Her brother was imprisoned for belonging to the National Guard. Since she was unable to get work in her village she found employment in Budapest as a cleaner. She remarried in 1966.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Márta Szelepcsényi (Mrs Imre Böröcz) was born on 12 July 1956 in Komló. She grew up in Budapest. Her mother abandoned the family, thus after her father's arrest she and her brother were taken into a state care institution. Four years after completing elementary school she left the institution. She lived in Pécsbánya and worked as a semi-skilled worker. She was given early retirement. She married twice and has six children. They lived in Komló, but now live in Mágócs.

Her father, István Szelepcsényi, was born in 1932 in Budapest to a family of clerks. After completing elementary school he was imprisoned for three years in 1947 for conspiracy. Part of the sentence was spent in the Young Offenders' Institution in Cegléd, where he obtained a qualification as an electrical fitter. Not long after his release he was again sentenced on a charge of conspiracy. He was released in summer 1953 and in December was conscripted for military service. During the revolution he participated in the armed fighting, including the taking of the Secret Police headquarters in Maros utca. On 2 November he joined the National Guard in Nagykovácsi. In early 1957 he organised an illegal group, and with the other members hid weapons and ammunition. During Khrushchev's visit in April 1958 they copied and disseminated leaflets. They planned to blow up the Dimitrov statue in Budapest. He was arrested on 21 March 1959. On 17 July 1959 the Budapest Military Court sentenced him to death on various charges, including initiating and leading conspiracy. On 3 September 1959 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 8 September 1959. At the request of his family his remains were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in plot 301.

Her mother, Márta Márton, was born in 1940 in Törökszentmiklós. She is heavy-machine operator.

Her brother István (b. 1957) is a tiler.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

László Tihanyi was born on 8 March 1949 in Győr. In 1967 he completed technical school with a qualification as an electrical fitter and was employed by an electricity company. He wanted to apply to college but in the character reference provided by the company he was described as unsuitable for a management position, thus he did not even sit the entrance exam. In 1968 he did his military service. From 1971 he worked as an electrical fitter. In 1979 he obtained a degree in engineering. From February 1975 he was a technical administrator, then group leader, at the Győr hospital. He married in 1973. His wife works in administration. They have one son. In late 1988, along with the relatives of his father's fellow convicts, he initiated the search for the graves of the executed and the demand for the exhumation of their remains. He personally followed every stage of the search and the exhumation.

His father, Árpád Tihanyi, was born in 1916 in Győr. His father became a lieutenant in the First World War, and as a result was granted an honorific title and a piece of land. Árpád Tihanyi completed teacher-training college. In 1940 he began teaching in Győrszemere, but was conscripted into the army several times. In January 1945 he was commanded to Germany. He was seriously wounded and while in hospital fell into the hands of the Americans. He returned home in January 1946. In 1954 he graduated from the Győr Pedagogical College as a correspondence student. He taught Hungarian language and literature and history in Győr. On 25 October 1956 he took part in the demonstration in Győr and recited the patriotic poem *National Song*. On 26 October, after hearing news of the bloodbath in Mosonmagyaróvár, he volunteered to help restore order. In a speech delivered from the balcony of the council building, he stressed the need to transform the local government democratically, to expel the Russian troops, and to bring to justice those who had ordered the fusillade. On 2 November, as a member of the delegation of the national committee of Transdanubia, he travelled to Austria to negotiate with the Austrian Peasant Alliance. On 4 November he visited the American Embassy in Vienna, where he asked predominantly for economic aid for the revolution

as well as requesting the support of the United Nations. He returned home in mid-November. He registered with the police but was allowed home unharmed. He was arrested on 27 December 1956. On 10 June 1957 the Győr County Court sentenced him to death for leading conspiracy and inciting to murder. On 21 December 1957 the Military College of the Supreme Court altered the charge to leading conspiracy and treachery and confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 31 December 1957. His body was buried secretly in the prison cemetery in Sopronkőhida. At the request of his family, his remains were exhumed in 1990 and laid to rest in the cemetery in Győr.

His mother, Mária Torma, was born in 1917 in Olaszfa. She was a seamstress. After her husband's execution, she learnt that the authorities intended to confiscate her home, so she changed flat. In 1963 she married a teacher, who was an old friend of the family.

His brother Árpád (b. 1944) completed agricultural college in Kaposvár, then worked for a local livestock trading company. In the mid-1970s he was forced to resign and for the next eighteen months he was unable to find work that matched his qualifications. He eventually became a buyer for a livestock trading company in Komárom county. He then held various middle-management positions in the company.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi and Adrienne Molnár.

Mária Tomasovszky (Mrs András Ősze) was born on 8 December 1945 in Nyíregyháza. After her mother's death, she went to live in a state care institution for young girls in Ökörítófülpös in the summer of 1956. After her father's arrest, she was brought up by her grandparents, at her father's request. Her grandfather was dismissed from his workplace as an electrical fitter and subsequently supported the family as a day labourer. In spite of her good grades, Mária was not accepted to agricultural school. Although she completed a course in typing and shorthand at evening classes, she only managed to find work as a cleaner. In 1963 she moved to Budapest to live with relatives and found work at the banknote printing house. She completed a printing course at evening classes. She married in 1970. Her husband is an armed security guard. They have one child.

Her father, András Tomasovszky, was born in 1923 in Alma-Ata. (His father, Mihály Tomasovszky, fell into the hands of the Russians in the First World War and returned home in 1928 with a wife and three children. After a short time his wife and two sons returned to Alma-Ata and he stayed in Hungary to farm his eighty acres of land. He became active in politics. After 1945 he became a parliamentary representative for the Smallholders' Party. In 1946/1947 he was lord lieutenant of Szabolcs county. In 1952 his assets were appropriated.) After completing secondary school he farmed on the family estate. After their land was confiscated he worked as an electrical fitter. In the coalition era he was a member of the Smallholders' Party. He was taken to court on two occasions, once for chopping down trees without permission, and once for not eradicating tussock-moths. During the protests in Nyíregyháza on 26 October 1956 he hoisted the national flag in the place of the red star that had been knocked down, and from the pedestal of the toppled Russian memorial he read out the demands of the Miskolc revolutionaries. He took part in releasing prisoners from the city prison. On 29 October he was entrusted with leading the intelligence group. He had permanent and close contacts with villages on the border and informed the revolutionary organisations of the region and of the capital city about the movements of the Russian troops. He was arrested on 16 November 1956 and the Nyíregyháza County Court sentenced him to three months in prison for concealing weapons. After completing his sentence he was

summoned before the court again. On 16 December 1957 the military court of Debrecen sentenced him to death for initiating conspiracy. On 28 April 1958 the Military College of the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. He was executed on 6 May 1958. In 1989 the site of his grave was discovered with the help of the local branch of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. His body was exhumed and on 6 October he was laid to rest in Nyíregyháza.

Her mother, Mária Bartha, was born in 1921 in Újfehértó to a family of landowners. She married in 1944. Until 1952 she worked on the family estate in Alsósima. They then moved to Nyíregyháza. In July 1956 she died of an incurable bone disease.

After completing elementary school her brother (b. 1947) became a tractor driver. Her sister (b. 1951) is a semi-skilled worker. In the course of the compensation they repurchased a part of the confiscated family estate.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Márta Tóth (Mrs József Lajtmann) was born on 3 March 1949 in Győr. After completing secondary school she worked as an unqualified hospital nurse in Budapest, then as a cleaner. She was then an office worker in Győr. Since 1980 she has been a pedicurist. She married in 1977. Her husband is a hydrographic technician, a geodesist and environmental activist. They have two daughters.

Her father, István Tóth, was born in 1919 in Győr to a family of workers. In 1942 he graduated in law, and was then articled to the public prosecutor. Between 1943 and 1945 he was a soldier, then once again worked at the Győr city hall as a notary. In 1948/1949 he was head of the social-political department. In spring 1945 he joined the Communist Party, from which he was expelled in 1949. He worked in the secretariat of the city council and in 1951 was moved to the county council, where he became leader of the administrative team. On 27 October 1956 he was elected president of the workers' council of Győr county council. During the revolution he worked to restore order and to provide medicines and food. After the defeat of the revolution he was dismissed from his job and on 12 April 1957 he was arrested. On 12 August 1957 the Győr County Court sentenced him to twelve years in prison for leading conspiracy, for overthrowing the people's democracy, and for misuse of social property. On 14 November 1958 the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence. In April 1960 he participated in the hunger strike by prisoners in the Vác National Prison. He was released in 1963. He worked at a pharmacy supply centre. From 1970 he was an investment officer for the Győr Waterworks. From 1976 he was a legal officer for the Győr Public Works and Construction Company. He retired in 1979 and died in 1999.

Her mother, Alice Ordódy, was born in 1924 in Dunaszerdahely to a family of intellectuals. She attended school in Bratislava, then completed her studies at the Győr School of Commerce. She was secretary to the director of the Győr linen factory. After her husband's arrest she could only find work in lower positions. From 1964 she was an office worker, then a secretary.

The interview was conducted by Zsuzsanna Kőrösi.

Ida Vámos (Mrs Petrik) was born on 9 February 1948 in Jágónak. After her mother's death and her father's arrest she was brought up by her maternal grandparents. Since she was not permitted to further her secondary-school studies in Nógrád county she went to study in Budapest with the help of one of her teachers. In 1966, due to the unfavourable opinion of the local party committee, she was not admitted to university

despite her success in her exams. She was an office worker in Balassagyarmat, and was then employed at the Nógrád county archives. She obtained a degree as a correspondence student from the College of Public Administration. Since 1987 she has been an archivist in Budapest. She married in 1967. Her husband is a lawyer and they have two sons.

Her father, József Vámos, was born in 1927 in Rárósmúlyad (Slovakia). He attended the teacher-training college in Jászberény, but quitted his studies because of the war. In 1947 he moved from Czechoslovakia to Hungary to be with his wife. After completing training as a notary he was an assistant notary in several villages until 1950. In 1951 he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison by the Szekszárd County Court for endangering public supplies and neglecting office duties, because, as a council employee, he had not enforced surplus-appropriation in his district. From 1953 he was buyer for a livestock trading company in Nógrád county. After he was dismissed in October 1955 he was employed as a worker at a stove factory in Salgótarján. In autumn 1956 he played an active role in the revolutionary events in Szécsény and was elected deputy commander of the local National Guard. He was arrested on 6 December 1956. On 6 December 1957 the Pest County Court sentenced him to two and a half years in prison. He was released in 1960. He began working for the Budapest transportation company and obtained a qualification as a mechanic. He suffered from serious heart disease and was given early retirement in 1977. He died in 1983 of a heart attack.

Her mother, Jolán Varga, was born in 1930 in Endrefalva to a family of landowners. In 1947, escaping deportation from Czechoslovakia, the family settled first in Somogy county, then in Szécsény in Nógrád county. She did not complete secondary-school studies because of the war and became an office worker. On 8 December 1956 she went to Salgótarján to ask about her husband, who had been arrested. While waiting at the bus-stop she was wounded in a fusillade directed against the demonstrators and died later in hospital.

The interview was conducted by Adrienne Molnár.

Péter Zsámboki was born on 15 April 1957 in Budapest. He was taught privately during the first grade of elementary school because of a heart condition that required hospital treatment. In 1981 he graduated in Hungarian and English from Budapest University. He works as a journalist and editor. Since 1996 he has been deputy editor-in-chief of the *Reader's Digest Selection*.

His father, Zoltán Zsámboki, was born in 1923 in Budapest to a family of workers. In 1941 he completed secondary-school studies, then graduated in Hungarian and Italian from Budapest University. In 1945 he joined the Social Democratic Party and in 1946 he became an independent political worker for the party. In 1948, after the amalgamation of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, his workplace was closed down. Until 1955 he worked in various state offices, then for the Central Statistical Office. During the revolution he again joined the Social Democratic Party. At his workplace he organised a National Guard unit and on 1 November he was elected president of the revolutionary committee at the Central Statistical Office. In the first months of 1957 he participated in the copying of the political pamphlet by Sándor Fekete, written under the pseudonym Hungaricus. In March 1957 he was dismissed from his workplace. He was arrested on 10 June 1958. On 2 June 1959 the Supreme Court sentenced him to seven years in prison for conspiracy, without the possibility of appeal. In April 1960 he participated in the hunger strike by prisoners in the Vác National Prison. He

was released in 1963. Until 1964 he had to report each month to the police. Until 1966 he was a freelance translator, then a proof-reader, scriptwriter and literary translator. From 1974 until his retirement in 1984 he was editor of a literary magazine. He was a founder member of the Committee for Historical Justice. He died on 13 January 1989.

His mother, Ágnes Kraiss, was born in 1926 in Budapest to a family of clerks. She qualified as a nursery nurse. Between 1948 and 1950 she was secretary to the psychologist Ferenc Mérei at the National Institute of Pedagogical Science, then until 1981 she worked as a nursery nurse. She married in 1957.

His half-sister Mária (b. 1945) is an editor, and his half-brother Zoltán (b. 1949) is an auto-electrical mechanic.

The interview was conducted by Gertrud Hoffmann.

Éva Z. was born in 1945 in Budapest. After completing secondary school she worked as a technician, then obtained a university degree by correspondence course.

Her father was a skilled worker. In 1950 he became an army officer. During the revolution his aim was to avoid bloodshed. In 1958 he was sentenced to seven years in prison. After his release he worked as a manual labourer.

Her mother was dismissed from her workplace in 1957 and only managed to find work after several months. Her grandparents, who were workers, supported the family throughout.

Ferenc Z. was born in 1955 in Budapest. After completing elementary school he was a semi-skilled worker, and was then employed as a driver.

His father was a semi-skilled worker. In 1956 he took part in the armed fighting, and produced and disseminated leaflets. He was sentenced to death in 1958 and executed.

His mother was an unskilled worker.

Pál Z. was born in 1952 in Budapest. After his father's arrest he was temporarily brought up in a care institution. He completed college.

His father was a worker, then obtained a degree. After the crushing of the revolution he took part in the intellectual resistance. He was sentenced to death and executed.

Before the revolution his mother was a housewife. After her husband's execution she had great difficulty in finding work.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations in this volume were selected from among personal documents belonging to our interviewees. Our choice was motivated by a desire to help even those readers to whom all this is history feel something of the atmosphere of the era. Events in the outside world and the shock and tragedy experienced by the families are apparent even in the children's drawings, diary entries and autograph albums. Courtesy of the families of the convicts we were given an opportunity to read the most dramatic of the documents—the farewell letters—some of which we have been allowed to publish. We would like to express our gratitude here.

The following is a list of illustrations along with transcripts of the letters.

I–II. From the diary of Andor and Zsolt Fekete, 1956.

The two roosters
Once upon a time there were two little roosters. One day one of them found a gold coin. He went to the shop to get small change for it. When he went home, he gave some of they money to his brother. When his brother found two gold coins in the garbage, he didn't give him anything. So they started to fight. Finally they went to the cat who was a judge and asked him to settle the matter. The judge said that they should give the gold coins to him. The rooster gave the money to the cat. That was what the cat wanted. As soon as he got the money, he chased them away. The two roosters sadly went away and promised they would never fight again.

II. (below, drawing) a soldier of Tamás Esze's army (1703–1711)

III. Children's drawings, October–November 1956.

IV. From the diary of Andor and Zsolt Fekete, 1956–1957.

Edible mushrooms

Chanterelle Champignon

On 25 October, 1957 the journalists were released

V–VI. Letter from Ilona and Katalin Kósa—with their photographs enclosed—to János Borbély, presiding judge of the Supreme Court, July 1959.

> Dear President,
> Two sorrowful little girls request you to listen to their pleas. Our father—Pál Kósa, born 25 January 1921 in Balatonfüred—has been sentenced to death for participating in the 1956 counterrevolution. We do not know what he did, only that he was not responsible for anyone's death, so we dare to beg for mercy for our father. We beg Mr President to allow us a little happiness and to let us have a loving father, just like other children. We will soon be setting out into the world and we beg Mr President to help us so that we will not have to start our lives with bitter memories and such wretchedness. Help us to be happy as youngsters, so that we can go on to live happy lives. We ask Mr President to show mercy on two children who are anxious for their father, and who tremble for their father's life but who await the decision of Mr President with confidence. Please show mercy to our father, whom we love dearly and for whom we are still waiting at home. If we lose him, we do not think we will survive. Once again we beg Mr President to listen to the pleas of two heart-broken daughters for their father. We place all our hope and trust in Mr President, and we hope that you will help us and our father.
>
> We send our love and unceasing gratitude to Mr President,
> Katalin Kósa and Ilonka Kósa

VII. From the autograph album of Kinga Göncz.

> Sail, sail on the see of life,
> but beware not to land,
> at the island of sorrow!
>
> Wishes for Kinga with love,
> Mari

VIII. (above) Letter from Károly Litván to his father, 1962. (He was not aware that his father was in prison.)

> Dear Dad,
> I am very well. I am playing very nicely. I do what Mum and Kati say. I have lots of friends. I got three grade 4s. I'm looking forward to seeing you.
> Kisses,
> Karcsi
>
> (APPROVED)

VIII. (below) Letter from Katalin Litván to her father in prison in Budapest, 11 October 1961.

> Dear Dad,
> Imagine! I'm a Pioneer patrol leader! Since I've been the leader of the Bear Cub Patrol the Bear Cubs have been the best of all the patrols in the two sixth grades. It's quite an achievement, since the patrols in the sixth grade are all really good. My piano playing is going well and it's going to get even better, because Mum has rented a piano. At school I'm still the best in my class. I have the fewest corrections on my work and in Russian language only my paper was given a grade 5.
> Lots of love,
> Kati
>
> PS. I forgot to tell you what I got for my birthday. From granny: 1 pair of nylon stockings, 1 hand-painted silk headscarf. From Karcsi: A book. From Mum: 1 book of short stories, 1 novel. From Gabi: A novel. From the Déneses: A book on Händel. From Fekete (a boy!): 1 box of sweets, 2 flowers. From Ági: 2 pieces of chocolate in a box [drawing]. From you: 1 book and 1 board-game.

IX. Letter from Károly Litván to his father, 1961. (He was not aware that his father was in prison.)

> Daddy come home! I'm waiting for you. There are four of us. What are you sending us for St. Nicholas' Day and Christmas?
> Kisses,
> Karcsi
> I've got some grade 5s in my mark book.
>
> (APPROVED)

X. (above) Extract from the family's letter to Sándor Bali in Budapest prison, 6 November 1957.

> My dear Sándor,
> Every line of this letter carries my soul to you. I want to tell you how much I love you but you already know, since while you were home with us you must have sensed the great love that I feel for you in my heart and soul. I loved you then, but now I love you a hundred and a thousand times more. It was so terrible when you were taken away. It felt as if they were tearing my heart out when they escorted you out of the door. Believe me, I have been left without a heart. I will only begin to feel again and be happy if you come back to me. I will wait, even if I have to wait a hundred years. I want to be happy with you, very happy. You will come back to me and we will start over again where our nice, quiet lives stopped, and things will be good again, you'll see. Just be strong and patient and God will help us. Take care of your health and always think of us with love, just as we think of you every minute of the day.

I'll say farewell, my dear Sándor, with millions of kisses. I've left some space for your little son and for your dad. With my love, your ever-waiting Marika.

My dear father,
I hope my letter finds you in good health. I am well, and so is little Marika. How are you? I'm going to school and trying to study well to be worthy of my daddy. Dear father, I miss you so much. We're waiting for you to come home. We pray every evening that the Good Lord will help you to come home as soon as possible. I end my letter and say farewell with a million kisses.
Your loving son, Sándorka.
And your little girl Marika.
My dear son,
I am writing these few lines with an aching heart. Be strong, because I already feel very weak. I feel I don't have long left. If only I could see you one more time. I cannot write any more, my dear son, because I can't see through my tears. I send many, many kisses.
Your loving father.
God be with you.

X. (below) Prison censor's refusal to forward the letter because it is too long.

XI–XII. Letter from Lajos Gulyás to his family, sent from Győr prison, 29 March 1957.

My sweet little Gabi,
In my prayers I ask for the blessing of God's Holy Spirit to give you strength, health, courage, faith and love for all things on your birthday. I still do not know how this prayer will find you, but it must, because no prayer has ever come from a truer heart.

My dear Ildikó, my dear Csilla, my dear little Anikó,

Along with me you must surround your mother with all the love in your hearts so that she will have the strength to wait for me. You must not lose heart because your father has been charged with treachery and murder and is in prison, since the Good Lord sees, and you know that I am innocent and I love my country and the Hungarian people. God bless you. Your Lajos, your father.
Győr prison, 29 March 1957.

XIII. Farewell letter from József Andi to his family, sent from the Kozma utca prison in Budapest, 2 March 1958.

My darling wife Ilonka, my dear little children,
I am sending these lines with my love to my dear family, the thought of whom gives me strength and keeps me from breaking down. How much pleasure it gives me to think of my family, to think of my children who loved to be with me so much, who loved to walk, to visit the Danube, and to wait at the bus-stop for their daddy. I know my children love me very much because I love them too and I was fighting only for them. What can I leave to them other than memories and love, since there are many things we have been unable to give them. Their lives are still better and

nicer because they have felt their parents' love for them. I feel that we have brought up our children well. My little children, always be modest and honest. These are the greatest qualities a person can have. Love each other. Study hard, because this may well help to make your lives more pleasant. My dear Józsi—little József junior, who'll always be József junior even when he's grown up—always look after your little brothers. Help them and love them like a father and a brother. And, above all, love your dear mother, who gave you life and who struggles so hard for your sake. Your mother should be everything to you. Take good care of her because you have no greater treasure in the world. And sometimes think of me too, since you were more precious to me than life itself. My darling Ilonka, what can I write to you? Even if our life was hard, it is certain that no woman and no mother was ever loved more than I loved you. Forget all the bad things, darling Ilona, and remember me as long as you live. You were everything to me, both as a faithful wife and as a mother who gave life to those whom we love as we love each other. I have always been proud of you, of my beautiful Ilona. You have grown old because life's many sorrows and hardships have taken their toll on you. Don't be angry with me! My dear mother, if there is a goal in life worth striving for, in your life it should be to raise our children, to fight for them, so that their lives will be better than ours. Please love our children just as you did before and give the older ones just as much motherly love and kindness as the youngest. My darling wife Ilonka, don't be angry with me for giving so little pleasure and so few nice things to you. We forgot to live. Our children made us grow old young, and while we tried to outdo one another in loving them—we lived only for them. My darling wife, our children will be grateful for this, you will see. All I can leave to you are memories and endless sorrow and struggles, since now you have to fight for the family instead of me. Take good care of our children. Like my love, they are treasures that you received from me. Teach them to love and help one another. My darling wife, my mother, what will happen to me will soon be decided, but no matter what life brings don't lose your faith. Think of our children and remember that I love you very much. I send many kisses, my Ilonka, Marika, little Józsi, Károly and Attila. Dad.

XIV–XV. From the autograph album of Kinga Göncz

Joys fly away
kind people die
old graves crumble
the Sun falls into night.
Behind the eye, behind the word
worry casts a shadow.
But still—don't tremble:
the soul is with you
you won't be alone.

With love from Aunt Éva
[Lajos Áprily: Encouraging rhymes]

(APPROVED)

XVI. (above) Letter from Nándor Orbán to his wife, sent from the prison in Kozma utca, Budapest, 22 September 1957.

> My sweet darling,
> I was so happy that you came to see me in Zalaegerszeg. Thank you for bringing me flowers and for thinking of me every evening when the bell tolls. Write to me, my sweetheart, about everything and about all of you. Write me lots about yourself, about mother, father, Ilus and her family, and the children. I have great love and trust. I think of all of you together and individually. How is dad settling in at ours? How is Lacika coming on? How is Gyurika getting on at school? Is Palika studying well? And how are his eyes? Is Náci studying properly? How is little Zsófi, and what work is she doing? What are you living on, sweetheart? That's a question I must not think about. We need to stay in good health: take good care of yourself. How are mum and dad bearing up? It bothers me a great deal that I can give you no help. Don't worry about me, I'm well. On 18 September I even received my glasses. Thank you for sending them. I am looking forward to getting the grammar books and dictionaries I asked you for. I'm grateful for all you are doing for me. You can't imagine how much I'm looking forward to your reply. You know that I'm here and how I'm living. You know that I'm alright and that every day I receive what I need, but I know nothing about you. Pray instead of me, because I can only beg. Hugs and kisses to all of you. Your loving husband.
> Budapest 22. IX. I am in good health. Daddy was 84 on the 14th.

XVI. (below) Letter to Mrs Rudolf Földvári from the Vác prison giving her permission to send a parcel, June 1959.

> Notification
> I inform you that between 15 and 20 June 1959 you are permitted to send to your relative a parcel of simple foodstuffs of up to 3 kilograms in weight. The parcel must not contain spirits, milk, lemons, chocolate, raw eggs, garlic, tins or cigarettes. The cost of delivery must be paid by the sender.

XVII. Letter to Nándor Orbán from his wife, sent to the prison in Kozma utca, Budapest, 30 June 1958.

> Sweetheart! It was good to get your letter, although I learned more about you from your previous ones—that you are working and that you are allowed to buy things to make your meals complete. This time you didn't mention this, which worries me. We carry on and are surviving. The children have passed their exams—Palkó got grade 4s and Gyurika grade 5s. Palkó will have another eye test this week. He'll travel on Wednesday. Lacika is growing fast and is quite restless. Zsófi's teeth were treated by Tibor in Kőrös, but I don't know how successful it was. Nácika is studying well: he read the whole of Hornblauer and he is working at the tailor's workshop. Mum, dad and Ilus' family are all well. Now I'm managing to sleep and eat, which is important. My hair is turning grey and I'm putting on weight, in other words, I'm getting old. Don't send greetings to anyone, sweetheart, since you don't

know who it's worth sending greetings to. Write about yourself, as that is the only thing that matters. The children are doing exercises, although I can't teach them how. We've had lots of cherries this year and we've made lots of jam. We're taking care of our health, although I can hardly believe that it's down to anyone's will to avoid cancer or a heart attack. Believe me, I am proud of myself that I haven't gone mad and that I'm doing my duty. That's all I can do. We think of you lots, and of course we're afraid and we worry, but you should feel only our support and our efforts to make things easier for you. I'll try to buy cheaper wood from the forestry—I hope I'll be able to.

We send warm hugs and kisses to you, and I very softly and gently kiss your eyes. Zsófi.

With love, Mum, Palkó, Gyurika.

(APPROVED)

XVIII. From the diary of Andor and Zsolt Fekete, 1957.

…to study nor to play.
His sons are expecting daddy home from prison.

Daddy returned home on 30 November.

Our father has returned.

Thanks to you our Heavenly Father
For returning our father to us.
We hug him and embrace him
And stroke his bald head.

Work in the slammer no more,
But in the council rather more.

XIX. From the diary of Andor and Zsolt Fekete, 1957.
(above)

You fill with joy our hearts and souls,
When you walk in the Polytechnic's doors.

Father was arrested on Wednesday 20 February 1957 at 4 pm. Father was taken to the court on 28 March 1957 at 4 pm.

(below, drawings)

A Hungarian soldier from the war of liberation in 1848–49
A soldier of Rákóczi [leader of a war of liberation] 1703–1711
János Hunyadi 1397–1456

XX. Letter from Magdolna Földvári to her father, 10 January 1958. (She was not aware that her father was in prison.)

> My darling father,
> I am sending you a photo taken at school while I was working in my school uniform. At the moment there is a break, but sadly the weather is bad. It's muddy everywhere. My dear father, I often think of you. I can hardly wait to hug you again. A million kisses from your daughter, little Magdi.
>
> (APPROVED)

XXI. Letter from the relatives of those executed for their participation in the revolutionary events in Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár to the Ministry of Justice, 4 November 1989.

> We the undersigned, the relatives of those executed after the so-called Mosonmagyaróvár trial, together declare that we still request the exhumation and identification of those executed in 1957 and 1958 who are buried in the prison cemetery in Sopronkőhida, despite the continued cavilling on the part of the Ministry. The site of the burial and the location of the graves have been precisely identified by the opposition round table in Sopron, and, in addition, one individual who took part in the burial has shown the site to László Tihanyi. Furthermore, László Tihanyi was informed that no burials were carried out either before or afterwards at that site.
>
> We hereby demand that our request for the exhumation and identification of the bodies be fulfilled as soon as possible.
>
> 4 November 1989, Sopron.
>
> Yours faithfully: Mrs Ferenc Szeidemann (relative of Lajos Cziffrik; Mrs Gábor Földes (relative of Gábor Földes); Csilla Gulyás and Anikó Gulyás (Mrs Andrási) (relatives of Lajos Gulyás); Mrs István Szőcs (relative of Antal Kiss); Mrs László Weintráger (relative of László Weintráger); László Tihanyi (relative of Árpád Tihanyi); Mrs László Polgár (relative of István Török); Miklós Zsigmond (relative of Imre Zsigmond); Mrs László Árvai (relative of Attila Szigethy).

XXII. Marker on the grave of József Andi in plot 301, carved by his son Károly.

XXIII. Farewell letter from István Kolozsi to his son, sent from the prison in Miskolc, 21 October 1958.

> My dear little son,
> Now that I am writing to you for the last time, my darling little boy, I say farewell to you with an aching heart and with warm fatherly love.
>
> My little one, I have always loved you very much. I loved you from the moment you were born. Your dear mother and I brought you up with high hopes and in difficult circumstances. Now, as I say farewell to you as a father, I think of your future with solicitude, your future life, your education, and everything that will affect you.
>
> I have been thinking a great deal about you during my time here. I knew deep down that I would never be back with you, although I wanted to give you so many things as you set out into life.

My little one, be a very good son to your mother. Be obedient, study hard, and help your lonely mother in everything. Always remember that your goodness and gentleness will make your mother very happy.

You will be an orphan, my little son, and left quite alone. You must love your big brother, little István, very much, because from now on he will be your guardian and your dear, loving brother. Mind what he says. Listen to his good and wise words. Never forget your loving father, but instead of me love your mother, respect and obey her, and help her in everything. And sometimes visit your father's grave.

Be honest and sincere with your mother and with little István. Never be too credulous because people do not deserve honesty. Most people will abuse your trust.

Study diligently. Make your poor, sad mother and your brother happy. Try to make them cheerful always, and don't be sad. I want you to be a cheerful boy and I wish you lots of happiness in your life. There is one thing I ask of you, my little one. There is one thing you should never get involved in: Politics! Always steer clear of it.

Be a good man—diligent, industrious and obedient—because with such qualities you will earn the respect of those around you and make them happy. Think often of your father, who loves you to the grave and beyond and who could not give you his full fatherly love for reasons beyond his control.

I love you, and I have always loved you, and I send you many warm, fatherly kisses for the last time. Your loving father, who hugs and kisses you with undying fatherly love and affection.

XXIV. Child's drawing.

XXV. From the diary of Andor and Zsolt Fekete, 1957.

A soldier of Rákóczi [leader of a war of liberation]

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