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Mindszenty's 'Guilty' False, Hungarian Deputy Testifies

Editor's Note: Here is testimony bearing on the authenticity—or lack of it—of the "confession" of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary. It comes from the pen of a prominent Hungarian refugee who wants the world to know that on at least one important point, the alleged confession of Mindszenty is spurious.

By DR. BELA FABIAN

Written exclusively for NEA Service

On Dec. 27, 1948, an exasperated Hungarian government ordered the arrest of a man who refused to be silent—Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty.

The "evidence" against him is now being produced in the Budapest People's Court and I wish to assert of my own knowledge that it is spurious in at least one important regard. Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty was not anti-semitic as he had allegedly confessed. Of that I have overwhelming proof—and if his "confession" is false in that regard, what can the world believe of the strange drama being enacted in Hungary?

The government, headed by Premier Istvan Dobi, a Communist wearing the label of the Small-Holders Party, tried to reason with the Cardinal before arresting him. If only he would limit himself to ecclesiastical matters and stay out of politics, he was told, he would be left alone.

But Mindszenty had too many years experience fighting the Nazi terror in Hungary to retreat in his current fight with the Communists.

The last remaining powerful figure east of the Iron Curtain to oppose Soviet totalitarianism, he insisted on speaking out openly for its principles. And, to the embarrassment of the government, the people listened to him. Finally, after a long compaign of vilification against him he was arrested on trumped-up charges.

Among the many fantastic charges brought against Cardinal Mindszenty during his trial is the charge that he had personally sponsored anti-semitism propaganda prior to World War II. To this accusation Cardinal Mindszenty pleaded guilty with the strangely weak explanation that he had done so because "it was the spirit of the times."

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On the matter of Cardinal Mindszenty and anti-semitism, I feel particularly qualified to speak because as a leader of the Hungarian Jewish Community and as a member of the Hungarian parliament for 17 years, I personally was acquainted with Cardinal Mindszenty and had occasion to discuss the problem of anti-semitism with him. I would be prepared to testify—if such a thing as free testimony were possible before a Communist court — that far from supporting anti-semitic propaganda Cardinal Mindszenty was in the forefront of the struggle against Nazism and anti-semitism and that he more than once risked his life to save Jews from the Nazis.

There are two historic facts which the prosecutors of Mindszenty are compelled to suppress in order to make their case against him.

• • •

While there were many Catholic Bishops who were convinced anti-Nazis, the Nazis out of deference to public opinion in Catholic countries generally did not venture to arrest them. Only in the case of Mindszenty did they feel compelled to risk antagonizing Christian opinion by arresting him and imprisoning him.

Fact number two is that in recognition of his anti-Nazi activity during the war, Mindszenty was unanimously awarded an estate of 500 acres by a commission which included four Communists, among them Matyas Rakosi, the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party and Laslow Rajk, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs.

It was in 1935 that the name of Joseph Mindszenty, then a vicar from the town of Zalaegerszeg in southern Hungary, first became prominent throughout the country. Disturbed by certain anti-Jewish leaflets which had been distributed by the "Arrow Cross"—the native Nazi party—he called a meeting of the county officials in defiance of the opposition of the local Prefect, Count Bela Teleki, who later became Premier under the Nazis. He made a stirring speech against anti-semitism which received wide publicity throughout the country. From then on, the Arrow Cross made him its principal target. He became the spiritual leader of the Hungarian anti-Nazi movement.

• • •

I first met Joseph Mindszenty in 1940 at a meeting in Budapest which I attended as the leader of the Opposition of Pest Prefecture. His appearance was deceptive, failing to reveal the great energy and spiritual power which he possessed. He talked clearly and resolutely. At the time I was concerned about the anti-semitic activities of Count Teleki and discussed them with Mindszenty. He was as distressed about Teleki's behavior as I.

Later, in 1941, when the Nazis overran Yugoslavia, Mindszenty, at that time Bishop of Zala, called upon Hungarian Prime Minister Bardossy to try to prevent the massacre of the Jews, most of them of Hungarian origin, who lived across the border from his diocese. Bardossy answered by stating that he had no means of intervening in the affairs of the German army. When Mindszenty persisted, he retorted:

"You should concern yourself with matters of your diocese and not with the foreign affairs of Hungary."

"It is sad enough," answered Mindszenty, "that I, a vicar, have to remind the Prime Minister of his duties. My request is supported not only by the Catholics of Zala but by those of the entire country."

"Your worship is forgetting himself. . . ."

"No, I am not forgetting anything, Mr. Prime Minister. I have seen prime ministers leave this palace dead as well as alive. I shall still be a vicar when the nation has condemned you to your fate."

The Nazis occupied Hungary in the spring of 1944, and the Jews were immediately herded into ghettos. Mindszenty, by now Archbishop of Veszprem, ostentatiously paid a visit to the ghetto and later, in a pastoral letter, condemned the inhumanity of the quisling Hungarian government.

• • •

After I escaped from imprisonment in Auschwitz years later, I ran into one of my fellow-deputies, Dezso Sulyok. He related to me that after he had been thrown into a concentration camp for anti-Nazi activities, Mindszenty made a long trip to the camp to obtain his release. The officer in charge suggested that Mindszenty telephone the pro-Nazi Minister of the Interior. Andrew Jaross. Mindszenty refused to deal directly with any member of the government.

"Then I do not know what I can do," said the police officer.

Mindszenty answered. "If you insist on throwing into prison all those who despise the Arrow Cross because it is against God and because it is anti-Christian, then I must ask you to lock me up, too."

The officer became frightened and begged Mindszenty to leave. He did later obtain the release of Sulyok.

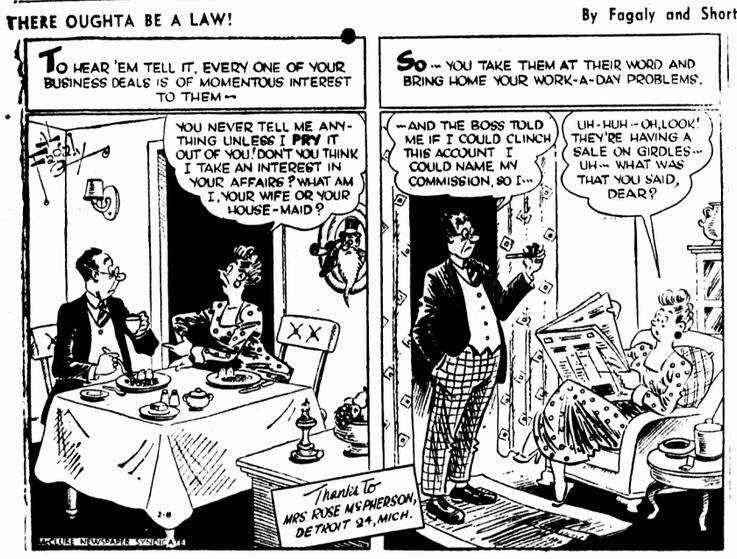
In the fall of 1944, after the Arrow Cross took power in Hungary, the police conducted a manhunt for Bela Varga, vice-president of the Small-Holders Party.

When Mindszenty discovered Varga's hiding place, he sent his own archdiocesan car for him. Varga went to Budapest where Varga once again went into hiding. The influence of Mindszenty, together with the intervention of President Roosevelt and King Gustav of Sweden, was largely responsible for the fact that 60 per cent of Budapest's Jews survived the war.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Dr. Bela Fabian was a member of the Hungarian parliament for 17 years; President of the Hungarian Independent Democratic Party; President of the Hungarian Jewish War Veteran's Association; a member of the Jewish Board of Hungary and Budapest; was a prisoner of war in Russia in World War I; was imprisoned under the Communist dictatorship of Bela Kun; was in four different Nazi concentration camps during World War II; is the author of many books and articles.

THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW! By Fagaly and Shorten



OUR BOARDING HOUSE Major Hoople

The Harvey Girls

Continued from page 2

ened the girl almost into her earlier terror. She fairly ran off. Her two friends were hugging her. The master of ceremonies, his voice husky, was trying to persuade her back to the stage. She escaped and found refuge in a dim corner.

It was a tough spot for the following number, but Hazel delivered a slightly expurgated scene from The Rivals so spiritedly that before her time was up, she had quite overcome the initial handicap of the unforgotten strains. Summoned to take a bow, she observed Tim, the counterman, advancing down the middle aisle with a superb bouquet of Jacqueminot roses. "Hot stuff coming up," he said in the Harvey lingo, handing them to her.

Puzzled, she buried her nose in the crimson fragrance and waved an acknowledgment to the audience with professional sang-froid. Alma, waiting backstage, pounced upon her. "You were grand! And such roses!"

Miss Bliss came up. "Those flowers never came from anywhere short of Los Angeles," she pronounced.

"That's right," confirmed the grinning Tim. "They came in, special, on Number Four."

"Compliments of Christopher Maule," the recipient read from a card.

"Your-Englishman!"

"He isn't my Englishman. Besides, where would he get the money?"

"I can answer that," put in Dr. Leonard Gibson in Alma's ear. "From me. Said he needed ten dollars at once for a very serious purpose. I can see how it might be serious, myself," he observed.

"If he'd heard Deb sing, I'd never have got 'em," said Hazel generously. "She stole the show."

"Where did she get to?" asked Alma.

"Look!" directed her friend. "Over in the corner. Our mouse has caught an elephant." Little Deb was sitting, smiling up at Judge Ezra Purvis. "I wonder how long that's been going on," Hazel muttered.

The doctor answered. "He made a beeline for her as soon as the show was over. Shall I go over and break up the party?"

"You won't have to. See who's coming now."

The Judge straightened up and made way for the slender, supple figure of Ned Trent. The gamoler was saying with a smile, "I knew you'd live up to my prospectus of you. I heard you sing one night. Just a bar or two."

"I thought it was you who answered," she said shyly.

"I could tell you were frightened tonight."

"Not after I saw you looking at me. I knew you loved music."

"I used to be a choir singer —in another life. But I'm not as good as you are, and never was. This won't be your last public appearance," he prophesied.

"I've had one offer already. Judge Purvis wants me to sing in his concerts. He'll pay me five dollars a night. You work there don't you?" she said.

"Yes," he answered coolly. "I run the gambling tables. I'm a bad, bad, man."

"You don't look bad. I shouldn't be afraid to sing if you were there."

"Do you mean to give up your job here?"

"Why, of course not! I love it."

"You'd have to. They wouldn't have a dance-hall girl at Harvey's." Seeing that she still failed to comprehend, he said: "They're readying up for the dance in the other room. May I have the first?"

"Oh, no! I couldn't."

His eyes were intent upon her. "Because I'm a gambler? Well if you don't want to dance with me—"

"I do. Oh, I do! But I can't. I don't know how."

Again he smiled. Deb wondered that she could have thought him hard.

(To be continued)

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Grade IV.—1, Anne Matheson.

Grade III A.—1, Glen MacKinnon; 2, Annie MacKinnon; 3, Sinclair MacKinnon.

Grade III. B.—1, Harold McCarron.

Grade II.—1, Evy Lou Bears.

Grade I. A.—1, Sandra McCarron; 2, Gladys MacKinnon.

Grade I. B.—1, Ruth Matheson; 2, Gladys MacKinnon.

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