

## INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of two world wars and the sacrifice of millions of lives, in the wake of the Holocaust and the horrors of the atomic bomb, it was possible to assume that humanity would unite in creating a free and peaceful world. Based on the new international treaties advocating human rights and the United Nations Charter, pledging to defend democracy and national sovereignty, it was possible to assume that future humanity would be governed by the laws of reason in spite of the existence of two opposing world views. But these hopeful assumptions gave way to a bitter reality: the weapons in Europe had hardly fallen silent in May of 1945 before the Red Army—stationed in Eastern Europe as a condition of the treaty at Yalta—began the bolshevization of those vanquished nations. In cooperation with the local Communist parties, the occupying Soviet forces completely violated the rules that were meant to establish new, independent states. Joseph Stalin, then at the height of his unbridled dictatorship, predicted it would take two to three years to weld the nations of Eastern Europe into a Communist bloc. When quiet threats and compromises did not bring about the desired ends, merciless terror no less barbaric than the atrocities of the Nazis was considered justified.

*The Long Road to Revolution* is the story of this bolshevization process in Hungary: an account of how the Hungarian state became a Communist vassal of the Soviet Union; an account of the notorious ten year reign of the Stalinist Rakosi regime in

Hungary—of the life in the prisons and death-camps, of the staged trials and executions, all hitherto kept secret or distorted; finally, it is an account of the democratic resistance that culminated in the people's uprising of 1956, ending ten years of terror.

The revolution which erupted in Budapest in October 1956 shook the world. Politicians and the members of various secret services listened to the news coming from Hungary with disbelief; the events of the uprising surprised even the Hungarians themselves. The most miraculous revelation of the revolt was that the country had remained united despite ten years of re-education campaigns and attempts to undermine national unity. Hungarians had taken a stand on the side of freedom over oppression and, if only for a few days, the country had regained its independence.

The rest is history. The Western powers were diverted with the Suez crisis, President Eisenhower proclaimed his anti-war policy, and the Communist states agreed to go along with Khrushchev's plan. The Red Army, with its military superiority, was thus given free reign to crush a nation's long dream of freedom. When all was over, the so-called experts came along, and from comfortable editorial offices and research institutes began to analyze the revolution, invent the whys and hows, pretend to understand the causes which incited a nation to revolt or the forces which made young people climb barricades, throw home-made bombs and risk their lives. Some of these analyses contained a grain of truth, others were pure fantasy. Few exhibited an awareness of the real reasons for the armed resistance of a demoralized country. Few knew about what had taken place behind the scenes. Few knew of the increasing bitterness that cemented the resolve of an entire nation to resist the Communist party. For lack of other explanations, almost everyone accepted the mendacious statements of the Communist propaganda machinery.

The revolution of 1956 had its beginnings in 1946, in the first years of the Soviet occupation, and continued after 1948 when

the Communist dictatorship forcibly took power. By 1956 many factors had contributed to the fomenting of revolution: the various resistance movements and anti-Communist campaigns instigated from the West; the open warfare between the Communist counter-intelligence and the resistance; the thousands arrested, jailed and executed. All these culminated in the formation of one unified voice, one unified goal. The people had endured enough terror, oppression, exploitation and poverty. The people wanted freedom, democracy and national independence. Thousands paid with their lives before the nation forced the political and military leadership, weapons in hand, to capitulate. Long was the road between 1946 and 1956.

When I published my first book in 1978, entitled *Börtönvilág Magyarországon* (The Prison World in Hungary), and then a few years later, *Szovjetvilág Magyarországon* (Soviet World in Hungary), many of my friends and compatriots encouraged me to have them translated into English. They considered it important to inform the Western world about the Hungarian resistance between 1945 and the outbreak of the revolution in 1956, a resistance actively defying the Communist dictatorship and the occupying Soviet army. This book is the product of their urging, a combined volume of the two Hungarian editions. In this new book, which is the first publication about the ten years of the Rakosi regime, all the accounts are derived from my own personal experience or the testimonies of my former prisoners who circulated in the hell of Hungary's prison world. This is what we lived through.

The validity of the documents used is illustrated by the fact that the Communist leaders in Hungary did not attempt to deny them; on the contrary, a televised book review in Hungary acknowledged that the documents credibly depict the reign of terror that existed during the Stalin-Rakosi years. It is a testimony to the changes that are taking place in Hungary today that my books will be published in Hungarian in my homeland—something unthinkable a few years ago.

I spent eight years in prison (1949-1956), most of the time under extremely difficult, inhumane circumstances. The Hungarian revolution of October 1956 brought me and thousands of other political prisoners our freedom. The suffering I endured left me with little desire for revenge towards my torturers, but I am often reminded that I was robbed of eight years of my youth, potentially the most beautiful. I cannot, however, suppress my bitterness towards those in the West who directly or indirectly caused the death of hundreds and the destruction of families in the name of self-serving anti-Communist propaganda. Through their encouraging influence, agitation and false promises, these entities used the Hungarian resistance for their own ends.

The Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest on 4 November 1956, crushing the revolution. A month later, I escaped to Vienna. In January 1957, at the continued urging of my friends, I began to record these events. I wrote my account as it lived in my memory, vividly at that time—adding or detracting nothing, as faithfully as I was able. May it encourage mankind to remember those who died for the freedom of their country. I strongly believe that their sacrifice was not in vain. The passage Albert Camus wrote in 1957 has been realized in the Eastern Europe of today:<sup>1</sup>

And if world opinion is too feeble or egoistical to do justice to a martyred people, and if our voices also are too weak, I hope that Hungary's resistance will endure until the counter-revolutionary State collapses everywhere in the East under the weight of its lies and contradictions.

István Fehérváry  
1989

<sup>1</sup> Albert Camus, *The Blood of the Hungarians*. Written in 1957 to commemorate the first anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.