

An Interview with Ella Borocz

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

Interviews conducted by
Virginia Major Thomas
in 2003

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Ella Borocz, "An Interview with Ella Borocz", conducted by Virginia Major Thomas in 2003 Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2006.

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Biography

The life of Ella Borocz exemplifies clearly the astonishing changes in living undergone by the old Hungarian nobility during the second half of the 20th century: from a life of privilege in the interwar period through the Nazi invasion, conquest by the Soviet army and the Communist domination into the era of a free market economy and democratic political government.

Ella is the great-grandniece of Istvan Szechenyi, sometimes called the “father of modern Hungary”. His was a very wealthy noble family, he was highly educated and widely traveled, and is noted among other things for founding the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, for writing influential political and economic treatises on reform, and for initiating the building of the first permanent bridge across the Danube from Buda to Pest, the so-called Chain Bridge or Szechenyi lanchid.

Ella’s father was a large landholder, also of the nobility, named Marffy. She grew up in the family’s manor house in Somogy county until the invasion of Hungary by Nazi troops in 1944, when she was put by her father in a boarding school in Pest. She was caught there during the Soviet army’s siege of Budapest and had to flee the captured school for refuge with an aunt in another part of the city. Finally her father found her and took her back to Somogy with her brother.

She lived through many different experiences and difficulties during the Communist period, including: expulsion from the university because of her noble background; escape from the Communist deportations of the early 1950’s; the revolution of 1956 and arrest and imprisonment of her husband; working, among various jobs, as a tour guide with limits imposed on her movements for political reasons; and as a witness of changes in political policies even before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the free market era, she has been involved in the activities of American and other foreign companies in Hungary and seen how these have affected the Hungarian people. She was also affected by the voucher system in post-1989 Hungary which was the new government’s attempt to recompense those who had lost money and property when the Communist government nationalized life in 1948.

- Thomas: This is Major Thomas, and the date is November 5, 2003, and I am at Csorsz utca 5 in Budapest, Hungary, and I am interviewing Ella Borocz about her life in Budapest and elsewhere in Hungary after 1956 through the change of regime in '89, '90 and in the '90's. But to begin with, let me ask you where and when you were born and a little bit about your family.
- Borocz: I was born in Budapest in 1930, but in that time we lived in the country where my father had a rather large property in Somogy, that is close to the Croatian border.
- Thomas: And how do you spell that, please?
- Borocz: Somogy: S-O-M-O-G-Y. That's the county's name. And my mother was a countess of the Szechenyi family.
- Thomas: Szechenyi.
- Borocz: Szechenyi. Maybe you heard about it.
- Thomas: Yes.
- Borocz: Because he was a great patrician, my great-great uncle.
- Thomas: That's Istvan.
- Borocz: Istvan. And Istvan's brother was Lajos and he is my ancestor, Unluckily my mother died when I was three months old so I never knew her. But she was a very lovely and very good woman, everybody said. She died of the failure of physicians, she had appendicitis and they left something in her body and that's from what she died. So I didn't know my mother, neither did my brother who was one and a half years older than me know her because we were too little when she died. We really, I must say, we did not miss her because we didn't know how it is when somebody has a mother. And our father was very very charming, he was an extremely good-looking man, all kinds of women all the time around him, everybody wanted to marry him but he never did marry. And there we lived until '44 in the autumn I came away from our manor house for the last time and then I saw it for the last time as it was.
- Thomas: What did your father do? Did he work the land?
- Borocz: Yes, he studied agriculture. He started to study law but then his brother died and then he went into agriculture because it was he who had to go out with the land. He had animals and apple culture which he studied in California.
- Thomas: Really?

- Borocz: Yes, because in 1932 when the Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles then he went with his sports club---he was not such a great sportsman, an athlete, that he could take part in the Olympic Games, but he knew English very well, so the club took him along as an interpreter. And he enjoyed that very much so he went on the coats of the Olympic Team of Hungary in '32. That was two years after my mother died and somehow he thought that that might get him a little bit out of his sorrow. And then he did not return with the team but he went around and studied agriculture. And he brought back to Hungary such kinds of apples like Starr King, for instance. It was really a wonderful apple culture. But you know, in '45, we did not stay in our country house when the Russians came in because everybody said that wouldn't be clever.
- Thomas: But you were in the house during World War II til the Russians came in.
- Borocz: Until autumn '44.
- Thomas: And that's when the Nazi Army came, right?
- Borocz: The Army occupied Hungary on the 19th of March '44. Well, we had many soldiers, Hungarian armies who came to live in the village and the officers always lived in our guest rooms, and we also had German armies, we couldn't do anything against that. But I must say that the German armies weren't all Nazis, they were real gentlemen, the German officers, they went out to ride with us, and one cannot compare them with the Russian officers who came later on.
- Thomas: And you had mostly officers staying in your house.
- Borocz: In our house, officers were staying, yes.
- Thomas: Not enlisted men.
- Borocz: No, because our house was let's say the best in the village. And we treated them as guests. In '44 we came to Budapest and I went to the English ladies in the Vaci utca, today a walking street, therein was the nuns' school, these English ladies, and there I was a boarding student. I went to that school earlier. It's a long story, I think it would get very long if I tell you everything.
- Thomas: But just briefly about your schooling.
- Borocz: When I was ten years old, that was in '40, then we came to Budapest because we had a house on Castle Hill, which is a different household, Grandmother lives there, it is a big house, it's still there, Disz Ter 10.....
- Thomas: Was that the address?

- Borocz: The address is, yes, D-I-S-Z Ter, Square, that's on Castle Hill, and number 10 was our house. We inherited it, my brother and me, from my mother, and we had a little flat there for the case that my father came up. And then we came here, to live here, my brother and me, our governess, who was an Austrian woman, very nice woman, we adored her because she brought us really up like a mother. And then came the cook, another woman. So the four of us lived then in Budapest from '40 until '42, but in '42 the bombing of Budapest started by the Americans, and then my father said it was a silly thing to live in Budapest if you can live in the country and he stopped that, which I was really sorry about because I loved my school mates.
- Thomas: So you had to stop school.
- Borocz: I didn't stop school, but then I had to learn by myself with a teacher. The next village to ours, seven kilometers away, lived cousins of mine, and they were a brother and a sister just the age of my brother and me, and they had a school teacher, a woman, so that my father made it up with their parents that I could join them, and my brother went to a boarding school in the country. So we stopped this houseful in Budapest and then we went there. So I went already to the English ladies earlier but not as a boarding child. And then in '44 my father brought me there as a boarding child.
- Thomas: Then he at that time moved to the apartment.
- Borocz: And he and my brother moved to the apartment. Everybody thought it was very safe to live on Castle Hill because there are very deep cellars made by nature, you know, so that where I was it was occupied by the Russians nine weeks earlier than where they were, so we didn't know anything of each other and we were of course in the cellar of the English ladies school by that time and.....
- Thomas: What do you mean, in the cellar?
- Borocz: In the cellar. We had to be there day and night when the.....
- Thomas: This was during the siege?
- Borocz: During the siege. And then the Russians occupied the building so that we couldn't even get our suitcases and our things which were up in the building because they occupied it and they said to the nuns that everybody has to go away within a few hours. So we put what we had in the cellar of our things in our bed sheets and took the four corners of it and put it on our backs. And I didn't know where to go because our house was still German-occupied on the other side of the Danube.
- Thomas: Your house in the country?

- Borocz: No, our house on Castle Hill, so I couldn't go there. The war was on, shooting. So I had an aunt, an aunt who was a very nice person but we did not like her so very much, we children, because she had no children, she was the sister-in-law of my grandmother, and somebody who has no children is not interesting for children. And poor Aunt Elma, she lived very close to that school, that was the only solution where to go.
- Thomas: And she did take you in.
- Borocz: She took me, what could she do? Poor Aunt Elma. So I spent all the time until the other side was also occupied by the Russians and until my father appeared. Because that was a terrible thing, Castle Hill siege lasted nine weeks long, many people died and also our flat was bombed so that you could see the sky from there. It was a two-floor, in American a two-floor building.
- Thomas: Well, you couldn't live there.
- Borocz: No, we couldn't live there anymore. My father was taken away by the Russians because he was blond and had blue eyes, and I think they thought maybe he was a disguised German. And so they took him and shut him in a house on Bartok Bela Street in a flat which was locked. And there were locked people who got very little soup to eat, two pounds of it three times a day and everybody was sick of it and after a week he was let out, so probably somebody was shut in with them who was a spy to find out which language they speak really. I think so, because then they said he could go after a week, he was much thinner of course because he was so sick of that soup. And then he knew from somebody already where I am and where my brother is because friends of his took my brother away from Castle Hill as one couldn't live there, that was torn down, and they took him to a little apartment. You know, the authorities then opened flats of people who were not there, gone to the west or somewhere, and they opened them for people who had no flat.
- Thomas: This is after the Russians came in.
- Borocz: This is after the Russians came in, and so he got a room, one room, and then my father came from there to Pest, to the other side, because he knew already that I was at Aunt Elma's place, and he came with a boat and he spent the night there, and then we went by foot, of course there was no circulation, everything was in ruins, and we went over Margaret Island, it was quite long way, it lasted from morning until late in the evening. On Margaret Island on the two sides of the island the Russians made a provisional bridge and one could use that, but one had to work for the Russians on the island, one had to lift.....
- Thomas: What kind of bridge did they have? Just a pontoon bridge? A temporary bridge.

- Borocz: Maybe it was a pontoon bridge. A temporary bridge, it was only there for a few months or weeks.
- Thomas: So you had to work on the island?
- Borocz: We had to work, because they cut trees and we had to lift these trees and put them on lorries for hours.
- Thomas: And you were doing this too?
- Borocz: Yes, my father and me, and other people who used the bridge because there was no other way, and then after two or three hours we could go and we went to the other side and we went to David Street and we arrived in the evening.....
- Thomas: You went to where?
- Borocz: To David Ferenc Street which is here in Buda not far away from Bartok Bela Street. And then there we were until.....
- Thomas: Was this a house that had been deserted or left by someone, an empty house?
- Borocz: It was not a whole house, but that flat was empty. Three rooms which were given to each family. And there we were until we went back to our country home. But there were no trains, and my father went away to find a man, somebody knew a man who had a lorry, but the lorry had to be repaired, and spare parts were looked for; the man said we should wait for him everyday until twelve o'clock, if he doesn't arrive with his lorry before twelve o'clock then he doesn't come that day. And then we always went to the cinema on Bartok Bela ut because we didn't know what to do and the American films which after the Germans occupied Hungary were not allowed to be played, they were all played again, very good American films, every day we saw a film.
- Thomas: And how old were you at this time?
- Borocz: I was fifteen.
- Thomas: And you were not going to school, you were going to films.
- Borocz: Yes, because then there was no school and we were waiting for the lorry. We arrived in March, the beginning of March, in Somogy. My father left us in Kaposvar with a family who had a flat in Kaposvar which is the capital of that county. My father left us, my brother and me, and he went to see the school which just started to teach again, so there in the Kaposvar school we could go on and we could finish the school year which started in September '44 but there was no teaching during the fighting.

- Thomas: But you went there when? In '45?
- Borocz: '45. So I had this class, I could solve this class, we didn't learn very much, but I did not lose a year like many children lost a year because somehow the parents did not think of going to school. But my father was very keen on us doing all the schooling.
- Thomas: And this must have been secondary school, gymnasium.
- Borocz: Gymnasium. And so my father took us down there, we arrived with that lorry. That lorry was so bad, it always broke down, it took us three days to get to Kaposvar from Budapest and otherwise it takes three hours. It was a very interesting trip. In Budapest everything was in ruins, and when we arrived at Lake Balaton, that was our second stop, there in a hotel we got a room and the gypsy band played in the restaurant.
- Thomas: And you got some food.
- Borocz: And we got food, and it was as if there wouldn't have been any war at all. It was quite different. Well, then we were in Kaposvar, and my father went around in Kapsovar and within a few hours he appeared with a horse-drawn carriage, two horses, even a bucket to give drink to the horses was hanging on the carriage, and he said "Now I go to Hencse", that was our village which is 26 kilometers from there.
- Thomas: That's where your property was.
- Borocz: That's where we lived, and we didn't know what is there, we didn't know anything about the two sisters of my father.
- Thomas: Was it all right?
- Borocz: Yes. My father had two unmarried sisters, who lived in another little manor house on the other side of the road. And we didn't know if they live, and what happened. So he set out on the newly-bought carriage he bought for gold, because he had gold chain, and then he always paid also in the hotel at Lake Balaton with some beads of the golden chain.
- Thomas: Was this a watch chain?
- Borocz: It was, yes. And he bought the horses also with the rest of that chain. And then he went down and he came back a few days later and brought a little foal on the carriage, a foal which almost couldn't walk anymore. The Russians took away all our horses and ate part of them and others they took away.....
- Thomas: They took them for food?

- Borocz: Yes, and there was a little foal which was a very good breed.
- Thomas: But it was crippled.
- Borocz: No, it wasn't crippled, but it had, I don't know how you call that, "ruh" in Hungarian, it is a worm which goes under the skin and then the whole hair of the horse falls out, and it was so weak it couldn't eat really and it couldn't have walked from Hencse to Kaposvar so he put it on the carriage and he brought it to Kaposvar because there was such a room where one could cure a horse, they put him into a cabin so that just the nose was out and a gas was left on the whole body and the gas killed the parasite. And then he took the little foal back and then it started to eat and to grow and became a wonderful horse and he sold it to a stud because the stud lost all the good breed horses and he got four working horses for that one foal. So he went back and then after we finished the school in June we also went back to Hencse, and we started to work very hard, like peasants, because my father had over a thousand hectars and all the land which was over a thousand hectars was taken away, without any compensation. So that my father didn't have anything. But my brother and me, and my two unmarried aunts all had land also which was theirs and they did not reach the thousand hectars, and those who were under a thousand hectars, according to the '45 law, got, could keep a hundred hectars of their land, each person, or twenty hectars of vineyard or fruit yard or kitchen garden, what is intensively used, which is not just acre. So that we got eighty hectars, my two aunts and brother and me, and we could choose which one we keep because my father was on good terms with those engineers who came to measure the land.
- Thomas: These were the Russians.
- Borocz: No, these were Hungarians from the Communist Hungarian government, of course led by the Russians, who made this law. Before they arrived in Budapest they made this law when they were in Debrecen, there was the first Communist government formed. They issued this law. My father heard it already earlier on the radio, so he knew that he would lose everything. So we had eighty acres of garden and vineyard. We thought we would get on, we would manage to live on it.
- Thomas: Could you?
- Borocz: We could have but later on we were chased away from there, because you know that was the first persecution, the big land owners, and then came the second persecution, the so-called kulaks, the big peasants, and then we fell again into it.
- Thomas: Were you considered a kulak?

- Borocz: Yes, afterwards, because we had the eighty acres. So in the end we had to come away from there. They did not want the former owner to stay in the village. They did not want, and they did everything to chase people away.
- Thomas: And what years did that happen?
- Borocz: That happened, when my father finally had to come away from there, it was 1950.
- Thomas: But you were there from, like, '45 to '50?
- Borocz: '45, '45. And all our manor house was in an impossible state, one couldn't live in it, there was nothing left, no furniture, and everything was ruined and filthy.
- Thomas: Was that because the Russians or the Communists or someone took it?
- Borocz: Both. Both. So then we saw that in the big manor house it's impossible for us to live, but next door was a kitchen building with six guest rooms and a bathroom, so we started to restore that place for ourselves. But you must imagine that the stoves which were out of ceramic were broken and everything. We had our own electric plant that was also broken, all the glass containers of the electric plant were all broken with hammers.
- Thomas: Oh it had been purposely broken.
- Borocz: Of course. Purposely, purposely broken. So that then we started to clean everything, and then always when we cleaned it then again another wave of Russians came, and we had to go in one room and the other rooms became filthy again. Because the Russians did not come only once, the war went on, you know, where our place was occupied already, then new troops went towards Germany, and then they came and they said, "Now we stay in your house" and they stayed there for a few weeks and everything was filthy again. So several times we had to clean everything again and then somehow the war was over in May.
- Thomas: That was in 1945. And after '45, did people, Russians or whoever, keep coming?
- Borocz: Well, the Russians stayed here in Hungary since '45 until '90.
- Thomas: But I mean did they keep coming to your house and staying or destroying.....
- Borocz: It was in summer '45 only that they came. It was during that time.
- Thomas: And after that it settled down and you could live there.

- Borocz: After that they had their barracks, they built barracks and they lived in those.
- Thomas: And someone lived in your place.
- Borocz: And we stayed there in those six guest rooms.
- Thomas: And they left you alone then.
- Borocz: They left us alone for a time, it was in '50 that my father was chased away from there.
- Thomas: He was forced to leave?
- Borocz: You know, that was also an interesting story. I then worked in Budapest. I had my first job where I also met my husband. I was twenty years old.
- Thomas: You had a job in Budapest: what did you do?
- Borocz: Then all the engineers were forced to give up their private offices and they were forced to get into big institutes and the buildings for the institutes were nationalized hotels, and it is today a very beautiful Mercure Hotel on Rakoczi Street which was our office. It was then a state-owned institute for civil engineering.
- Thomas: And what did you do?
- Borocz: Together with eight or ten other girls we counted the norms. Because somebody found out in the crazy Communist time that they have to measure the work of the engineers like they measure the work of workers, the norms, which is absolutely crazy.
- Thomas: What do you mean, measure the work?
- Borocz: How much salary they will get, it was according to, like a worker who builds a wall and it is said how many square meters of wall he has to build in one day, and they wanted to measure how much work an engineer did a day!
(laughter)
- Thomas: And that's how they get paid?
- Borocz: And that's how they get paid. And there was an engineer who got the job to work it out. Everybody knew that it is a nonsense, but it had to be done.
- Thomas: And did you help do the calculations?
- Borocz: Yes, we were there, eight or ten girls, we had to do the calculations every day until eleven o'clock, every department of the office had to give a big paper on

which every engineer, and drawer, technical drawers or technicians were and according to that we had to count what they worked the day before. It's a nonsense, it's a nonsense.

Thomas: Had you finished school?

Borocz: Yes, I finished school in Budapest in a boarding school in 1948 with the best records.

Thomas: And it was after that that you did.....

Borocz: And after that I wasn't taken because of my origin, because of my land-owner father, and my countless mother, I wasn't accepted to the university.

Thomas: You were not allowed to go.

Borocz: I wasn't allowed. Once I tried to say my father is a gardener and such things and then I was accepted and after six weeks they found out and they threw me out. So that happened and then I went to a school where I learned typewriting and stenograph and that's how I went.....

Thomas: That's how you got the job with the engineers doing the calculations.

Borocz: Yes. (laughter) But we had a wonderful time there because all or most of the engineers were men and we were pretty girls and every day it was fun. I liked it. And then I knew my husband.

Thomas: Was he an engineer?

Borocz: He was an engineer. But to go on with my father's story, how he came away from Hencse. There was a law, you had to list for credit which you gave the state, it was called peace credit. Those people who worked for instance in my office, when early in the morning, unexpectedly, armed people, armed people were there, and there was a list and you had to write every month I gave I don't know how much per cent of my salary, to a credit to the state, and I will get it back I don't know when, and one can also win a great sum later on.

Thomas: You had to give part of your salary to the state, and this was under.....

Borocz: That was in '50.

Thomas: In 1950, but there were armed guards there to see that you gave it.

Borocz: Yes. You couldn't go into your office room unless you didn't sign it.

Thomas: Did they tell you how much.....

- Borocz: Yes. They told us how much, how many per cents of your salary. It was just taken away, that money. And in the country came a group, they called themselves freedom fighters, terrorists from Budapest, not the village people at all.....
- Thomas: Were they legal, under the state?
- Borocz: Who knows how legal....yes....well, it was everything to make the life impossible to former landowners or to a certain class.
- Thomas: It was harassment.
- Borocz: Harassment. So they arrived, I don't know how many people, three or four, and they sat down in my father's room and they said, "Now you sign that you pay so-and-so much". But for that you have to know that we had to pay so much tax that we couldn't sell so many apples or anything, green grocer things, we had to buy things to give them in tax, eggs and I don't know what, so much that we always lost, every month we lost something of a jewel of my mother, or I don't know what, because it was impossible to do as much, so that was how they wanted to make it impossible for the big peasants and the kulaks. And they sat there and they said, "We don't go away until you pay that and that amount". And it was impossible for my father, it was ruining him, it was quite impossible, and they waited for him to say something against the government and they would have arrested him, that's what they wanted, he saw that, and it was his luck that the next house was a post office, and the post woman came over and said, "Mr. Marffy, you have a telephone call" and then he said "Excuse me" and he went to the telephone, to the next house, and then it was somebody, I don't know what, about apples, when he will buy the apples, and then he thought, I don't go back to that room, I sit on my motorbike and I will go away to Budapest, what can they do. And he had a housekeeper, a woman, and he asked the housekeeper woman to go into this room to bring them glasses of wine and to take some of his what he needed, his shaving things and a few shirts, though that was in his bedroom. So she gave them wine and she took that out of the cupboard, nobody noticed what she got, and he put it in his rucksack, and he pushed the motorbike a little bit away, so they don't hear the noise. And he sat on it and went away.
- Thomas: So he just left.
- Borocz: He just left. A certain time they did not notice, and then they said, "Well, this swine, how long he speaks on the telephone" and then they went to see the housekeeper woman and then they saw of the tires there was mud which was dry, and as he pushed it fell down and you could see the trail that the motorbike was pushed away, and they said "This swine, he went away" and they telephone to the next village to the police that they should arrest my father. But the police, who knew him well, of course, said "But why? What is the reason?" And they said, "He went away when we wanted him to pay for

the levy to the state". They said, "For that we cannot arrest him". And my father thought they would want to arrest him and when he went on his motorbike after Kaposvar, between Kaposvar and Budapest, a policeman stopped him on the way, and now he thought, they got me. But, you know, the policeman only wanted to see if he had a Red Cross package, band aides and what you need to have on a motorbike. That's what he controlled only. So my father arrived in Budapest.

Thomas: Did he ever go back?

Borocz: No, he didn't go back. I went to pack some things there. He didn't dare go back.

Thomas: The fact was he just gave it to them, the land, the house.....

Borocz: He gave the whole land to the state. He gave everything to the state. We had to sign a paper, because we wanted to get rid of it, it cost us just money, it was impossible to work there. So he went away from there and then he worked.....

Thomas: So he just didn't live there anymore after that.

Borocz: No, never, never. So he lived in a flat which also we inherited from an uncle but not on Castle Hill. All these houses of course later on were taken away, were nationalized.

Thomas: When were they taken away, in the '50's?

Borocz: '40's, late '40's. So they waited, for instance, the house on Castle Hill which was bombed, we had it remade, and after it was remade they nationalized it.

Thomas: When they nationalized these places, does that mean you cannot live there anymore?

Borocz: It meant, if we lived in it, that we could live in it and pay rent to the state. But that was in '50. And in '51, there was a deportation. That was another thing, people were deported.

Thomas: From Budapest?

Borocz: From Budapest.

Thomas: To?

Borocz: They sent them to the country, to the puszta, the flat part of the country, in winter much cooler, and also they punished with it an upper class and the big

peasants, because they put the people relocated from here into a spare room of a village house.

- Thomas: And did they then have to work in the fields or work on the farm?
- Borocz: If they could, and if they found a job, and they could only move five kilometers away, because otherwise the police had to give them permission, they were like prisoners.
- Thomas: And did that happen to your father?
- Borocz: Well, it happened to us. I had my marriage.....
- Thomas: When were you married?
- Borocz: On the second of June, '51, I had my official marriage, because that deportation started, and we knew about it, and it always happened on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, they brought a paper and it meant that on the next day in the morning you were taken away. So on Monday, Wednesday and Friday the paper came, and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday early in the morning in a lorry you were taken away, it was 20 kilograms of things on you you could take.
- Thomas: When you said it was your official marriage.....
- Borocz: My official marriage, my state marriage.
- Thomas: Were you a Roman Catholic?
- Borocz: A Roman Catholic, so we were not.....
- Thomas: So you could not be married in the church.
- Borocz: And on the seventh, in the afternoon, was my church marriage, but of course I didn't say that in the office, only to my best friends.
- Thomas: So you could do it but it was sort of secret.
- Borocz: Yes, one could do it, but nobody said it in a way. So then my husband already stayed there because we thought my husband was of the middle class and so we thought maybe he would not fall into these deportations, and maybe he can keep the flat. My father went away. On the seventh of June, my father packed his things and went to sleep in the place of a friend of his. And he also found a place for one of his unmarried sisters (one died already but the other unmarried sister also came way from Hencse). And in the night when we had our first night together, my husband and me, only the housekeeper of my father was of my mother, whom I liked very much, and my husband and me.

And at two o'clock in the morning arrived, somebody rang the door, and they brought the paper, and we have to be ready next morning.

Thomas: Did they know that it was you that was there or were they after someone else?

Borocz: They knew that I am there and my father and my aunt and my grandmother. They didn't know that my husband is there and that we are married.

Thomas: So what did you do?

Borocz: We did not know if we would be rescued or not, we did not know that, because we didn't know anybody who was rescued, who somehow was not taken away. So the whole day, my husband hired a lorry, we transported furniture, you can imagine, we didn't sleep at all, because we were very much in love and made love at night. Now all day we transported furniture because my mother-in-law on Bartok Bela Street was so nice that she emptied one room and we stuffed all the furniture of that flat into it to rescue it, because we thought the flat will be lost. In the evening we were so tired, there was only one bed left there and this room belonged to my husband, in the other room was my grandmother, and in the little office was the housekeeper. And then came a man and tore the paper of deportation and wished us good working. It was because my husband went to his office the day before. Our director was Mr. Hilvert, an engineer of a very well-educated Jewish family, a young man with Communist sympathies. After the first Communism in Hungary stopped he had to go abroad. There were several such Jewish young men of the upper middle class, and some of them immigrated to the Soviet Union, and the luckier ones immigrated to other countries, some to America, but poor Hilvert immigrated to the Soviet Union, and there he married a Russian woman and he had a son and when the Russian army came into Hungary and occupied Hungary, they forced him to come, he had to, and he had to leave his wife and his son behind, saying that they will come later, they never ever came, he never ever saw his wife and his son again, that you must know about him, he was a very very cultured man who spoke languages.....

Thomas: And they never were allowed to come to Hungary?

Borocz: No, but that turned out later in '51 he still hoped that they will come, after six years he still hoped that they will come, but they never came until he died. So he ran to the inner ministry and to the police.....

Thomas: When your husband was going to leave.....

Borocz: When my husband said that he goes away with me, because next morning I will be taken away, and he said to the people in the ministry, "It's impossible. I can't do without that man. Do something". So that next morning a man came in a leather coat, very typically looking, a secret police man, he rang the doorbell, he came in, my husband came out of the bed completely naked and

he said “Who are you?”, “I am Imre Borocz”, and “Who is that?” he showed on the bed and he said “This is my wife” and “Who is in the flat?”, and he said “There is the grandmother of my wife and there is another lady”, that was the housekeeper of my father. And then the man took the paper which on the day before came, and tore it into two and said “So go on working” and he went away. We were saved, it was incredible, and he went away, and we fell back to the bed and slept, and we did not think, we thought that in the morning we will telephone, there was no telephone in the flat we had to go down to the square, we thought that in the morning work started at eight o’clock and that was at two o’clock at night, we thought that in the morning we will telephone to the office that we are here, or we will go to the office, I don’t remember what we thought, but we slept so deep, as young people can, it was I think ten o’clock or eleven o’clock when a colleague, a friend of my husband came and rang the doorbell and we woke up and he said “Hilvert asked in the morning ‘Is Borocz here?’ And as we were not there he thought that we were taken away and he ran to the ministry again and he made a fool of himself saying that “You took them and I asked you not to take them”. And poor Hilvert who helped us was ashamed there and was humiliated.

Thomas: But he wasn’t punished.

Borocz: He wasn’t punished but then we of course apologized to him very much and I’m still sorry for our behavior.

Thomas: And so what happened?

Borocz: So my father never returned to the flat, he did not dare to come to the flat.....

Thomas: So he just kind of hid out.....

Borocz: As you say. And then he went down to an uncle of my husband who lived in Balatonlelle, next to Lake Balaton, there he also slept some nights, and from there he always went with the train to Barcs. Barcs is a town which was on the border of the then Yugoslavia, on the river Drava. But you know to go to Barcs you had to have a permission, like a bus pass, because in the zone which was everywhere around the country which was close to the border you had to have an extra permission, like into another country. My father of course wouldn’t have gotten such a one. But he thought he will try what happens if he goes from Balatonlelle to Pecs, another town, and he has to change trains at Barcs. If he has to change trains, then he doesn’t need permission although with the train he goes into the zone, with the other train he comes out of it. And he wanted to see if it works, so several times he went there and he also saw that he could walk out of the train station because the other train only came two hours later, and he wondered if somebody watches him if he goes out of the station or not, nobody cared.

- Thomas: Nobody paid any attention
- Borocz: He saw that there is a border guard, a soldier going up and down, but he had some distance to do so he wasn't always there. And there were two wire fences with one meter between and in that one meter bombs were put in the ground, and that fence was high and on top was, how do you call it, like needles. So he had to find out how he could get over that, and then he arrived at the river and then he could swim on the river, because his intention was to go to Yugoslavia. Then Tito, Josip Broz Tito, was on bad terms with Stalin, so that Yugoslavia did not turn back people who went over the border.
- Thomas: And this is about what year?
- Borocz: That was '51. End of June, beginning of July, I don't know quite exactly which date my father, I didn't know, I didn't know where he is, he didn't want to tell, so that if somebody asked me I cannot tell.
- Thomas: You wouldn't know.
- Borocz: So once or twice I met him in some places where he asked me to come, and he always said somewhere else. And in the end he chose a night when there was lightning and thunder and rain and he took the train again, and he went out of the station building, he found a little bridge which went over a creek, it was just a piece of wood, that bridge, one piece. And he could lift it, earlier he tried already if he is able to lift that, so he climbed up on that fence and he put that piece over, but it was very dangerous because it could have fallen down between and then the bombs would have been activated. But he managed to put it on top of it and he managed to climb to the other side, but all his trousers were torn, but he didn't mind, he also managed to take that wooden piece on the other side so that they shouldn't notice immediately, and he had put around his neck a tire, a rubber tire for a wheel for a motor car, and that he blew up and he swam with that to the other side of the river.
- Thomas: And so he got into Yugoslavia.
- Borocz: He got into Yugoslavia.
- Thomas: And they let him in and let him stay?
- Borocz: At first, what he saw, a little light, he wasn't very religious, my father, but he knelt down and prayed Our Lord Who Art in Heaven, and then, because it was raining, he went towards the light and it was a police officer. And the agreeable policeman showed him a bench and put a dry policeman's coat over him and said, "Sleep here until the morning". And he slept wonderfully.
- Thomas: Did he ever come back?

- Borocz: Yes, thirteen years later he came back. That's a very long story, but that's how he went away and then he had a friend in the area and that's another long story.
- Thomas: But I would like to know what changed if anything after 1956, did anything change?
- Borocz: For us very much, because they put my husband in jail.
- Thomas: Your husband was involved in the uprising in '56?
- Borocz: Yes. But back to 1951, to make it short, my father went then back to the police because he wanted them to give him some papers because first they let him out of jail, he was in jail only for a week, and they let him out but they didn't give him any papers, and then he went back, it was quite difficult to find the jail again because he didn't look back how the jail looked like and he went to see his friends and then they said, but let's go back, you don't have any papers, and for a moment they looked for the jail and they found it. But the policeman said, "You don't go very far, I can give you papers, legally it will take you a very long time. You crossed the border illegally, why don't you cross another one? To Austria?" And they took him in a jeep to the border.
- Thomas: To the Austrian border?
- Borocz: Yes. And then he went, he had to have things to eat, he had his razor in his rucksack, because a man who is not shaved is suspect, and he always went at night, during the day he slept and in the morning he cleaned his face. He wanted to get to Vienna because there he also had friends, but he was got by a policeman, on a bridge he asked for his papers, which he didn't have.
- Thomas: This was in Austria?
- Borocz: That was in Austria, it was in the English part of Austria, because then it was still divided, in '51, and he went to an English prisoners' camp, and then the man who took his dates said so you have to pay so-and-so much punishment. And he said why? He said because you crossed the border illegally. Then my father said, "But I risked my life and I came from a country where they persecuted me and you want me to pay punishment", and the man said "You don't want to pay?", "No", "Good" and he closed the book. My father was there for some months, he could go out to work in a garden for somebody to earn some money, and in fact his case was not treated and others who came later could go away. And then he asked the man there, he could speak English, he said "Why am I staying here and others went away?" and then he looked up the book and it said because he had debts, you did not pay. But nobody said to him that if he doesn't pay it will never be arranged. So then he paid, and the next day he was let out of the camp. That was the English camp.

- Thomas: And he could pay because he had worked and made some money.
- Borocz: Yes. And then he went to England because he knew a lady who almost married him eighteen years earlier but then she was married to an English Marine officer and had three children. They lent him money to go to Africa, to Rhodesia, because my brother was there already, otherwise Rhodesia would have been the last place where he would have wanted to go, but as he could not live where his daughter was, he said then I go to the country where my son is. And there you had to have a caution: you had to put down money, which after a certain time you got back. And that money this English couple lent him. So he got to Rhodesia just for the marriage of my brother. He was at my marriage and after it he had to swim over the Drava River and then he arrived to Africa for the marriage, that was in '53, Rhodesia which now is Zimbabwe. My father died there, he is buried there, and my brother was chased away from there. Like we were chased away here, it happened twice to my brother.
- Thomas: Was this when.....
- Borocz: Last year, because of Mugave. And now he lives here, five minutes from me. He has an English wife. But that's another story. So you want to know what happened in '56. In '56 all the summer already there was such an atmosphere of freedom, everybody went towards freedom. And on the 23rd of October, we had then already three children, and I had a cleaning woman every week, one of the days of the week.....
- Thomas: Your husband was still working.....
- Borocz: My husband was working. I was thrown out after we almost were deported.
- Thomas: Oh, you couldn't work there anymore, but then you had three children so you didn't.....
- Borocz: Yes, and I typewrote at home because we bought a typewriting machine so I didn't get another job.
- Thomas: And so in '56.....
- Borocz: In '56 we had three children and my husband was nearby, then the office wasn't there anymore in that hotel but pretty close to our flat, where the Marriott Hotel is and now there is a bank, that was the office. And my husband told me that he will go to Bem Square on the Buda side because there will be an interesting demonstration there which the students of the Technical University organized.....
- Thomas: This is on the 23rd

Borocz: The 23rd of October, two o'clock in the afternoon, and he said "Come there, we will meet there". And I could go away because the cleaning woman was there until five o'clock. So I went there but there were so many people, my husband was there and I was there but we didn't see each other. It was wonderful. Really it is difficult to tell it in words unless you were there and you felt that fantastic feeling in your heart. From minute to minute the whole situation changed and people spoke aloud, said freely that we don't want to be under Soviet control and that the whole thing is a nonsense, and we want to be free, it was fantastic, we were quite overturned inside, you understand that?

Thomas: Yes, I know what you---I've read about that.

Borocz: Yes, and then the whole, the whole big, big, big, I don't know how many thousand people on Bem Square, started to move toward Margaret Bridge, and I went with them and we sang and we said "Rakosi volt az apánk, nincsen ingunk, se gatyánk", that means "Rakosi was our father", that was the Hungarian saying, "and we don't have either a shirt or pants", such things we shouted, and we came to the Parliament building and in front of the Parliament building we all shouted "Nagy Imre!" Imre Nagy, who was later on executed, should come out, Imre Nagy should come out, and he came out. If you stand on Kossuth Lajos Square there is the Parliament building and on two sides there are two balconies, two sides of the main entrance, on the left balcony if you stand in front he came out, I still can see him, and he spoke to the many many many people, and they all said you should be prime minister, be prime minister, we want Imre Nagy to be prime minister. And then he said "I will think it over" and he went in, and then the whole people started to go to Andrassy Street, which was then called Stalin ut, and one stood on the shoulder of the other, with the hands, a foot in the hands, the other foot on the shoulder, because it was high up, and they started to peel down those signs, which made a noise because they were attached to the wall, and everybody applauded when a sign came down.

Thomas: What were the signs?

Borocz: Stalin ut. Stalin Street. And the other people came out of the houses who lived there and brought cardboard signs and they wrote on it Magyaritjusag ut which means the Boulevard of the Hungarian Youth, and that they fixed somehow in place. So I was there until then but then I was close to where we lived I had to go home because the cleaning woman had to go home so I went home. My husband was not there yet then, within an hour he also arrived home, and we said how fantastic it was, how wonderful, and what will happen now, and then on the radio already the young people spoke, and then we said, "Let's go see the radio", then we put the children to bed and we went to the radio, it's not so far away from there, and when we arrived there we heard shooting and police came with an ambulance and we thought we have three small children, and many people started to go away, and we hurried home.

The Soviets stopped all the newspapers. In the days of the revolution my husband was elected vice-president of the workers' council..

Thomas: Was he a member of the party?

Borocz: No, he was never a member of the party. He was very popular because he married me and he made a bad marriage with that, so he spoiled his career, so to say, and that's why he was popular, you know. And that's why he was elected vice-president.

Thomas: I wondered about this election.

Borocz: Yes. He had the key of the office which was nearby. One afternoon a young man came, of the committee of the Technical University, and asked for the key because in his office there was a Xerox machine and they wanted to make a newspaper on the Xerox machine. And then he did not only give the key, he went with them and for hours and hours he also helped them to make the newspaper. And that's why he was arrested.

Thomas: This is why he ended up in prison after the Russian tanks arrived.

Borocz: It was in----when was it----early June '57 he was arrested. I wasn't at home because I went with my elder daughter who was four years old to her dancing school, and in the dancing school she was very very good at that, what she made there, she was so sweet, and there was an examination in nice little dresses, we all made them at home, that was a rehearsal for this examination that I took her, and my other daughter was two, she had fever, and my son was three and my husband was at home with them. When I came home there was a very antipathetic woman of the house, a Communist woman sitting there, everything of the cupboards on the floor, my little daughter who had a fever just said "Water, water, water" and this woman didn't give her water, and my husband was taken away.

Thomas: And they came at home and arrested him at home.

Borocz: Yes, at home while I wasn't home.

Thomas: How long was he is?

Borocz: He was in eleven months.

Thomas: Did he have a trial?

Borocz: Yes, he had a trial.

Thomas: And what was his sentence.

Borocz: His sentence was three years. But it was two trials, the first step and then the second step. So after the first step, as all the jails were terribly overcrowded, in a cell for one or two people there were ten or twelve, so that they let out those who were condemned to three years or less. He was in a case where there were sixteen people involved, most of them he didn't know, he knew only one of them, the one who came to ask for the key. Three were condemned to death, two were hanged, and for one it was changed to lifetime, but he spent only eight years there. So after the first trial they left my husband at home because maybe the second will condemn him for less so they didn't want these people who have less than three years to spend more. So he was let out. And he came home and I got pregnant, and when there was a second trial, many months later, I was already in the seventh month, and Bela was born in January. His three years stayed three years, he ought to have gone back, but then he put a petition, that his wife he said was with three small children and pregnant with a fourth, and then he was allowed to go back half a year later. In the meantime, that was in '59, in January Bela was born, my fourth child, my second son, and in April there was an amnesty for all those who had three years or less. So he never had to go back to jail.

Thomas: That was '59. When he was not in jail, when he was waiting for the second trial, did he go on working then in the office?

Borocz: Yes. When he was put in jail, our doctor came to me, she heard in the house that my husband is in jail and she told me that if I get a letter that he is fired I should not accept it. From my husband's office somebody rang me up because they said they sent him a listed letter saying that he's fired, and they rang me up secretly, they were not allowed to do that, that I should not sign a listed letter, you have to sign that you take it, I am not Imre Borocz, I should not sign, I should say he's not here and then the letter will come back and they cannot fire him, so he will still be on the list of those who work there without being paid. That was a very good thing. And that's how I could go to the doctor, because otherwise I wouldn't have had the right, because I didn't work, I had no insurance but as I was his wife and he was still in this office I could have a doctor. And then when my husband came out this doctor woman said immediately he should come to her and she will write him ill. Because then they can not fire him for a month and then maybe in the meantime he can find another job, and that's what happened.

Thomas: So he did find another job.

Borocz: Yes, and really after a month they fired him after he was written sick for a few days, but she couldn't do it longer. But then there was a law that a month after you were ill only one can fire you. And then he found another job, of course not so well-paid and a much lower job, but he had a job.

Thomas: And there was no further political persecution, so to speak.

- Borocz: The persecution lasted until he retired. He always was somebody who was involved in '56, he couldn't be for instance the leader of a department. But he was, practically, because he was a very good engineer and he, then he worked for the water works of Budapest before he retired and there he had a department but they helped themselves so they didn't call it a department, they called it a group.
- Thomas: But there were limitations to what he was officially allowed to do.
- Borocz: For him and for me too, for both of us. There were limitations.
- Thomas: Did you, could you live comfortably? Or was it really very difficult to have enough money to buy the food.....
- Borocz: It was difficult, but we were very happy. I must say I've been very happy all my life because maybe I inherited the good nature of my mother and because I had a very good husband and healthy children. Well, we had difficulties, it was always difficult, but we never were hungry, we never were cold.
- Thomas: And the kids had enough food and clothes and they could go to school and.....
- Borocz: They could go to school but also at school they were treated in a way.....
- Thomas: Differently?
- Borocz: Yes.
- Thomas: Did they know about their father's arrest and being in prison?
- Borocz: Yes.
- Thomas: You talked to them about this?
- Borocz: I talked to them about this.
- Thomas: So they understood what was going on.
- Borocz: They were little, but they knew that he came home from jail. And I had a friend, a girl friend, whom I knew as a girl already, she was from near us in the country. She had an unlucky marriage, and she divorced her husband and came to Budapest, and lived in a room that she hired. She came to visit me two weeks after my husband was arrested, and she said she had to leave her room within a month because they want to sell the flat and they want to live in it, so she cannot stay. I said, "Come and live here and I will not be alone here with my three children", so she lived with me, and she.....

- Thomas: It was helpful to have her?
- Borocz: Yes, it was helpful to have her, really. It was good, I could talk to a grown-up person.
- Thomas: But did you have any experience because your husband was involved in the newspaper, the underground newspaper in '56 and was later sentenced and in prison, did you have any sense of people, other people, having hostility toward you?
- Borocz: No.
- Thomas:of feeling angry.....
- Borocz:quite the contrary.....
- Thomas:or ignoring you or isolating you, pushing you away.....
- Borocz: Isolating, yes, that happened, because many of our friends went away to the west and others of our friends who were very good friends and we saw them frequently, we didn't see them anymore because we couldn't afford it, we simply couldn't afford it.
- Thomas: They lived on a more expensive lifestyle.
- Borocz: Yes. But we got new friends, because in the jail, where there were so many people, two men had to sleep on one straw sack, and when my little boy was already born, and my husband was in his office, I got a telephone call, from a very nice man, he said, "I had the pleasure to spend some unforgettable nights with your husband on a straw sack, and I got out of prison now, a year later, and I would like to visit you". "Oh" I said, "but that would be very nice and I'm sure my husband will be very glad and we have a child since, a new one", and it turned out that their children are just the age of my two elder children.....
- Thomas: And so they were new friends.
- Borocz: And they were completely ruined because he worked in the oil business where they had a flat given by the enterprise and he of course lost his job and they came to live with his mother-in-law who wasn't nice at all, now she's dead already, so she's at peace. It was a small flat and they were there with the two children, he worked as a worker in a terrible place where he had to lift very heavy things, so they really were very much pushed back. And when they came to visit us, my husband invited them to our little summer house in the Buda mountains. There, in '55, '56, we had it built. My husband made the drawings and gypsies came to build, it was very primitive because by then you

couldn't own a summer house bigger than thirty square meters, so that it was exactly thirty square meters, and.....

Thomas: That was allowed.

Borocz: That was allowed, so we wanted to spend summer months there. There was nothing there when we started to build that house. On one side was a big room four by five meters, then in the middle there was an entrance and the little ante chamber, and then in front was a little bathroom and a ladder which led up to the attic, and to the left was a kitchen two meters by five meters, of which a little part in the corner was stolen away for the bathroom. We slept in the kitchen, my husband and me, and the children were in the room. There was no space for more people there. When Laci Pollok and his wife, who was just my age, came up to this mountain with their children, they said, "Can we not put up a tent here in your garden and spend the summer here?" and then my husband said "But the tent is here, the attic is a tent" and then the two men made out of pieces of wood beds, we bought straw sacks, so they lived in the attic and we spent summers together. I don't know how many summers. Very nice people, they were just as poor as we were, and we were very good friends and later on we became relatives because their daughter married my husband's nephew, so she became Mrs. Borocz. And they still are friends.

Thomas: But these were prison-made friends, so to speak.

Borocz: Yes, prison-made friends, yes, and the three children of the young Mr. Borocz would not exist if his uncle wouldn't have met with Pollak father, and they were really very very good friends.

Thomas: But did the children in school experience any kind of negative feelings because their father had been, I mean after all, under Kadar as I understand it the revolution was referred to as the counterrevolution.

Borocz: Of course.

Thomas: And it was a bad thing. Was there any feeling the children experienced in school or from the teachers.....

Borocz: At school they cannot say anything about that.

Thomas: But they know that it was not a bad thing that their father was involved in but they did know that it was considered bad.

Borocz: Speaking about the "counterrevolution", teachers did not like to go into details, they didn't like the lies which were written into the book.

- Thomas: Right. And so what happened? Did anything change very much when the Soviet Union collapsed? I mean when the Berlin Wall came down.
- Borocz: Here the change was earlier. When the so-called iron curtain, a wire fence, was torn down, it was a technical happening, not a social happening. But they organized a social happening for that, they organized a picnic, a Pan-European picnic on the 20th of August, which was a real picnic, that meant that people stood there with a sandwich in one hand and with a glass of champagne in the other.....
- Thomas: This was in 1989.
- Borocz: '89, while the fence was torn down, and they invited also the commandant of the border guard so that also was there, and a group of east Germans, over a hundred, knew about it and while those stood there with the sandwich and the champagne they rushed over the border, they rushed, technically they ran away, and they were gone.
- Thomas: And now they're going from Hungary to Austria?
- Borocz: To Austria.
- Thomas: And they had come from East Germany to Hungary?
- Borocz: They came to Hungary for that because they planned that, they knew about that. And they rushed over the border and they were gone. And the commandant of the border guard stood there with his champagne and.....
- Thomas: What can you do?
- Borocz: What can he do? They are gone. And then many eastern Germans started to flow, to flow, to flow into Hungary, because they sought such a possibility, but that was stopped already and then they didn't know where.....
- Thomas: Who stopped it?
- Borocz: The Hungarian border guards, that was just those who ran over, and there was a border again, no fence but a border, and then they went in the garden of the German embassy, the west German embassy. Young people with children, and the whole garden was full of people.
- Thomas: They were seeking asylum?
- Borocz: Yes, And something had to be done. And others were here like tourists, but much more than otherwise, because they all sat on the train and said we shall see what will be. So that there had to be something done about it, open your

border, we don't mind. And then on the eleventh of September the Hungarians opened their border and the Germans started to flow, all those who were already in Hungary. It already was so from the end of August, then on the twentieth of August was that picnic, and from then until the eleventh of September was that flowing of the east Germans. Young people gave tea and food to the people who were there in little Trabants with children, and people on the street, in the villages, said "Come in, we give you a bed". The school always starts on the first of September in Hungary or around then, and there was a big Communist European young people's camp, this is next to the northern side of Lake Balaton, and in September it is still warm with little houses and beds in it, so that this camp was open for such refugees and day after day passed and there were always more and more people there. Something had to be done, it would burst, so that the border was opened down there, the eleventh of September, and they went to west Germany. And how happy they were, the Germans who kissed each other on the border, now they are not so happy about it.

- Thomas: I remember seeing newsreels, films, of the falling of the Berlin Wall and how the people greeted each other, and it really brings tears to your eyes.
- Borocz: There still are friendships here in Hungary. Those who called people from the street to their home and gave them a bed and gave them food, there are such friendships which still exist. And also at that time when in '51 there were the deportations, for instance, I know a lady who is younger than me, she is a Countess Pongracz, a well-known name, she is the youngest daughter of the elder Pongracz, the baron has died already, she was with her father deported in a village, and then her father worked and the peasant woman looked after the little girl. And then when in '53 they were allowed to go away, but they were not allowed to come to Budapest, so that he had to look for where he can work something, and she always was left with those people where they just were stuffed into the house. And now still she likes them, they are very old people and she sees them.
- Thomas: Why was he not allowed to come to Budapest?
- Borocz: Because it was the law that was like this, that the deportees, it was.....
- Thomas: Why didn't they let them come back later? They just didn't?
- Borocz: Later on they came back. Some of them came back and they lived in some villages around Budapest.
- Thomas: Did anything in your life change? I mean, what was it like after the fall of the wall?

- Borocz: In '90. Oh it was, you know it was such a great pleasure that now that happens, still in my life, but the pleasure is over because it didn't make many changes in my life, it came a little bit too late, a little bit too late.
- Thomas: But it made some changes?
- Borocz: Yes, of course. For instance, a change is that now you can have a bank account in foreign currency. This is a first. You know that Nick and Stephanie were put in jail because of a hundred dollars or what he had at home. People were made stupid by the Socialist system, really people were made stupid, the heads, there are great great mistakes at the heads, which they don't get out.
- Thomas: What do you mean, they were made stupid?
- Borocz: Because it's a stupid system. I could tell you many examples for that stupidity, for instance, when in '90 first it was allowed, the radio said that now you can have a bank account in dollars or Deutsche marks or whatever, and nobody will ask you where you got the money from, and then people queued at the bank to open a bank account, and a man stood there and he had in his hand some two hundred dollars and the policeman came and put handcuffs on this man and took him away because he saw the two hundred dollars and he didn't know the newest change, what the day before was said in the radio, and he took him to the police station and the police station said "Get him back".(laughter) I resent that quite a bit that I, I worked for many years.....
- Thomas: Were you working then? When did you start working?
- Borocz: I started working when Bela was, I think, one and a half or two years old.....
- Thomas: Now where were you working, at the engineers' office or no?
- Borocz: First I worked for a little, how do you call it, it was not a state-owned enterprise.....
- Thomas: Private?
- Borocz: Not private, between that, cooperation.....
- Thomas: Cooperative?
- Borocz: Cooperative. But not a negative culture cooperative but it was a cooperative of iron workers, they worked with iron, and that's where I got a job, officially I was a worker, an unskilled worker.....
- Thomas: An unskilled worker. But that was a good position under the Communists.

- Borocz: Yes, they needed somebody in the office but they were not allowed to have as many persons so I was officially an unskilled iron worker but I worked in the office. It was a very nice place and I learned very much there because all the others there were also déclassé people because of '56. There was one who made the accounts who used to be the accountant-in-chief of a very big factory but he was thrown out because of '56. Very nice people were there who taught me many things which I didn't know which I could use later on when we were in the foreign trade. But I couldn't use languages. As a child I learned languages because I had a German governess and then a French girl coming.....
- Thomas: So you learned English, French and German as a child?
- Borocz: As a child.
- Thomas: Yes, so you've known these languages for a long time.
- Borocz: Yes, of course, English perhaps less, German and French I knew quite well, English not so well because for that there wasn't so much time, but I knew languages. But I could not work in such a place, you know, I wasn't allowed to. And then I wanted to tell you, because I told you that three Jewish men rescued me in some part of my life, once when I still worked with this iron place, where I fit very well, I was quite well paid and they were very nice people, but one day I get a telephone call from a certain gentleman who worked in the light industry ministry and he said he was the son of Mrs. Barta. Mrs. Barta was a Jewish lady who had a fish wholesale company, and we had fish ponds in the country, in our land, and my father, and my grandfather and my great grandfather all sold fish to the Bartas, and they were all the time business friends with these Jewish people, and this Mrs. Barta, who was really a lady, she came every year when the big fishing was, she came to see how they put them in the lorries with this water, and so she stayed with us like a guest, and I knew her, and she was, when the Germans occupied Hungary in March '44, then started the deportation of the Jewish people, but in Budapest, from Budapest they did not deport Jewish people so most of the Budapest Jewish people stayed alive, and that is because Horthy, who didn't have very great power against Hitler because we are a small country, a weak country, we didn't have a large army and they had a large army, but he said that the Budapest Jewish people, we don't give them to you because we need them here because Budapest has to stop the Russians, that was Hitler's order, and we need the Jewish people here as workers, as helpers, and that's why the Jewish people were not deported, but they were stopped, this Barta family had on Szechenyi Mountain a beautiful apartment, but she was stuffed into one room in the former Jewish district, I don't know if you know where the big synagogue is.....
- Thomas: Yes, I do.

Borocz: And around there, these streets, this was a ghetto which was made during the German occupation.....

Thomas: She was put in that little room during the German occupation?

Borocz: During that time she was stuffed in a little room together with her son and when my father knew that and when he came to Budapest he brought her honey and goose fat and soap, which we cooked at home, there was a shortage of soap, for instance, so of course she was an old friend of the family, he came and helped her. And this man said that he had another name, I don't know why, and he called, he said now I've found you because I've searched after you, I thought that you are in difficulty in this system and I have a certain power, and as your father helped my mother when they were in difficulty I want to help you now to get a better job. And I wasn't happy about that because I went into so many places and it was so humiliating that they always let me translate things and typewrite and in the end nobody took me when it turned out that my husband was in jail and that my mother was a countess and my father, he was a big landowner and he's abroad, it always turned out that then they always said, "Now e don't have any place". I was fed up, I am well there as a worker, the iron worker. But he kept telling me, yes, you must, and then he said, "Don't write into your resume that your husband was in jail. You can tell it to the man who is responsible, you can tell it to him in words, you can tell it but it shouldn't be written down, because then he is responsible, why did he take such a person". But he also couldn't find me very quickly a place, so we went to several places. He was appointed by the minister to organize research institutes for all the branches of the light industry, so he was a great man, much depended on him and in such a place they needed people who knew languages, and that was his idea, that he would put me into such a place. And so we went to the paper research institute, the textile research institute, and third we went to the leather research institute, and the leather research institute they took me. They paid me less than as an iron worker to start with. But in that job I had the possibility to use my language knowledge. You know then you couldn't go to seek for state language examinations, now you can do that, but then the office had to send you. If you were in such a job that you need languages the office sent you to seek for examinations, and if you get the medium degree then you got 8% of your salary more, and if you had the upper degree then you got 15% of your salary more. So that with that the whole thing changed already for me because although I got less paid and I was a little bit unhappy because I liked the old gentlemen there and the déclassé people, but I came to that place and here I could ask for being sent to the language examination.

Thomas: What languages did they use particularly?

Borocz: All kinds. I sat in a room with some other people. Our job was to read leather and shoe industry papers from abroad and translate the titles and if we thought it was interesting make a short account of what it is about and what we

showed in a little paper-like something, that was sent to all the leather factories and shoe factories in Hungary and they read it and what they found interesting they ordered from us the whole translation.

Thomas: But what languages were you using?

Borocz: Well, I knew German, English and French.....

Thomas: So you used all of those?

Borocz: Yes, and I looked for the three examinations. In one term, it was a few days from each other, it was oral and then writing, also passing the writing to go to the oral examination, so I got in the first round the upper degree of German and the medium degree of French and English. So that meant that 15 plus 16, 31% of my salary immediately was much higher. I was envied so much. There was a great Communist in that research institute in Ujpest, a very silly man he was, and he was quite sick at that, that I now get 31% more, and he went to a shop and bought an English language book and he came to my desk and said "I will also have that per cent because here I have that book" and he thought that if he buys that book.....

Thomas: He will pass the exam.

Borocz: He was a very lazy man. That research institute was a former leather factory, and he lived very close to it, and in the morning he put on his trousers and his shirt over his pajamas and he came just because we had to be there at seven o'clock in the morning, so he signed and put into the machine the paper and then he put his bag on his desk and something on his chair, and then he went back to his house to go to make the great loo business and to wash and to dress, then he came again. That's what he did. (laughter)

Thomas: When did you start doing guide work?

Borocz: I always asked for it. Every autumn when the guide school, when it was a state school, one would make one school year, it would be in the evening of course, to be a guide and also more dealing with languages, and I always went there and filled out and I never was taken. Because of course of my background. And then I was taken in '71 but now that all the things come out of the Party which were secret things, then later on I heard that in '70 the whole thing changed, and they said that such kind of people like us who were always excluded from everything, we can be taken. But we have to be watched.

Thomas: Now were there very many at that time tourists, and if so where.....

Borocz: Not so many, but.....

- Thomas: Where did they come from, where would they come from, east Germany?
- Borocz: Even America, even America, east Germans many, also from Austria and Germany, brave people came, brave people, who thought that they are heroes if they dared to go over the Iron Curtain. When President Bush was here, from America, that was in '86 I think, ...maybe it was '89...after he came here much more Americans came, much more. Until the Gulf War, and that stopped it. Different things always stopped the Americans, of course 9/11 also stopped the Americans, which is quite understandable. ... And the Bosnian War also stopped them, in Yugoslavia. You know America is far away and on the map Hungary is a neighboring country so they thought you could hear the cannons. Many people then did not come here and then they decided to go elsewhere. ... But things change sometimes. Last year there was for one whole year a Hungarian festival in France, and now we have one in Italy. In France it means there were concerts of Hungarian artists, exhibitions of Hungarian pictures or museums, all over France and it lasted a year long.
- Thomas: Was it sponsored by the government?
- Borocz: By the two governments. And it made this year more French people came than usual. I had more French work.
- Thomas: Really. So you have French, you have German, and you have English-speaking, I mean the Americans, English and Australians.....
- Borocz: Not only, yes, but also all the Scandinavians because there are not enough guides for the Swedish or Norwegians.....
- Thomas: But they speak what?
- Borocz: They speak very good English. The men. They come with their wives. When I talk I hear in the bus when I say something then rrrrrrrrrrrrr.....
- Thomas: The translation.
- Borocz: The translation for the wives. The Japanese the same. There are of course Japanese guides but sometimes there are not enough and also the Japanese men all understand English, the women no, and then it is the same.
- Thomas: And to be a guide you have to take a state exam.
- Borocz: Yes, so I went to that school in '71 and '72 in June I made an examination and I got a license.
- Thomas: And does that just last indefinitely?

- Borocz: No, you always have to renew it and make again an examination. Nothing's changed in the last years. I have a new one because my whole bag was stolen.
- Thomas: Did you have to take the exam again or just simply say it?
- Borocz: Not the exam but with the whole changes, the ministry, it now belongs to another ministry and you think that all the time when you were registered again, and it always costs money to be registered again, then everything is kept. Now when my bag was lost it turned out that my dates are lost, not my examination, but I had to bring my examination papers and have a copy but with a notary, notarized each one extra for money for the three of them and bring them again, otherwise I don't get my license. Typical.
- Thomas: Yes. Those things always are. Isn't that what we call bureaucracy?
- Borocz: Bureaucracy! Everything is always written down in seventy-seven places, and then when you need it they can't find it.
- Thomas: It's lost. Now who do you have, what kind of tourists do you have the most now, or does it vary.....
- Borocz: It wasn't a very good time, every guide says that. I guide very much for a French company. They have a Hungarian partner and they provide everything for the ships, the food, then the people in the kitchen and the cleaning people and also the guides for the tours. So there are French people, not always French, on the French ships sometimes Americans come or Germans. They live on the ship, they get the food pension on the ship, and then they can book for different programs.
- Thomas: And then they book you for the guide, the guide for Budapest.
- Borocz: Budapest, or the country, or to the puszta, different things, they can book for different things. So I work very often for them, and then I work for another company which now has children, German children, well, not small children, fifteen to twenty, school children, schools, and that's mainly in spring and in autumn, before the school ends or when it starts.
- Thomas: Is this sponsored by the school?
- Borocz: I don't know, no, I think the parents pay for that, maybe it's sponsored partly by the school.. But it's a company which only organizes that .They drive to Lake Balaton and stay in some very much run-down summer holiday places of a factory or something which doesn't want it anymore and sold it to somebody who bought it and now it's a hotel or hostel and they stay there and then they make an excursion to Budapest and arrive at eleven o'clock at Budapest and I wait for them. And then, it's very funny, because you know, the German people are very precise and if they have a full pension then they would not

miss to eat one meal if they paid for it, but the children of today are quite different, the children with their earrings and in the nose and they have red hair or green hair, they don't eat the breakfast because they stay up long in the evening and then they don't want to get up five minutes earlier to eat the breakfast and they don't like the breakfast because they don't eat bread, butter, cheese, sausage, or marmalade, that they don't eat, they only eat who knows what, and when they arrive to Budapest at eleven o'clock and I am keen to show them Budapest and they are keen to find a McDonald's. They only ask, "How long will that last?" The tour. And they are terribly hungry. (laughter) Not all of them. I have a son in Germany, he lives in Cologne, since '81 he went away, and he always watches this latest stupid soap opera, it is called "Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten", "Good times, Bad Times", and as we can also see it here I watch it also because I know he watches it. But it's a stupid story like every soap opera, and it is about such young people. And when they come out of the bus I always think when they arrive that they come out of "Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten". Maybe a little bit more run down because they didn't sleep at night. And they are very hungry. (laughter)

Thomas: He left, your son, left in the early '80's?

Borocz: My son went away with a legal passport and the permission to be away for one month, and he didn't come back. So he went away illegally, and he was.....

Thomas: Does that mean that until the changes in '89 he couldn't come back?

Borocz: No, only after five years. In Hungary there was a law that if he would have come back earlier he would have been put in jail. Within five years it was not valid anymore. So in '86 he could come. It was a very bad feeling to me in those 5 years, maybe I'm dying and my son cannot come to see me.

Thomas: But it was because of the political situation or because he could get a job he wanted there or why did he leave?

Borocz: Both, both. He thought he would have much more possibilities there. He had a very hard time to begin with, he was a night watchman with a dog and all kinds of things until he was able to get a normal job. Now he works his computer, he works whatever he wanted to be because he is an agricultural engineer and he's interested in horses and now he works in Cologne in the main office of the horse races.

Thomas: He is not a veterinarian?

Borocz: He's not a veterinarian, no, he says it's a pity because he would earn more money. No, he's an agricultural engineer who studied animal breeding. But what I wanted to say, you asked me how it was when he went away. We knew that he would go away but we pretended not to have known, and then we had

to tell the police if he didn't come back, and a man came to my office, then I was with Kultura, that was a foreign company for books and such things. My colleagues wondered why a policeman wants to talk to me. He asked me about my son, what I know about him. Well, in the same time I was in a second job, one could have two jobs because it was difficult to live on one, and when I finished my school as a guide, I did guiding as a second job for them and they never gave me a western trip. I didn't want very much trips because I didn't want to spend my holidays away from my family very much. But for a weekend I would have liked to go to Vienna which then was a great thing.

Thomas: But you could only go east?

Borocz: At least after doing many works, just sight-seeing on Sunday or on Saturday or such work, which is not really good work, because you see the people only for three hours and you don't have really a contact, it is not high quality work that we really like to do, sometimes they give me a group which came for two or three days but not very much, so I was in the back. Then I got at last a group, a Hungarian group, which goes to Vienna for three days, but then, on the same day when the policeman came to see me in my main office I went in the afternoon because then they would have given me the papers and the money that I needed and the list of the people who will come, and I went there and she said, "You can't go to Vienna, your son went away illegally" and she said "But then I send you to Prague". I took a group to Prague instead.

Thomas: That was nice of her, I guess.

Borocz: That was nice of her. The east Germans, we have east German friends, and they were very much astonished that I can go to Socialist countries, because they wouldn't have been allowed. If anyone went over the border----"up town" they called it, the Germans, they couldn't go anywhere, not to other Socialist countries either. After my son left, my boss, who was a very nice lady, said, "I'm sorry, but you know I don't dare to send you on a business trip to the east, you must understand". And then the next year my first trip was to Frankfurt where I met my son!

Thomas: So it was a year of punishment for you.

Borocz: Yes. A year of punishment. But as a guide I went to Czechoslovakia which then still existed.

Thomas: But that was an eastern bloc country, it was considered then.

Borocz: Of course. I wanted to be a guide as a main job, but they did not take me because of the political discrimination.

Thomas: Could you go, however, to Russia, or Poland?

- Borocz: To Russia we went, with my husband, when I was still not a guide. Our first trip in our lives, as we never had a honeymoon. Then we had this little house and we had our friends staying there and we had a girl from the country. Our friends, the jail friends, and us, the four of us, could afford to pay that girl for the summer to look after our six children, she was a very nice girl, eighteen years old, so then we could afford to go away for a week, and then we went to the Soviet Union. But it was not so easy, we had to have from the party secretary a writing that we were nice and that they should give us permission.
- Thomas: And the party secretary's permission went to, say, the Russian.....
- Borocz: To give us a passport, a Hungarian passport, which was valid only for eastern countries.
- Thomas: Then did you have to get permission from the Russians like a visa?
- Borocz: No no, it was an organized group, a tourist company. So they arranged for the flight and for the visa and everything.
- Thomas: Could you have done the same thing to other countries like Poland or Romania or Yugoslavia?
- Borocz: Yugoslavia not. But the others yes. It was a one-week tour. We would have had a sightseeing tour of Varsovia, but it was not held because they thought that there was a smallpox epidemic. So we just sat for hours at the airport. From there we flew to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) for 3 days. From there we took a train to Moscow and we flew home after 2 days.
- Thomas: This was what year now?
- Borocz: That was '64. Then we were already married thirteen years, and the same year my father arrived for the first visit in autumn. That was also fantastic, he telephoned when, he flew to Vienna and then stayed with a friend of his and he telephoned he will come next day and we were so excited, we didn't see each other, we were scared that he would not be allowed to come here, but it all went well and then he asked me to go by train to Gyor, you know where Gyor is, and he would come in the train and then from there we could already be on the same train. But we couldn't because I couldn't go to his compartment and he couldn't come to mine.
- Thomas: Why?
- Borocz: In Communism there are such things. So I saw him in the window, I saw him after thirteen years and I had to go back to my compartment.
- Thomas: That's ridiculous. I guess there were a lot of silly rules like that.

- Borocz: There were a lot of such. Another example: you know that last year a Hungarian writer got a Nobel prize, a Jewish man who wrote about, his book which got the Nobel prize was about the Holocaust, in a quite other light and angle written, so many books are written on it, but this is really an excellent novel.
- Thomas: I read this book, it's called "Fateless" in English.
- Borocz: Yes. And this Imre Kertesz, who wrote that book, he writes in another book of his about a trip to Vienna. He never became a party member, he was offered it but he never wanted. Most of the Jewish people had a great possibility like the son of Mrs. Barta, because they could get into very high positions after the war, but this Imre Kertesz he never wanted to become a party member, but he lived on his translations in a modest way, but in Germany he was known already, in Vienna also as a writer, and he was invited to Vienna to get a prize. He had a passport to go and he had four thousand schillings which belonged to him.....
- Thomas: From his writings and selling in Austria?
- Borocz: Yes, yes, and that was already in '91, it was already after the changes, in '91 he wanted to go to Vienna, and he put the four thousand schillings in his pocket and thought, now I go to Vienna and now I can afford anything I want and I will eat dinner in a good restaurant. But the Hungarian customs man said he should empty his pockets. So the four thousand schillings were found. He should have had a permission to take such an amount of money abroad.
- Thomas: Was the permission of the Hungarian or the Austrian?
- Borocz: Of the Hungarian. He wrote that you had to prove where you have the money from, I don't know, I don't know quite exactly, because I never asked for such information, but as a matter of fact he writes down in his novel, that he had to get out of the train and go to an office, where he had to wait for two hours and his train went away and then they took away his money, it was confiscated, the four thousand.....
- Thomas: And he didn't get it back?
- Borocz: He didn't get it back, but then he said, "I have my ticket for that train, it will come back now in the evening, I paid from Budapest to Vienna and from Vienna to Budapest, may I take the train to go back?" and then they said, "But for that you have to have the permission of the army".
- Thomas: You know, it sounds as if not everything changed in '89. It changed slowly, it sounds like.

- Borocz: No, because it was in the brain of people. It was like you must imagine that they poured in it concrete when it was soft and it got hard and you don't get that away with a change of the system.
- Thomas: You don't get rid of that fast.
- Borocz: It's still there.
- Thomas: Do you think it is still there now?
- Borocz: Yes. People have to die and other people come.
- Thomas: Another generation that has not lived like that. Do you think there is still a sense of suspicion and a fear of speaking freely to just anybody?
- Borocz: No, I don't think so, I don't think so, no.
- Thomas: So that has changed, there is much greater freedom. And what about what is printed? Is there more freedom now since '89 of what is printed in the newspaper and
- Borocz: I didn't vote at all last year because I was in America when the voting was, but I wouldn't have voted for the Socialists because the Socialists in my eyes are the same as the Communists, let's say the better part of the former Communists. I wouldn't have voted for them but many people voted for them, those who were party members before, those who thought that when the Socialists rule everything will be cheap again, because you know that life is not easy at all. Some people think that it used to be better.
- Thomas: In what way?
- Borocz: They get poor now. The pensions lose the value so it's very difficult to live on pensions, just on the pensions. You can't afford many things if you live only on your pension. It's a very poor life, you cannot afford to have a car or other things.
- Thomas: And are there other expenses for, say, younger people that they didn't used to have?
- Borocz: Yes, younger people don't find a job, many factories close their doors, because some other big factories bought them and they didn't buy them in order to make them function, they bought them to close them, to get rid of the competition. So that in many places, for instance the Szerencs factory, Szerencs is a town in the northeast, there was a sugar factory, the first sugar factory of Hungary, old traditions, and they also made sugar and chocolate, and Nestle bought it. Everybody thought that now that's very good, and you

know what? Nestle stopped the production, it's only a store house, and instead of several hundred people eleven people work there.

Thomas: This is to get rid of the competition?

Borocz: They want the Hungarians to buy Nestle and not to buy Szerencs.

Thomas: This has happened often, with different companies?

Borocz: With different companies, yes. So there are places in Hungary where people don't have a job at all. There are such villages where the only people who have money, who get money every month, are the pensioned people and the young people who have children and get money from the state for the children. Other people don't have money. They have a garden, they have chickens, they live on perhaps a few eggs they can sell, but they have a very poor life.

Thomas: And there are not new companies coming in?

Borocz: There are, yes. Two years ago I was hired by two gentlemen who came to the Hilton and from Hilton to Nyiregyhaza in the northeast corner of Hungary, very far away from Budapest, and they went to see a factory, an American factory which started production of baby-dolls pajamas. These two gentlemen came from another American company which wants to buy the baby-dolls clothes, but their boss was a very honest man, and he said, "You go there and see if people are not exploited, those workers are in slavery". They didn't want to use the local interpreters but have an interpreter who is not working in this company. And they wanted to see and ask the people if they are happy, if they are paid enough. I went with them the whole day. We went in a big hall which was used for something different before, they brought the machines, the sewing machines, many women were there working very fast making the baby-doll clothes one after the other, and a few men were only working there, those who packed and looked after the machines, but many women. So we went to those sewing machines, one after the other, and they asked the women how many children they have, how far they live, how they come to the factory, how are they paid, are they happy, are they not happy, and several things.

Thomas: What did they find out?

Borocz: Well, they were quite happy, they earned very little compared to Budapest, but in that part of the country.....

Thomas: The money goes farther?

Borocz: Yes, they go for much less because there is no work so they were quite happy to have work. And they also got such pieces which have a little deform, you

know, something is not right on a baby doll, they can buy that cheap and then they can sell them again and also they got thirteen months paid and then they had a Christmas party made for the children and husbands, so such things which they never had before, so they seem quite happy.

Thomas: So did the Americans buy the company?

Borocz: No, they didn't want to buy the company, they wanted to buy the production, and they did, yes, I think, they went home with positive impressions. It was quite interesting.

Thomas: That is interesting. It is interesting for you, I think.

Borocz: It is. And then also our church, I go to St. Elizabeth church, they had a Catholic conference, it was also two years ago, we could say those who can have people for a night, for a dinner, a night and a breakfast, who come from all other parts of the country, and I also said that I may have two people of the same sex or a couple, because I have a room with two beds. I had two ladies and also a gentleman, I could put him into the drawing room, and they all came from different places. They all told me about that, how poor they are and how little money.....

Thomas: They were all Hungarians?

Borocz: All Hungarians, also from that part of the country.

Thomas: Do you think then that this is the situation that accounted for the election of the Socialists?

Borocz: Yes. Many people thought that that would be better. And now, for the second time last year the Socialist won. In the thirteen years which were since the changes, already once for four years the Socialist were the government and now we have it also. Very tight, it was very tight. Fifty-one per cent and forty-nine per cent. But I am in the forty-nine per cent. And Nick also, very much so.

Thomas: Do people feel that with the election of the Socialists that things have improved?

Borocz: No, now many don't think so after two years.

Thomas: So maybe in another election the Socialists may not.....

Borocz: It's like a swing. I honor very much two politicians, one is, was a member of the Communist party who when he was abroad, I think in Switzerland but I'm not sure, he was the first to say in '89, that '56 was not a counterrevolution but was an uprising of the people. He dared to say that and then there was a

terrible shouting but he said it first time officially. That was in '89. And now he got a decoration, on the third of October, he really deserved it.

Thomas: That's nice.

Borocz: That's nice. Of course he didn't get any role, because he was a party member, somehow he was pushed aside but he was very good. Imre Pozsgai was his name. And the other one was a young man, you know when Imre Nagy and other poor people were reburied, it started in '89 with that, the family asked to be able to take them out of the grave where they were just thrown in with the face downwards, which is a Russian custom----executed people they buried with the face downwards, from that one can see how much influence the Russians had in that execution, when they exhumed them they found all these with the face downwards----that they can bury, give them a family burial. It started with that, in the spring, and until it was in June it changed, the whole thing changed. It became a great thing. It was in Heroes Square. There were four coffins, of Imre Nagy and two others and there was an empty coffin symbolizing all the other martyrs, and different people made speeches, and a very young man made a speech there, the whole square was full. I wasn't there because in that time I came with an American group from Vienna to Budapest on the hydrofoil ship. I wasn't there, but I know from everybody, and the young man said "We want the Russian army to go away", and everybody said that will be a great scandal, what will come out of that. What came out of it, the Russian army went away. But he was the first who said it. This is Victor Orban, he was that young man.

Thomas: Wasn't he the prime minister later?

Borocz: Yes. He was the prime minister before now the Socialists won.

Thomas: And is it true that the present prime minister who is Peter Medgyessy, that he was a member of the secret police under the Communists?

Borocz: Might be so. Who knows?

Thomas: I just read that in a newspaper this last spring, it was the Financial Times in a section on Hungary, and it said that about him, at least that that was, shall we say, discovered after he was elected prime minister. That's why I am asking if that's true.

Borocz: I don't know. You know, of course, the Socialists say it wasn't so, the others say it was so. I don't know. It might have been. Because you know; there is for instance a quite close relative of mine whose mother also was a Szechenyi and she was a cousin of my mother. I never knew her, she was a little bit older than me. I never went to balls as when I was of the age, for there were no balls and I was a déclassé, but she went to balls because she is some years older, she's an Almassy countess, and she married also a middle class man, it was a

great love affair, and she worked as a nurse because as a countess during the war the young countesses learned to be nurses, so that was the only thing she could do so she worked in the health business all her life. She and her husband were taken to prison, it was I think in '50 or in '51, I don't know exactly when it was, and they wanted to put them into some of those cases which were built up, they made cases like a theater, you know.....

Thomas: You mean like a show trial?

Borocz: Show trial, that's the word, yes, so they made show trials and sometimes they took people to be in the show trials but in the end they did not need them so that probably was their case, but to prepare them to say everything they wanted they beat them and tortured them, so that she and her husband were tortured every day. They had to put their hands so on the table and with a rubber stick they were beaten, and then the feet, so that they were limping, and also they were hit in the face. For a whole week they were all blue and lilac everywhere and limping and sick and had fever. And in the end it turned out somehow that they were not needed in such a showcase, and then they were put in another jail for another week so that they should not look like this, and then they were let out. But definitely she and her husband had both to sign a paper that they will give information about their circuits, they signed it but she and her husband never spoke about that, they only somehow knew of each other, and she always was called by a man of the secret police time after time and she had to meet him in an espresso somewhere where she had to give him information. Because of that they never went to see anybody of relatives or in aristocratic circles because they didn't want to get into trouble anybody. They lived such a life just with the children and with colleagues where they worked.

Thomas: And they didn't actually know anything?

Borocz: They didn't actually know anything, yes. They had to say something but the something wasn't interesting for them. But, you know, like this anybody could have been, anybody, because they told them, if you don't do that then you stay here.

Thomas: So anybody could have been a spy but not really a spy.

Borocz: Yes.

Thomas: So actually I think that this newspaper article said that Medgessy said that he was not a real spy, he was something else, I don't know. It's hard to know the truth.

Borocz: It's hard to know the truth. There was one, a Count Eszterhazy, which turned out, now you know his son is a famous writer, and it turned out that he was a spy, and he enjoyed it, he somehow got it like a hunting fever.

- Thomas: Really? But he was a real spy. He really did inform on people.
- Borocz: He was a real spy. In the documents he had another name, a cover name. When this turned out, my son telephoned from Cologne and said "What was my father's cover name?" It was a joke. My son always says such things. When the Soviet Union collapsed, he rang me up and said "Now the next thing the Catholic Church will collapse".
- Thomas: He is making jokes! Are your other children here in Hungary?
- Borocz: Yes. I have four children, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.
- Thomas: That's wonderful! Well, is there anything else that you would say about the changes?
- Borocz: Yes. One thing I didn't mention I have to mention, that there was a compensation after the political change. It didn't turn out very well but it was a gesture, they never said it was a complete compensation for what you lost, so people who lost land, house, factory, freedom, those people could apply for compensation.
- Thomas: And the compensation was monetary, money?
- Borocz: It was not money, it was coupons, it wasn't cash. And that was the difficult thing, It was very limited what you could buy for the coupons, or you could sell them on the black market for cash. Some people got very rich with those businesses, lawyers, lawyers did such things, because it was really difficult to spend the amount written on the coupons well. For instance, we, my father had almost four thousand hectares of land and my brother he had some hundreds. We couldn't buy that very land which used to belong to us, not one square meter was offered at these auctions where one could go with these coupons. You could go to the auction and then put in your money and then you could say what you buy and then you couldn't get back the rest of your coupon money for, I don't know, two months and in the meantime there were other auctions, you couldn't go to them, so it was practically very difficult and they didn't offer good land, no buildings.....
- Thomas: So you could never get back your family lands.
- Borocz: No. We could buy other land, which is bad, now I am about to see thirty hectares, it is very difficult but now people want to buy because in the European Union we might have advantages.
- Thomas: But somebody else presumably bought your land.
- Borocz: Our land was sold for dollars or for marks to foreign people.

- Thomas: So it is now in foreign hands.
- Borocz: We never say so but it wasn't offered to us. We couldn't buy any of it but it was sold. For the coupons you could only buy what used to belong to you or where you live now. So I could buy around Budapest, but there are people who live there and who had land there and they were angry with those who also wanted to buy land there.
- Thomas: So that's the reason why you were not offered your land.
- Borocz: I don't know what the reason was. And only much worse land was offered. So I bought land in different places, and I even have such a piece of land which is one meter and sixty centimeters wide and almost one kilometer long----what can one do with that? Nothing at all. Old people bought it, and you even didn't know at the auctions where land was.
- Thomas: And the auction didn't specify what you were buying?
- Borocz: Yes, but you never knew what it really was, and how they will cut it into, so they made these stripes, so one should talk to everybody who had another stripe and put them together and try to sell it, but now, one stripe I don't know, the person died, and three children inherited it, now you to go to all three of them, it's almost an impossible thing. And that is all over Hungary with those coupon things. It wasn't a very good compensation but it was more than nothing. So we bought the flat of my daughter which was a state-owned flat and she could buy it, that was a buy in a good way.
- Thomas: So she owns her flat.
- Borocz: She sold it since.
- Thomas: And she could sell it and buy something else that was maybe better or where she wanted it or something. Was it this way because it was just not well managed?
- Borocz: It was not very well managed, I'm sure. But it was more than that. It wasn't very even compensation. Some people were luckier.
- Thomas: I wondered if maybe it was a situation where there were just too many people who had lost for the government to be able to compensate.
- Borocz: Yes. Too many people because of course this included from, it started with the Jewish people, there was a Jewish persecution, and then came all the other people, so many other. But in some countries, for instance in east Germany they gave back houses. Also the Czechs. The Czechs paid much compensation in money, real money. I don't know how they managed it, but they did. Castles, they gave back castles. A lady who had a castle, her family, her

mother wrote a book, "The Journey", didn't you read that book? The daughter lived alone, she now runs a hotel in that castle.

Thomas: Really? Which is a good business.

Borocz: Which is a good business. I had an American lady whom I guided here and she stayed there. But our manor house for instance was sold before the changes to a man who was a water polo player in the Hungarian team and he went to the '56 Olympic games in Australia and did not return.

Thomas: What did he do with your manor house?

Borocz: He bought it much later. In '56 he was a young man, he married an Australian girl, he worked there and they made a very good hotel business together so that in the end they had several hotels. Thirty years later they got divorced and sold them all and he came with a share to Austria and married a Hungarian woman who lived in Austria, and they came to Hungary and went around in their car to see if they can buy something. They saw our manor house which was very much run down so that the roof was leaking because it first belonged to different institutions and they didn't care and they didn't keep it up, and then he bought it for not very much but of course he had to spend very much money to turn it into a golf hotel.

Thomas: This was before the coupon system.

Borocz: This was before. We knew him because he asked in the village, he asked all the people if they don't know whose house it was, but some people knew my address, they knew my brother was in Africa. We were invited, my brother was also in Hungary then, when he opened his hotel he invited us to the opening. But he sold it now, the hotel goes on but he sold it to an Irish company. It is still there. Used as a hotel. It's a golf hotel and there are not many golf hotels in Hungary. I think three.

Thomas: Is the land of the golf course where you used to raise apples?

Borocz: Yes, yes, it was our land. It's a wonderful eighteen-hole, very expensive.....

Thomas: That's kind of smart from the point of view that I see from Americans because Americans who love golf will go anywhere in the world to a good golf course. I mean they are crazy about the game.

Borocz: Oh somebody is here.

Thomas: I think it is Nick. So we will stop our conversation. Okay, if you want, we have one more story.

Borocz: One more story. After the war, my father, when we lived in the country and we tried to manage, my father knew English, well, he went to the American library in Budapest to get books from there to read. And he got out the book of Churchill's memoirs about World War II which he was very keen to read, and he took it to Hencse, to our village, but as by then he always had to take care, then we started to be on bad terms with America, the Cold War was already on, so that when he went in his garden, then already we didn't have the eighty acres but we had the kitchen garden in which he worked and he sold melons and cabbages such things and so in the morning he went there, he never knew who was coming to the house, and he didn't want to leave the Churchill book next to his bed but he took it out to the back yard where there were pigs and there were also the maizes, stengels, were put into a gula----I don't know how I can explain that to you----the stengels, the maizes what is the plant when it is dry?

Thomas: Corn. Corn stalks.

Borocz: The corn stalks, the corn stalks were put together, it looks like a tent, and on top of it he hid the book, always when he went away in the morning. And one day when he came back in the evening one of the pigs somehow got out of his stable and turned over the whole thing and ate up the Churchill. So when he came to Budapest the next time he told the librarian who was a very good-looking, very nice, sympathetic lady, a widow, Mrs. Spencer, he told her the story, that he was very sorry but he cannot bring back the book because the pigs ate it. Somehow that became a love affair, as they were both widowed, it was a love affair, they were the same age, and she was very nice, Corrine Spencer, I don't think she's alive now, but she was very much in love with my father, my father also I think with her. When he was in Africa much later, and he had a job, she was retired already, she gave up her flat in Texas where she lived, she put all her furniture in a storehouse and she went down to see him in Africa. I think she thought that they would get married, but they did not. I asked him later on. He didn't marry her because her income was much higher than his. It was impossible for him to marry a woman who had more money than he. We wrote letters to each other, and then she stopped writing letters. She once wrote that Tyler is a dull place.

Thomas: She was right.

Borocz: Was she? I had guests from Tyler and I told them that story, and I said I don't know what happened to her, now she doesn't write anymore and then they wrote me a letter and said they went to visit her and she is quite well but somehow she has a sore hand and she cannot write. It's impossible now that she's alive, she was born in 1898.

Thomas: That's an interesting story.