

An Interview with Dr. Denes Bara

Survival: Lives of Hungarians under Communist
and Capitalist Governments 1956-2006
Oral History Series

Interviews conducted by
Virginia Major Thomas
in 2007

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Denes Bara, "An Interview with Denes Bara", conducted by Virginia Major Thomas in 2007, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2010.

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Family, early education and fate of family—life under Szalasi and the Arrow Cross and the liberation of Budapest—life under the Russians—arrival in Szeged and life there—in the university of Szeged—life under Rakosi, marriage and army service—1956 Revolution, its effects and the Kadar regime—transition governments—political situation in Hungary today.

Biography

Denes Bara was a physician in Szeged, Hungary. He grew up in Horthy-era Budapest, escaped in a Swiss safe house there the Arrow Cross killing of Jews, and after the Russian army entered the city he fled and by chance ended up in Szeged. He tells here of his life in Szeged under the Communist rulers Rakosi and Kadar, of his going to medical school and serving as a doctor in the army, of the effects of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and of various aspects of the capitalist governments after 1989.

Miklos Jakabffy, translator

- Thomas: This is Major Thomas at Jozsef Attila sugarut 24 in Szeged, Hungary, and we are interviewing Dr. Bara Denes on November 19, 2007, and first we'll ask Dr. Bara where he was born and the date and a little bit about his family.
- Bara: November 16, 1925 in Budapest. Mattilde Meller was my mother and she was from the town of Győr. My father Bachrach Derso was from the town of Tab in the county of Somogy, south of Lake Balaton.
- Thomas: What did your father do?
- Bara: Interesting, he had the same profession as my wife's father, they were both technicians, my father was a technician repairing sewing machines and bicycles. At that time they were together.
- Thomas: And like Eva you became a doctor too. Both your fathers had the same profession and you two have the same profession. Tell me about your schooling.
- Bara: I attended school in Budapest. Madach was the name of the high school, on Barcsay Street. It was 4 years of elementary school and then 8 years of high school. Kertész Imre, the Nobel Prize winner, went there too.
- Thomas: This was in the Horthy years?
- Bara: The Horthy years and then Szalasi.
- Thomas: Yes! Please continue.
- Bara: It was the Hungarian Jews from the countryside that were taken to the death camps. That was in 1944, but at that time my family lived in Budapest already, and Churchill called it the worst crime in mankind's history. About 830,000 people lost everything, including our family, and 600,000 were cremated. This was under Horthy. This was in May of 1944 but Szalasi, the Hungarian Arrow Cross leader, took over only in October. My father was in Theresien, north of Prague, which was the "best" camp, and he also survived, unfortunately he died of typhus one month after it was liberated by the Americans. My mother had already passed away from natural causes in 1938. I had a sister, she also survived in the Jewish ghetto of Budapest. After Rome was taken by the Americans, there were in Budapest so-called "safe houses" and among them there were some run by the Vatican, and my sister also like myself was put in a forced labor team, digging ditches for the army, I didn't know but she ended up in one of the safe houses.
- Thomas: Were you in the army?

Bara: I was only 18, this was why I wasn't in the army, I would have been summoned to the army the next year. The forced labor was under Szalasi. As the world had sent a message to Horthy to stop the deportation of the Jews of Hungary, this was after having the Jews of the Hungarian countryside sent to the extermination camps, this was the luck of the Jewish population of Budapest mostly that they were not transported. When the Soviets arrived in Pest, I was a doorman in an auxiliary hospital in the ghetto, and I saw arriving Russian soldiers kicking, destroying by kicking, the wooden walls of the hospital dividing the hospital from the rest of the town, and for us this was the liberation! Later it turned into something else, but for us this was the great liberation! The next day already the Russians started to catch people on the sidewalks, on the streets, because many POW's successfully ran away, escaped, and it was only important for the Russians to have the same numbers, and it was easier for the Russians to catch people on the street than to chase the escaped POW's, so we were anxious when in the streets not to be caught by the Russians. In the auxiliary hospital we had an SS officer, a Nazi, he was shot and he had collapsed during the fight, and we were curing him. I asked Dr. Bara, What did you do with him? The Nazis were killing the Jews and now the Jews are healing an Nazi SS officer? Well, he was not killing us, he was injured in the fight and we had to take care of him, this was our job----not mine, I was only the doorman, but the doctors----this poor officer had to be taken care of. But when the Soviets arrived, then he shouted loudly, "Glorious Israel, you have won!" (laughter) But I want to mention a friend of my wife Eva's who had a bad time in the extermination camp seeing his son starving to death in the same barrack next to him, and he himself, Uncle Gottlieb, managed to get home, he survived. But here in Hungary he was caught by the Russians and sent to Siberia, and in Siberia he lost both of his feet due to the cold. He came back and here in Szeged I met him personally and he was telling me here in the dialect of Szeged about his plans. He was the best-willed person in the world, he was the deputy manager of the factory where Eva's father worked, everybody loved him, he helped everybody, but he deserved better from the fates.

Thomas: When did Denes go to medical school?

Bara: Before that happened, under Szalasi I was in a safe house, it was a Swiss house, it was the Lutz safe house, but the day after I got there the Hungarian Nazis, the Arrow Cross, came and tore up our safe letters, our documents, so half of the people were taken to the Danube and shot into the Danube, and the part where I was were taken to the ghetto, that's how I got in the ghetto. Before that, I was in a transport on foot going from Budapest to the west, toward Wien, towards Germany, because Szalasi had made an agreement with Hitler that the Hungarian forced labor would make a fort on the Austrian border. But at a place called Gonyu during the night I escaped with a woman from the same unit because we were told that we were going to be put in a boat on the Danube and they were going to sink that boat to get rid of us. This is why we escaped during the night. We were walking on the road in the

middle of the night, it was completely dark, and all of a sudden we ran into two Hungarian gendarmes, and they wanted to know what we were doing there. I was already tall and played sports in one of the sports club where Jews were admitted, but in this situation I tried to make myself smaller, and this woman spoke very well, and she started to tell the gendarmes, "We are going to the hospital in Komarom"----a major town in the county----"and I take this poor child to the hospital".

She said her husband was a wealthy person, and soon things were going to change and then they would need help themselves, and then her wealthy husband would help them, they had better let her go now. She introduced herself as "Mrs. Kohn". To continue, we got into Komarom, but she was caught, she put a scarf over her head like a peasant woman but she was caught and I never ever had a chance to see her again. She disappeared forever. I was alone, I just sat in front of the railroad station, and there I was so what should I do? My best luck was that someone from the sports club came there and this person gave me 20 pengos and with that I could buy a ticket to get to Budapest. At the railroad station, all entrances were guarded by the Arrow Cross except one, so I used that exit obviously, and I went home, and I had to go to bed because I had a high fever. The entire house was empty because the people were carried away from that house. There were Christians there, two or three, they were nice people, we knew each other, we were friendly. I lived in Isabella Square and this nice neighbor called somebody to take me from Isabella Square to the safe house in Pozsony ut because it was too dangerous for me to go on the street. So my sister had a partner who was not Jewish and he was in a military parachutist dress and he came to meet me and take me there. When we were on the street and met somebody who knew one of us they were astonished at what the situation was, but if it was a peculiar situation we pretended to enter the next house or looking for something. But at that time Budapest was not in the complete circle of the Russians. The siege of Budapest was one of the worst in World War II after the siege of Stalingrad. In the safe house we became very easy, because everybody----we were 10 or 20 in one flat----and everybody was comforted by the thought that nothing can happen to us, for us the war was over. The next day, half of the people were taken and shot into the Danube, and the other half was taken to the ghetto. So this was the anticipation of the future: the people spoke with ease to each other, "It is better that the Russians come. I won't have 5 dresses, I will only have 2". From the safe house we were taken to the vicinity of the railroad station in the Jozsef district, and there was a house where there were many Jews. During the night we were there together with my father and we changed shoes. He had better shoes, but our anticipation was that because I was the younger I would need better shoes because they would take me and he as the older would be left behind. The next day the train got very crowded and there was no more room. I managed to hide in the big house, and when I looked out I saw that my father had not been put on the train because it was too crowded and so the left-overs were made to make up units, and my father was in the first row, and as I watched I saw after a while an Arrow cross man

said “Okay, there is room for a few more, so the first row should move”, and this is how my father was taken.

Thomas: He went from there to Teresienstadt?

Bara: Father was in different locations, the end was Teresien. The next regime was finding those nice people. The neighbor who called for my sister’s friend to take me to the safe house retired during the Communist system as a police colonel, and the boyfriend of my sister became a deputy general manager of a boat factory. I only don’t know about the sports club friend who gave me the money, probably he was killed.

To the question, how did you get to the university, that’s easy, I was hungry. For 3 months I could only eat the dry outer part of the bread. It was at the hospital where I was a doorman, old women gave me that food because I helped them to turn around and things like that. At that time the ordinary military staff was fighting against the Russians, and the Arrow Cross were searching the houses and flats for dissidents and people in hiding, not only Jews but the many people who had escaped from the army because they saw there was no use fighting anymore. So the Arrow Cross was searching for people and taking valuables, they were robbing people. When I was on the march toward Vienna those who couldn’t keep up were shot dead on the spot and the bodies were in the ditches on both sides of the road. The liberation in Pest was nice but we had no food at all, we were starving. But the chocolate and sweet factory was open, and we ran into the factory and there were candied fruits on the floor all around, but I had no bag, however I found a really big bag that was full of nuts and that I carried home and everybody was given a few nuts, and that’s how we survived. I wanted to go to the countryside which is why I decided to leave Budapest, and I went along the street down to the south out of the city. There I met the regular Soviet army, and they were all along the width of the road and on the side were the military police, those were mostly or often women who kept up the march and order of the units. I went into several farms, but I wasn’t given any food at all because the farmers killed their livestock and dug and hid them from the Russians. There the Russians with their revolvers were threatening each other to get what they could. I was often stopped by the Russian units and I had no documents, no paper at all except my high school paper, which the Russians couldn’t read because it was not in Cyrillic. But I had a side bag, and in that I had some black thread, and they were so happy to find it they took it and let me go. I met a couple from Budapest who had the strongest most valuable currency for the Russians, they had a bottle of rum! As the family showed the Russians the bottle of rum, I was with them, and the Russians gave us a ride on their military truck. In both directions on the road we met prisoners of war, big huge units, and our Russians were very nice, when we passed these units they threw something over us to hide us. We had no idea where we were going, but finally they dropped us in Szeged in the Kossuth Lajos railroad. So I ran into the first pastry shop where I was dropped, and I had 20 pengos, and

I purchased pie and I ate as much pie as I could. Somebody on the street had seen that from my side bag something was hanging out, and that was my clean shirt, and he wanted to have the shirt. So I sold him the shirt for 40 pengos, and this was a tremendous fortune, I felt rich, and I immediately entered the first restaurant in Szeged, which was well supplied then, and I ordered myself a huge portion of paprika chicken!

Thomas: So you really ended up in Szeged by accident?

Bara: Yes, because the Russian truck dropped us here. And this is when my happy life began. Szeged was untouched. The bridges and some houses were blown up, but everything else was intact. So my happy life began because I checked in to the university. I never ever had money but here I found different organizations who were doing charity and they gave me money so I could rent a room.

Thomas: And he had his high school papers.

Bara: It was easier having my high school papers but even without them I would have been admitted because at that time they were not needed. When I checked in I took lessons from the earlier Nobel Prize winner Szent-gyorgi but I never met him thereafter. It was in February 1945, we were at the most 15 people, and it was a busy life here in Szeged because Hungarians from neighboring countries which were under other governments came here as well as those who could manage to get out of other parts of the country like Budapest. The kitchens and the store rooms were filled with food so it was a good life. EVA, Denes's wife, adds: We lived in a village and I remember in the house where we lived there was a big pot to store fat which was filled with fat and meat, but it was hidden in a deep hole dug in the ground in case the Russians came and took everything but we would still have that. In Hungary there were not very many Communists at that time, but here in Szeged they found one, later a leader, a very well-known name, Komocsin Zoltan, and he as the local Communist was put forward to be the leader and he established civil guards who were watching out, and the Russians did no crimes here any longer than the first month because the guards would report to Komocsin and if it involved the Russian army, then Komocsin would report it to the Russian leaders and there was order here. There were many different interesting greetings on the street, such as "I honor you, Uncle", that was a local voice, and another voice would say "Oh you are alive too", that was a refugee's voice. The busiest cultural life in 1945 was here in Szeged, there was a famous theatrical personality here, and I enjoyed this very much. Almost every evening I would go to the cheapest place available in the highest seats farthest from the stage and I enjoyed all the performances of all the operas.

Thomas: How did he get any work done at the university, going to operas every night?

Bara: This was special in the entire country, the security and safety, the performance started at 7:00 in the evening and was over at 10:00 and everybody could walk safely on the streets. It was a good life until summer, because the many people consumed all the available food, and by May or June the markets were empty. For a short while the farmers carried food into the city but then they ran out of food too, and then what you found on the market was only pumpkin or pumpkin seeds. The grain, corn, that was formerly given to the animals was used with melasz poured over it. Melasz is the raw sugar in the sugar factory, the first product you get from the sugar beet, that is a dark syrupy sweet liquid which could also be given to animals, this was very valuable on the market. It was a funny situation with the Russians in Szeged after the war was over, because the Russians were put in the army barracks and those officers who had family had their family with them in the barracks and they had schools for the children. But the Russians couldn't go out. So the Russians were in Szeged but they couldn't go out of their barracks.

Thomas: I guess that was good.

Bara: Yes! That was an advantage! So it was a good life until the dissidents of Szeged returned from the west, because I could choose where I wanted to live, but when the owners of the flat returned then I had to move to the next one. It was funny that the charity organizations gave out clothes as well. I remember I got a beautiful brown jacket, and I was so happy with it, but when I wanted to show it to my friends then I saw that earlier it was owned by a person who had a humpback. So I was studying at the university and there was tuition to pay, but it was very good that those who passed every semester their exams successfully didn't have to pay the tuition.

Thomas: That's a very strong motive to study hard.

Bara: At that time the half-year exams were not mandatory, they were optional. There were people who hadn't passed any exams for five years, ten semesters.

Thomas: But they couldn't get a degree then.

Bara: If you hadn't passed your exams you couldn't continue. When I was in the third year I went to the pathology institute, I was working there but not only working but I was lecturing, I was only in the third year, I was lecturing people of my own age, and I continued this for three years, although I didn't get paid anything but I didn't have to pay.

Thomas: Did you learn a lot from teaching others?

Bara: Of course.

Thomas: Is the university the same as the medical school? In other words, when he goes to the university he has medical courses?

Bara:

Yes. It was the Szeged Science University and it had different science faculties, the medical faculty, the science faculty and so forth. This was general medicine. It was not a general university. We were very lucky that the Americans were so nice, the gold stock captured by the Americans in Austria was sent back to Hungary and this was the basis of the very strong forint. In '49 I got my first salary which was 600 forints. It was a huge sum. The price of two chickens was one forint. So I purchased many things, clothing, a warm winter blanket, many things. In Hungary there was a good factory manufacturing radios, so I bought a new radio. I had a good life until I met Eva. She helped me in science, she was working in science also, and in '53 we married. This is when my second happy period started. This is for many the worst period in the post-war history because it is the time of the Hungarian equivalent of Stalin, Rakosi. I had a rented room and she arrived with all her fortune, it was a big bag like a plastic bag today. I had lost everything during the Arrow Cross period, under Szalasi, even my wrist watch was taken by the Arrow Cross, so I was not interesting to the Russians because I didn't have anything. But during the Rakosi period it was unfortunate that one had to attend all kinds of courses besides the medical courses, there were many meetings, mostly political, and no matter how stupid it was everybody had to listen. We not only had to listen, we had to answer questions. So we figured out that when there was a political question we answered the opposite of what we would have thought was logical, and that was the right answer. Although this affected everyday life, this was my second happy period because then we had the children. The bad luck was when I graduated as a medical doctor I had two times to serve as a medical doctor in the army for 6 months, Eva mentioned that in her interview. Then it was very interesting in the spring of 1956. I was in the army for that summer, and the Russian army was to move out of Austria, and my unit was on the border on the Austrian side to clean up the mine field. But there was no map of the mine field. My good luck was that because it was such dangerous work all the doctors ran away, and that left me, because I had just entered the army, as the only doctor, and I was very highly appreciated by all the soldiers and officers. There were 3, 4, 5 explosions a day and many injuries, so legs and arms were lost, and because I was a doctor I was carried preciously everywhere, I was put where I would be safe, and there were other sub-officers who worked who had some medical experience. Many of the mines were attached to the fence which was on the border, and the soldiers dropped me 30 feet from the fence. Once I was hanging around there and I saw in front of me a deer coming to the fence on the Austrian side, and I started to pray that the deer wouldn't touch the fence which would then explode, and this was the ten minutes when I got my white hair! But the deer went away. At first I went in the army in '51, and there was much stupid stuff in the army, but it was not dramatic for me except the miraculous use of penicillin, which was new in this country at that time. We had a huge army at the time of Rakosi, that was when penicillin was given to the army, and whatever the disease, pneumonia or sexual diseases, I just gave penicillin and what had taken six months to heal was healed in a few days. I had a hospital

room with six beds. In 1951 there were built really an unnecessarily large number of hospitals in the countryside, we had full medical staffs in them, because it was thought that Hungary would be the first country to get the Russian wounded in case during the cold war of a confrontation on the Austro-Hungarian border. I had friends who were heads of the hospitals they were in who had nothing to do because there were no patients there, because the hospitals were built for supposed future needs. Now there is discussion in the parties about why we reorganize the medical system in this country, that so many hospitals are unnecessary and the government party plans to stop the operation of many hospitals, and many people dispute this, asking why is it necessary, because they do not understand that many hospitals were built for the supposed military needs of World War III and do not understand why the politicians want to shut down the hospitals, and there is no talk that there will be no Third World War, at least not here. And then there were training camps for pharmacists.at that time, women training as pharmacists. Today in Hungary the big fuss is about non-prescription drugs being sold at gas stations----in your country that's been happening who knows how long, but it is new here----non-prescription drugs being sold in supermarkets.....

Thomas: And over the internet.

Bara: Not here yet. But Denes says that then they weren't worrying about drugs being sold in supermarkets, then the fuss was about the women pharmacists being able to clean themselves because the camps had no showers! (laughter) But in my life, on October 20, 1956, I finished my second period in the army and I came back home to Szeged, and 3 days later the 1956 Revolution started.

Thomas: Did your medical life change significantly after 1956?

Bara: No, I did the same. For me there were no changes. Now we arrive at the Kadar era. What was the greatest advantage of the 1956 Revolution? The flourishing of the west European Communist parties was over, when they realized what the Soviet regime was doing. Those Communist parties in certain Mediterranean, south European countries, like France, Italy and Greece, were very strong, and in Greece they were very close to having a Communist system like Yugoslavia under Tito, and it was so to speak brought under control, and in France for instance it was a question who would win the next election, the Communists or DeGaulle. The Americans made a smart intervention with the Marshall plan. But the major effect of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was that the Communist parties of western Europe lost their popularity. That returned the Communist party to where it belonged, one of the available several parties in the election system.

Thomas: I think now that historians, in America anyway, say that 1956 was the beginning of the decline of Communism, the beginning of 1989.

- Bara: Yes, yes. We are now at the Kadar regime. There was a big difference between 1956 and 1963 because during that period the Kadar regime reestablished Communism with reprisals in this country, and by 1963 private property was permitted, which was the basis of the flourishing of the country. For example, we got a weekend house at Lake Balaton. This is how they let people buy certain things which earlier was not possible. Kadar understood that people cannot be commanded or directed as was done earlier, so certain freedom, certain property should be permitted. It was a permanent improvement. Everybody knew that next year will be a better year, we won't have the level of living of western Europe or the United States, but a little bit better. It is interesting why the nation was behind Kadar. The class which experienced the most advantages were the peasants. It was very smart of the Communists that they nationalized the big farms, the privatization and giving the land to the peasants, so that the aristocracy and the church lost everything and the land was given to the farmers. They profited and this is how the Communists gained their support. On the other hand, it was a big loss when they started, ordered the cooperatives, the farmers were ordered to "volunteer" their goods into the cooperatives. This was the basis for making the peasants the class which had the most advantages under Communism, they got the most benefits, because when the cooperatives were formed in Hungary it was a special "garden cooperative" where around the farmer's house where he lived with his family a kind of garden was left over as his private land. Let's say if he had 2 acres, he had to give 1.8 to the cooperative, but the rest around his house was his own, and one cow would be left over for him. This is why everybody got lazy in the cooperatives in the everyday 8-hour work day because after that he would go home and cultivate his own garden, and this was what I call "garden communism" because the farmers got to be the richest by the income from the cooperative with their own produce, part of which they could eat but part of which they could sell for income which was not taxed.
- Thomas: So they had two incomes?
- Bara: Yes.
- Thomas: Did they think Communism was better, had been reformed by Kadar?
- Bara: Certainly. They not only thought Communism had gotten better but they had on the one hand the belief that every year it would get a little better and on the other hand the major security, the social security, that everyone had the possibility and reality of a job. If you went jobless for longer than a month the police took you to jail, you had to have proof of a workplace with a certain income.
- Thomas: And did they give credit to Kadar for the improvement in Communism?

Bara: Kadar was given the credit for the advantages, it was a better life. There were no basic human rights at all available. But, a little bit before '63, people--- those who were not considered dangerous---were given a chance to travel abroad. For example, Imre Kertesz, the Nobel Prize winner, didn't have a western travel permit because he had no job, he was working at home as an author. But the every day workers had the possibility once every three years to travel to the west. They could buy only a little money but with that little money they could go for a few days to the west to see how is the open society compared to our society. They saw the advantages of the free world but they also saw the unemployment there. This is how Hungary was living the best life in the east bloc, and this is how the opposition to Communism built up. There were no basic human rights, so the opposition leaders used the negatives and this is how the so-called changes came about.

Thomas: But did the people think Communism would go on forever, and therefore '89 was a surprise, or did they think it wouldn't go on and '89 was not a surprise?

Bara: Among the intellectuals or the middle class there grew the basic will for basic human rights. Nobody thought that Communism would change, and my third happiest period of my life was after Kadar when Nemeth Miklos was for a short period the Party first secretary, because he had a foreign secretary who had all the good ideas. This foreign secretary was Gyula Horn and he had excellent ideas like opening the western border. It was the people of east Berlin getting to the wall and getting to the gates in east Berlin after the border in Hungary was opened, cut, by Horn and the Austrian chancellor that led to the central European picnic. And then east Germans were permitted to travel through east Berlin and Hungary to the west.

Thomas: And this was the official policy of Horn?

Bara: Yes. It was a very interesting period under Nemeth Miklos because Gorbachev permitted everything to happen, and under Nemeth human rights were restored. Horn got all the appreciation and decorations in western Europe, and there is a new monument being erected in Berlin to George H.W. Bush, Kohl, Gorbachev and Horn. But he didn't get all the honor in Hungary. He was in for about a year. The Parliament members were not elected but were appointed by the Communists and it was a happy period for me to see on the TV the parliamentary sessions, when different opinions by the opposition were expressed, if it was a good speech there was appreciation expressed with applause, and vice versa, although it was a Communist Parliament. But today they are really enemies. A book was written about Horn and his period and he was not given the highest awards because he was in the so-called Workers Guard which became after the revolution the volunteer police of the workers, the best translation is the Workers' Police, and they were given guns, they were given ammunition, and Horn explained clearly why he joined this, because his brother was killed by the revolutionaries, his brother was hanged, but Horn didn't do any harm to anybody, although he admits what he did, he

was guarding a bridge, a railway station, he was doing his job. Horn was never a businessman, but a book he wrote called “The Basis” was well-received in Germany. At the time of the next election, when he was prime minister, there was much in the press about his having built himself a new big house, but the funds for his house came from the German income from his book.

Thomas: I want to ask who was involved in the Round Table discussions?

Bara: At that time Horn was the foreign secretary, Nemeth was the party leader, but it was the home secretary who was involved in the Round Table. It was a movement, the official name was The People’s Front, it was allegedly non-aligned, it was obviously led by Communist Party members. Pozsgay was involved, it was expected that he would be the president. Now he is retired but is on the Fidesz side. Antall was the leader of the Democratic Forum, as Orban of the Young Democrats, Goncz was the candidate of the Liberal Party, and Antall was ready to make compromises and agreements which is absolutely different from the situation today, Antall understood that he was going to be the prime minister and Goncz was going to be the president, and this is what happened, that is how Pozsgay disappeared. Antall died in office.

Thomas: Isn’t Goncz’s daughter in the government now?

Bara: Yes, foreign secretary now.

Thomas: Is she effective?

Bara: Once upon a time the Hungarian foreign minister had a position such as Horn had, but now she’s just the foreign secretary of a country, one of the many members of the European Union. She is very intelligent, she is very clever.

Thomas: I have heard criticisms that she is out of her depth.

Bara: I would say that it’s all the same who is the foreign minister today.

Thomas: Why?

Bara: Because the foreign secretary has guidelines to follow and that is the foreign policy of the European Union and the membership in NATO, she has to follow that.

Thomas: So it doesn’t matter what party is in power?

Bara: Actually it is not all the same. The foreign secretary of the “shadow government”, the opposition, was against Hungary’s membership in the European Union. He alone was against that. Without the Hungarian presence in NATO, we would definitely have had different experiences, at least during

the war in Yugoslavia, when we had American air force units in Taszar in Hungary, not far from here, because the wild people of Serbia and Croatia, there was actually danger that they would come over to attack each other in the so-called Hungarian corner, and we in the south on the Croatian-Serbian border were or are in the immediate neighborhood. There were recently western press people on top of the Novotel here in Szeged, it is one of the best hotels, and they were taking pictures of what is happening on the other side of the border. Around the world the number one conflict in our days is world terrorism. In Hungary we haven't experienced that, so far, we are so far secure.

Thomas: Is it possible in Hungary not to support belonging to the E.U. or NATO? Is such a position viable?

Bara: It is not given credit by any not to be a member of the E.U. or NATO. In our opinion the opposition is following the concept, take everything or anything that the E.U. and NATO gives, but give or do nothing. And this is what we see now, that it is a genius plan probably devised by Edward Teller, a former Hungarian, a Jewish-American, to put up an umbrella to protect this part of the world from the entire missile system. And now what is happening? It is planned to be put in in Poland and the Czech Republic because in Hungary the opposition is so strong that not even a radar stronghold would have been built because there is such a big uproar against it. Hungary should be independent. The way of nationalism is to take money but not even to give the option to build. Now it will build a radar defense station but not at the site where NATO wanted it. NATO wanted it north of Pecs, on the mountaintop, but the people protecting the environment avoided that, so it will now be built somewhere else, but NATO will pay only part of the expenses, the other part has to be paid by the Hungarians. We call those Hungarians, actually Jews of Hungary, aliens, because they became American or foreigner, they were from Hungary, like Edward Teller or John Neumann or Leo Szilard, who actually had such calculations not only for their time but for the future. Among them Jeno Wigner got the Nobel Prize.

Thomas: Maybe we should go back to ask what happened after '89? Dr. Bara was talking about Horn and that good period, what happened after that?

Bara: Antall did many good things, for example the basic human rights, the rights of freedom, were not only accepted but also included in the state law, and that was the basis of the multiparty Parliament. It is never mentioned that Antall started the compensations in Hungary, it was a tremendous amount of funds. For example my brother-in-law had a printing company, and it was nationalized under Horthy or Szalasi, or whoever, and the same thing happened under Rakosi., and he got during Antall 800,000 forints, which today would be probably 8,000,000 or more. Those compensations were not only helpful but authentic. But the treasury of the country ran dry. Antall died, and his deputy Boros—

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Dr. Bara Denes added in his editing:

could not help anything at all during his short period. In 1995 two economic specialist of Horn resolved the problems. A relative economic balance existed until 2000, when Orban was the prime minister, who celebrated the Millenium of the Hungarian Kingdom. In 2002 and 2006 the socialists won the election. Their first leader Medgyessy significantly raised salaries, increasing the newer deficit of the treasury. The present prime minister Ferenc Gyursany makes efforts to achieve economic balance by multiple reforms/health insurance, pensions, etc. with the aid of the European Union. Since 2002, the majority of conservative forces have united into a nationalist and leader-oriented alliance, favoring the ideals of the last century, i.e. the Nation State.

[End of Interview]