

An Interview with Maria Kollar

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

Interviews conducted by
Virginia Major Thomas
in 2004

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

Maria Kollar, "An Interview with Maria Kollar", conducted by Virginia Major Thomas in 2004, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2006.

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Biography

Maria Kollar is the granddaughter of an eminent Hungarian banker, Leo Lanczy. The family's contribution to the building of the first permanent bridge across the Danube from Buda to Pest is recognized by the inscription of the family name on the base of the Szechenyi Lanchid or Chain Bridge. Maria's father, Dr. Andor von Wodianer, was a lawyer. The family's social position led to their being "resettled", that is, deported, by the Communist government from Budapest to a village on the Hortobagy (Great Plains) where they were quartered with a peasant family. Maria began her schooling in the village but after two years she and her sister were allowed to return to Budapest to live with their grandmother. Her parents were still not supposed to live in Budapest but in fact her mother secretly lived with the grandmother also, which created an exciting if somewhat frightening situation for Maria.

Her social background also prevented Maria from entering the university. After graduation from the gymnasium she became a secretary-administrator, first in a bank and later in a marine shipping company. In 1968 she married and moved to Szekesfehervar with her husband, a teacher. There she was employed as an administrator by Lightmetal Company which was bought by American Alcoa after the political changes, and Maria has worked there until the present. She raised two children, the daughter a teacher, the son a businessman.

She has experienced many economic and social as well as political changes from the Communist era to the present capitalist system and has many comparisons to make and comments on the enormous changes that have taken place and are still taking place in Hungary.

- Thomas: This is Major Thomas, and the date is November 11, 2004, and I am at the Alcoa plant in Szekesfehervar, Hungary, and I am interviewing Marika Kollar. And I think we might begin by asking you first where and when you were born and a little bit about your family. I'll put this here and you may have to speak up a little loudly.
- Kollar: Okay, yes. I was born in Budapest 1945, 1945.
- Thomas: And the day?
- Kollar: The day is March 9th. It was a very nice spring day during the war, and I was born at home in our cellar, in our cellar, yes, and after that came in the Russians-----.
- Jakabffy: To liberate Budapest.
- Thomas: So you were born during the siege and that's why you were born in the cellar.
- Kollar: Yes. Yes.
- Thomas: But you don't remember that.
- Kollar: I don't remember that. I know it from my mother and from my friends. I was born in Buda, in a very nice house, because my family was rich enough at that time, but after that not.
- Thomas: Who were your parents? Their names?
- Kollar: Their names were Maria, Maria-Anna Lanczy. Lanczy Leo was the famous banker from Hungary, before the war. He was my grandfather.
- Thomas: He was your grandfather, and your father's name was....
- Kollar: You can see my grandfather's name on the base of the bridge, the Chain Bridge in Budapest across the Danube, because he gave money to build it.
- Thomas: And your father's name was....
- Kollar: Dr. Wodianer Andor, I put it here, yes (she writes it on sheet of paper). He was a.....
- Jakabffy: A lawyer.
- Kollar: A lawyer. I speak better German, sometimes some words come up from German.
- Thomas: That's okay, you can just say them in German.

- Kollar: German is my better language because I was in Austria as a baby sitter during the Kadar era.
- Thomas: Uh huh. And your mother was....
- Kollar: My mother and my father worked in the Hungarian Credit Bank together.
- Thomas: And her name was Maria Anna?
- Kollar: Maria Anna. Maria Anna.
- Thomas: And you grew up in Budapest then?
- Kollar: In Budapest, yes.
- Thomas: And where did you go to school?
- Kollar: I go to the school...no...it's a big story.
- Thomas: Okay.
- Kollar: It's a big story because after the war, in 1951 we were settled out from Budapest.
- MY: What does "settled out" mean?
- Kollar: Settled out is kicked out of the dish, I think I say that.
- Jakabffy: That's the same that I told you, that everything was confiscated, yes.
- Thomas: You had to leave your house.
- Kollar: Yes, and we were settled out to the Hortobagy, to the Great Hungarian Plain in the east of Hungary.
- Jakabffy: To the great plains. Forbidden to take their belongings with them.
- Kollar: To Polgar, yes, we went there, to Polgar, this is the name of this little town. In the Hortabagy. Now it's a bigger town but it was a little one, a village.
- Thomas: And you were settled with another family living there?
- Kollar: Yes, with another family, with another big family, for a half year and after that we were alone with these people who were born there in Polgar who were also "victims" of the era. They were peasants who had more land, that's why they were punished with this..
- Jakabffy: They were a family....

- Kollar: They were settled in their flat, in their house, their little house.
- Thomas: And how long did you live there?
- Kollar: We were there two and a half years, from 1951 to 1953.
- Thomas: And did you go to school there?
- Kollar: Yes, and I began my school there. I had also two sisters and one of them died, during this settling, she was only one-half year old, and my other sister is living now in Canada.
- Thomas: When did she go to Canada?
- Kollar: At the same time as I married, in, I think in 1971, after she finished her school here, she is a chemist, she left Hungary. But she was married to a Hungarian man who was going from Hungary already during the revolution, 1956, with his parents to Canada. .
- Thomas: She met him here, in Hungary?
- Kollar: Yes----no, no----yes, one time. He was settled out from Hungary, to Canada, with his family, when her husband was a little child, and after that they came back one time to Hungary again and they met them and they married. But he was Hungarian.
- Thomas: Were they settled out or were they allowed to leave?
- Kollar: Allowed to leave, that's why, because she was married with his coming again, he was already Canadian at that time, in the '70s.
- Thomas: And so you started your school....
- Kollar: Yes, in Polgar, and after that in Bocskay Street which is also in Buda.
- Thomas: So you moved back after....
- Kollar: Yes, we moved back to Buda to my grandmother because our flat was taken out from us and our parents could not stay in Budapest immediately, only we, as children, could move back.
- Thomas: And what year would that have been, that you moved back to Buda to your grandmother's?
- Kollar: We moved to my grandmother's house in Buda and that time I made my elementary school third grade.

- Thomas: Oh I see.
- Jakabffy: Was it in '53?
- Kollar: '53, I think, yes. From the.....
- Jakabffy: Third grade.
- Kollar: Nine year old. Yes, yes, yes.
- Thomas: And so you finished the elementary school....
- Kollar: The elementary school in Budapest and in another school in Fehervary Street because this school in Bocskay St. had the classes only to the 6th and the last two classes we had to make in another school also in Buda.
- Thomas: And then you went to the gymnasium?
- Kollar: I went to the gymnasium in Monor, also in Pest county, near Budapest. The second husband of my mother lived there and that's why I went to Monor for the secondary school. He was also a lawyer. After the settling of my mother and my father they parted, divorced because my father was very very angry at my mother that they were settled. A man can't weather living through an event as the settling was.
- Thomas: I see. So you went to gymnasium and finished the gymnasium in Monor. And then what happened?
- Kollar: After the gymnasium I wanted to go to the university to learn teaching, to teach.....
- Thomas: Preparation to be a teacher?
- Kollar: Yes, to be a teacher in Russian and English but I was not accepted in my exam. I made it 5 times in the Budapest ELTE, ELTE is the biggest human university in Budapest.
- Jakabffy: Scientific Faculty.
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: And what were your scores on the exams? They were good enough to be admitted?
- Kollar: I was good enough because I made my last exam of the secondary school with the best notice, but because of my....

- Jakabffy: Background.
- Kollar: Background, family I wasn't acceptable, and without my cleric, clerical training, because I was going to the church and that was not acceptable at that time and not for a teacher.
- Thomas: This was the Roman Catholic Church.
- Kollar: Yes. The Roman Catholic Church.
- Thomas: And you took the exam 5 times.
- Kollar: 5 times. And I was a little bit stupid because I had to probably go to the country somewhere and not to Budapest, the ELTE there was the biggest university, and my sister learned from my life and she went to Szeged for example and she was accepted. And also the human faculty was easier..
- Jakabffy: The human faculties.
- Kollar: Human faculties was always a little bit serious at that time, more political....
- Thomas: More under the control of the government?
- Kollar: Yes, yes. Also I think it was to make it some more so.
- Thomas: It was more difficult to pass the exam.
- Kollar: Yes, to pass the exam.
- Thomas: To be accepted.
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: So what did you do?
- Kollar: I worked at a lot of places because at the end of the year I always thought that I will go to the university already but it's not going and I---
- Thomas: You kept hoping.
- Kollar: Yes, I hoped always. I went to work a lot, I worked in a bank because my mother at that time worked there also.
- Thomas: What did you do?
- Kollar: I was dealing with a lottery, and I was dealing with a lot of things, with telefax, it was at that time new in our country.

- Jakabffy: You did something like a secretary.
- Kollar: As a secretary, everything, everything, I always made everything. All the jobs, after my secondary school. Only here in Szekesfehervar as my children were born I worked in other secondary school as a financial executor and I worked also school as a leader, as a guide.
- Jakabffy: Oh, for a guide.
- Kollar: For a guide.
- Thomas: A guide where?
- Kollar: Here, in Szekesfehervar. And near my job I always had some money from being a guide.
- Thomas: Now you worked a good number of years in the bank in Buda....
- Kollar: No, in Monor at first, and after that in Budapest also, and after that I went to the Detert. Detert was the biggest Hungarian marine and shipping company, and there was already a sales sector. We collected things for the ships. I was there a sales support. I liked this job.
- Thomas: What kind of things?
- Jakabffy: Necessary supplies?
- Kollar: No, no.....
- Jakabffy: Goods to deliver.
- Kollar: Yes.....
- Thomas: Loads, things you carry on the ships.
- Kollar: Yes, things to carry on the ships to make the port. It was very interesting.
- Thomas: Was this physical labor?
- Kollar: No, it was administrative work. I was always in administrative work.
- Thomas: And after that?
- Kollar: After that I married, in 1968, in 1968 I was married and my husband, I knew him from the secondary school already, and he is a teacher also, a physical education teacher here also now in Szekesfehervar and that's why we are coming to Szekesfehervar because he had got a job here, and it was not so far from Budapest, and it was the best thing at that time because it was difficult to

find a job in Budapest. And I had a relative who worked for the aluminum trust, he was the director Mr. Dobos, and Mr. Dobos invited me to come to this factory and from that time I am working here at this factory from 1969 for 35 years, in the same plant.

Thomas: Have you worked anywhere else, in Szekesfehervar?

Kollar: No, at that time this was the Lightmetal Company when Alcoa bought it. .

Thomas: It was Hungarian-owned?

Kollar: Yes.

Thomas: It was state-owned?

Kollar: Yes.

Thomas: At first it was state-owned and then it was privatized after the change.

Kollar: Yes, no, not after the change, before the change. And Alcoa later.

Thomas: And after the change Alcoa bought it?

Kollar: It was in '93. And I told you that at first half of the factory were American and after two years in '95 it was bought by Alcoa 100%. .

Thomas: And have you liked working here?

Kollar: Yes. I am retired already in 2000 as I was 55 years old because I could do it if I had 38 working years, so now I remain here and I have the pension and a salary too. There were more than 4,000 working in this factory and now there are 1,200. A lot of people had to go.

Thomas: Had to go. Laid off.

Kollar: Laid off.

Thomas: Is it nicer working here now than it was when you first came?

Kollar: Other. Other. It's other. It was also nice that time..

Thomas: What's the difference?

Kollar: The difference is it was very friendlier before in the factory also, the family and the workers go out together, also in the weekends or after the work or so, for cinema, for the excursion, to make excursion....

Thomas: It was like a community.

- Kollar: Yes, yes. But now everybody, not just in the factory but the whole of Hungary is not the same, nothing in this factory, everybody like leads his own life, so very much more other than before.
- Thomas: Very different than before.
- Kollar: Yes. But I don't say that's better.
- Thomas: That's fine. It sounds as if you have more independence now to do more what you want with your family or children. Before you did more with the group.
- Kollar: Both, both, both. We are going with the family together with groups from the factory.
- Thomas: So it is a mixture.
- Kollar: Yes. It was very nice also, I could not say any worse that's now.
- Thomas: Now is not worse?
- Kollar: Not, not.
- Thomas: Was it better before?
- Kollar: Was not better, was not better, but worse also now, no. So perhaps for the younger people, but for me not. Perhaps the younger people who are now in their 20's, 30's, is better now, the life, but for us, was not. Was not much more worser. My life was worser during the Rakosi time, much more, but after that was always a little bit better than before, for me.
- Thomas: You're saying the Rakosi era?
- Kollar: Yes.
- Jakabffy: That is the '50's, before '56.
- Thomas: That was not a good time, is what you're saying.
- Kollar: No. It was a very very exciting time because, I can tell you some things. For example, after the outcoming time before that, my mother could not live in Budapest, only we children with my grandmother live in Buda, and my mother had to buy a little flat near Budapest for a long time, I think, still, '56, and so she had to live there on paper, but she lived with us, but that was very exciting..
- Jakabffy: She rented.

- Kollar: She rented a flat in Dunaharanti, near Budapest but she was always with us, but sometimes in the evening when somebody was ringing on the door, she had to hide herself in our house.
- Jakabffy: So that was the threat of the bad period
- Thomas: That might have been the secret police or someone who....
- Kollar: Yes. Sometimes they are coming to check it that really my mother is not at home with us. And my father lived, he rented a little room also near Budapest.
- Thomas: They were supposed to stay there, they were not supposed to come to your grandmother's, or to Budapest.
- Kollar: No, no.
- Thomas: And after '56, under Kadar, what was it like?
- Kollar: I like it because I went to the schools, at first the elementary school was for me very good. We had to learn Russian but I liked it, I liked it really, the Russian language is not so bad. I can say also today because now Alcoa owns 2 big factories in Russia and here now all have to learn Russian. So everyone from Alcoa speaks so much Russian. And I like Russian and I like languages, I could go to an English language teacher also in that time also in Budapest.
- Thomas: Is that how you learned English?
- Kollar: Yes, I learned in the elementary school, also English, not in the school but I learned also with a girlfriend together at a very nice teacher's.
- Thomas: Private lessons.
- Kollar: Yes, private lessons. German also, German is coming also from my family because I had in my life, when I was 3 years old, I had also German-Austrian babysitter, it also was from my mother she had before the war.
- Thomas: So you learned German as a very young child with a nurse.
- Kollar: Yes, I had a nurse, an Austrian one.
- Thomas: And when you got out of the gymnasium that was during the Kadar regime.
- Kollar: Yes. The gymnasium was a very good school in Monor. My parents wanted that I have to go to a gymnasium at first in Budapest, but it was a Catholic school.
- Jakabffy: It was under the supervision of the church, it was run by the Catholic church.

- Kollar: They wanted it but I was not so glad about it, but we had not enough money for it and I could not go.
- Thomas: Why were you not so glad about it?
- Kollar: I didn't want to go only with girls together, for example, one thing only, because in that school they learned together only with girls, for example, and in the gymnasium in Monor we learned together with the boys together, coeducation classes.
- Thomas: Did that make any difference in what you were taught, in the subjects you were taught?
- Kollar: Yes. Yes also, also. .
- Jakabffy: Church, church history, religious history....
- Thomas: This was at the church school.
- Jakabffy: It was a nun's school.
- Kollar: I learned always at the church but I don't want to learn only these things. I was a very human person, I liked literature, languages, grammar but not so much mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc.
- Jakabffy: Open person.
- Kollar: Open person and I went also in a human class in Monor. At that time was human classes and real classes in the gymnasium.
- Jakabffy: In the human faculties it was literature, languages, and history, and art history, and in the real faculties it was more mathematics, physics, science.
- Kollar: And I don't want to do them, I took only the human.
- Thomas: You liked those.
- Kollar: I liked those, not so much the other. And so I could go to Monor in a human class. But it was together boys and girls also. It was more girls because of the human faculty but was boys also, in this class there were 27 girls, 13 boys.
- Thomas: And when you got out of school, and it was under the Kadar era, what was it like to work?
- Kollar: I wanted to be a teacher always, but that was difficult, to go to the university with my family background.

- Thomas: Yes, but you could not because you could not go to the university.
- Kollar: Yes, but....
- Thomas: What were the jobs like? I mean what was it like to work under the Kadar era? In that period of time in the jobs you had, was there any special restrictions, any special things you could do, you couldn't do, you should do?
- Kollar: I could do everything, it depends on the family status, because, for example, my mother worked for this bank and I could go to this bank to work. Now it is not so, because they don't expect family are together in the same work.
- Thomas: It's not allowed?
- Kollar: It's not good. Here in the factory, also not a good thing, that from one family working together, here were a lot of family together in a lot of departments, but nowadays not so, not so good. I cannot say it's not allowed but not so good. I could do a lot of things. To get a job was I think easier than now. For example, a lot of people who are coming up from the universities cannot get work, cannot get jobs.
- Thomas: Is that because there are not enough jobs?
- Kollar: Not enough jobs now, not enough jobs. Now a lot of people go to the university because they can pay for it, they can go, not in that time, and also after the university they cannot get jobs. It's a big problem. For example, my son-in-law is an agricultural engineer and he cannot get now agricultural work. Because he worked for Parmala, Parmala is a big factory here in Szekesfehervar, it came from Parma, it was also here in Szekesfehervar, a milk factory, but after the changing it was bought from Parma, from Italy, and now he had to leave this factory, for example, because of bankruptcy.
- Thomas: And why is that?
- Kollar: I don't know, because Italy's owner wanted to make other milks, and it was very expensive for the Hungarian people and such milk they could not sell, expensive.
- Thomas: So they went out of business here? Not in Italy.
- Kollar: Yes, yes.
- Thomas: But there were always jobs before the change?
- Kollar: Not always, but if somebody wanted to work they could find. But I think is now also. (laughs)

- Thomas: If you went to the university before the change, you could always get a job?
- Kollar: Yes, yes. Lot of teachers can be teaching, and nowadays the children are always less, always not so many children in the schools.
- Thomas: Fewer children to teach?
- Kollar: Yes, and the teachers have very bad salary in the schools.
- Thomas: Is this true of other jobs too, not just teachers, that the salaries are not so good?
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: Now? The salaries were better before?
- Kollar: It was enough. Now it is not enough.
- Thomas: Why is that?
- Kollar: Because everything is much more, is much more money.
- Thomas: Costs more, things cost more now than they used to?
- Kollar: Yes. If I could not stay here at Alcoa then I could not get so many money which is enough for me because now I am living alone because we are also divorced after 25 years and it's not so easy.
- Thomas: No. So you support yourself....
- Kollar: But I got much more salary after the Americans came. I can say, but before it was enough, but now it would be not enough.
- Thomas: Before the change it was enough to live, now it would not be, that would not be enough because things are more expensive.
- Kollar: Yes, and a lot of people have a very very low salary now also, in other work.
- Thomas: So it is not true that since the change, the American companies that have come in give....
- Kollar: Who can have a job in these factories or these IT people can get much money but for example teacher, doctors, normal engineers who don't have a very good job, they could not have enough salary for this life like we now have.
- Thomas: Doctors? Lawyers?
- Kollar: Yes, also.

- Thomas: But people who work for American-owned companies have sufficient salaries?
- Kollar: Yes, much more than the others.
- Thomas: The American-owned companies pay higher salaries than the Hungarian ones?
- Kollar: Yes, if the company is, our companies can't.
- Thomas: So what do people do, lawyers, doctors, to live now? Do they do without? Do they take second jobs?
- Kollar: Yes, some have second jobs or they are working for the whole day, we are working at Alcoa for the whole day. But they are working the whole day and they could not get so many money.
- Thomas: And so how do they live?
- pause
- Kollar: It's difficult for the families who have more children. I see now because I have already 4 grandchildren.
- Thomas: You have how many children?
- Kollar: Two, a daughter and a son. And both have already 2 children, 2 sons and 2 daughters, and so I have 4 grandchildren, and I see how difficult it is and I am so glad and so happy that I can help them, because without my helping and without my husband's helping and without the other parents' helping they could not have enough for the life.
- Thomas: Your husband does help the children.
- Kollar: Yes, also. He is a teacher but he has not so big salary but he is now alone and he can also help them, and the other parents from my son-in-law and daughter-in-law can also help them. And so can they live only.
- Thomas: What do your children do?
- Kollar: My daughter is an English teacher, she went now back to a secondary school to teach English because til now she was mostly at home with the children. And my son is now, he is a buyer also for an American factory, Emerson Process Management. Now they take over a big factory from Niederland and now their very big boss from the U.S. was here and was very very satisfied with the very good job they are making here. For example, the Alcoa managers are saying also that we are working very hard and very good.

- Thomas: That makes you feel good.
- Kollar: That's right, it's true. And he is also happy with his job, his wife is also now at home with 2 little children. So they need a better job when they are living from one salary. She is also an English teacher, my daughter taught our workers also here in the factory for English.
- Thomas: She taught English to the workers.
- Kollar: Yes, yes. And I also for German here.
- Thomas: And the days of the doorbell ringing in the night are gone.
- Kollar: Was? What?
- Thomas: The days when the doorbell would ring at night and you feared, those days are gone, they are no more?
- Kollar: No more, no, no, no more. And I don't remember, I was too little for that time. It was for me not so bad. But I had a lot of relatives abroad, so I could go, I could travel also to Germany, to Italy, to Austria, to Switzerland.
- Thomas: So you had no problem as a child traveling out of the country?
- Kollar: No. No. We have to have our passport only for three months, for example, it was also a time, but I could go when I was a little child.
- Thomas: Were children allowed to go more easily?
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: Probably. To visit relatives?
- Kollar: Who had relatives, and they sent an inviting letter, and I could go. But I was not to my sister in Canada unfortunately.
- Thomas: You couldn't visit your sister in Canada.
- Kollar: I only was an assistant in my workplace, a manager's assistant. And I had to work always, and I don't have so many holidays that I can travel to Canada because I think it will be better if I can go there if I have three months' time for it.
- Thomas: That's a long way. Did you have any sense as a child of having to be careful--this is before the change, in the Kadar era---any sense of having to be careful what you said?

- Kollar: Yes, yes. But I always thought about it and I didn't say anything but I don't allow it, words like that out for us.
- Thomas: Were you told by your parents what not to say?
- Kollar: Yes. We are speaking at home but we were I think intelligent enough for that, that we never say what we don't have to say, at school or somewhere in other places.
- Thomas: You knew what you shouldn't say, you did not have to be told, "Don't mention this".
- Kollar: Yes, yes. I think it was not a problem. My parents were very very intelligent for it and they never taught us that I have to hate this what we lived. We never hated it.
- Thomas: Do you feel that the situation now is better as far as being able to say whatever you wish, that yes, you do hate such-and-such, or is it different now----
- Kollar: For younger people perhaps, because they can say really everything, but for in my case I think it is not so much better.
- Thomas: Not so different?
- Kollar: Not so different.
- Thomas: So you don't feel a sense of relief, a sense of ability to say what you think in public and not have to watch out for certain people who might----
- Kollar: No, because I think we could all, at home we could speak about----
- Interruption
- Thomas: So you don't feel that there's much difference in people's communication or ease of----
- Kollar: No. I could not for example always stay in the family, I know that we can travel, but in my situation, in my family we don't have enough money for travel so much.
- Thomas: So the freedom doesn't make that much difference because you can't afford it.
- Kollar: Yes. Now the people are traveling a lot, much more than before, but not I. And not my family. I always live for my children, and I never left them alone and I have another feeling that now the younger people, and also my children also, they are now after 30, my daughter is 33, my son is 31, and they have already 2 children, and a lot of people now younger people don't have

children in that time, another meaning in our family I think, and it came from the family. And that's why I cannot say to you that now it's much more other, much more other for who had a very good for example familial jobs.

Thomas: You mean a family business.

Kollar: A family business, a family business and in time, in time, immediately after the changing, they have better now, because at that time they can get so much money and so fast then they can now live very good from this money.

Thomas: Money to develop a family business.

Kollar: Yes. Nowadays not so good, who now make a family business it's not so good, much harder. So that right after the change, because my son-in-law and his family, for example, make now a milk import-export company, a little family company, but it's very hard, very hard to live from it.

Thomas: But was that started----

Kollar: That was started after the Parmala had a bankruptcy.

Thomas: So that was recently----

Kollar: Because his father was also the director there and he, my son-in-law was the marketing manager there, and they made now a little business, a family business, but it's very hard, I don't want to work in such a business, I don't want to do, it is a whole day's head attack from it, I really can't tell you how difficult---

Thomas: They are really working all the time, they don't take vacations from it.

Kollar: No, no, oh they can go for vacation but at that time they don't have business enough.

Thomas: Is there then a decline in investment by foreign nations and foreign companies here in Hungary, less investment, less money from big American or German or British companies coming in, less money coming in to put in Hungary, is that the case?

Jakabffy: You ask it now, less money is arriving here, less money----

Kollar: A little bit less, a little bit less, but since always it went from the government, and unfortunately our government is changing every 4 years, always, every 4 years it is changing now. (laughs)

Thomas: Does this affect business?

- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: Does it mean that business, that foreign companies say, well, that's not very safe?
- Kollar: I think, yes.
- Thomas: It's probably good for the government, though.
- Kollar: Yes. Now we have the same thing in the prime minister, is also another, but the same party, but other.
- Thomas: You mean another leader, same party, another leader?
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: How many parties are there, political parties?
- Kollar: More, but in the government is only 4 now. Two left and two right.
- Thomas: Nothing in the middle?
- Kollar: Nothing. Too little, the others too little, they could not go to the government. Not so easy.
- Thomas: Is there a lot of dissatisfaction with the government? People don't like the government?
- Jakabffy: Unhappiness about the government?
- Kollar: Yes. Half country unhappy, half country happy.
- Thomas: You mean like America?
- Kollar: Yes. Like America, yes. (laughter) But what can we do?
- Thomas: Wait 4 years. (laughter) What about the press? Does the government control the press, the newspapers, the magazines, what's printed?
- Kollar: The government who is on the top, better.
- Thomas: Do you feel that you have different points of view expressed, that one paper will tell you one point of view, another paper will tell you a different point of view, so you get different, not reading British or American, just Hungarian papers?
- Kollar: Yes, different, I don't read, only Hungarian, it's other.

- Thomas: Freedom of expression, freedom of opinion.
- Kollar: Yes. A lot of the newspaper, it's lucky for the other men, a lot also for the other parties.
- Thomas: So it about evens out, it's about equal.
- Kollar: Yes.
- Thomas: And what was it like before the change?
- Kollar: Oh it was one newspaper. (Laughs) Or two or three, and now it's hundreds.
- Thomas: And before when there were one or two or three did they say the same thing?
- Kollar: Yes, yes. It was not so different.
- Thomas: Not different points of view?
- Kollar: It's also in the bread and butter now because we have hundred butters, hundred breads, but only one is good for a family.
- Thomas: So there is a change.
- Kollar: It's a change, but we can get, the shopping centers, they wanted to sell everything, it's good, it's not so good, it's not so good I think. It's better that I can choose what I want, but so many, why? We are too small a country for it, too small.
- Thomas: For what?
- Kollar: For so many shopping centers and everything. Only from west they want to sell everything here now, and I think it's not ideal. Why? Why? We are too small.
- Thomas: The country is too small to have so much being sold? so much offered?
- Kollar: Yes. That's my opinion.
- Thomas: Do you think that there is too much selling, pushing? Pushing products on you?
- Kollar: Yes. The products pushing, they are pushing really, to have to sell, to have to buy. They want to sell everything here, but I think we are too small country, too small and too small these people who can get it, who can buy it. The market is not so big here in Hungary for it.
- Thomas: Not enough people who have the money to buy a lot of these things.

- Kollar: Yes, there are a lot of poor people. They cannot, they will be much much more happier to go in a little shop and can get one thing but not so expensive. For example, Szekesfehervar was so nice a town, with little shops in the main street, but now they cannot stay, they have to leave the little shops and they have to close every little shop because these big centers, shopping centers, a lot of people again who don't have jobs, that's why.
- Thomas: When the little stores go out of business.
- Kollar: Yes, yes. And these shopping centers have the people only for 3 months and after that they have to let...
- Thomas: Why?
- Kollar: Because it's billiger (cheaper) for the centers.
- Thomas: So they raise the rent, and people have to leave the shopping centers, and somebody else comes in.
- Kollar: They are again looking for new ones and it's always a little bit cheaper for them.
- Thomas: Do you like the shopping centers?
- Kollar: No. I don't like. I think my meaning is that it's a lot of time to go in a big shop and then walking there a lot and show what I can, and at the end I will buy a lot of things that I didn't want to buy. That is the west market!
- Jakabffy: You want a specialized shop.
- Kollar: A specialized....
- Jakabffy: That has, when she wants to buy a piece of butter or a pair of shoes she doesn't want to go to a super market and go through the different departments to get to the shoes, she wants to get the shoes. And when she wants to buy a hat, then she just wants to go to the hat shop.
- Thomas: Yes. It's like in England when we lived there, the green grocer, the meat shop, but that takes time.
- Kollar: Yes. The meat shop, for example, in Szekesfehervar is now closed.
- Thomas: Yes, the butcher shop. But that took more time to shop. In the malls there are everything all together.
- Kollar: But only for people who don't learn anything.

- Thomas: It's a different way of life, and the other way of life had its great advantages.
- Kollar: But the younger people think other than I, I think.
- Thomas: But the young people like the mall?
- Kollar: Yes, like shopping, also they don't buy nothing, they are going, looking, it's a program but not for us. But is it a program? That's my question!
- Thomas: That's what we call window-shopping.
- Kollar: Yes, but I like window-shopping at the street and not in a center, in the big shops, it was nicer from the street.
- Thomas: Because you don't see so much all at once and you are not so tempted.
- Kollar: Yes, and it's the same, every is the same, every is the same, hundred forints more or less. Now it's again to come into Szekesfehervar also a big shopping center from Germany, four shopping centers were here, a new one, in a hundred thousand city
- Jakabffy: Cities.
- Kollar: A hundred thousand cities or so in Szekesfehervar, it's nothing for it, it's nothing for it. Okay, it's coming also from the little villages, coming to Szekesfehervar to buy, to shopping, but it's also coming from the county, okay, we have buses for all little villages, little towns, the county, but it's also not so many people.
- Thomas: Do you have any regrets, do you feel sorry now that you could not go to the university and be a teacher?
- Kollar: No, not more, not more, because I can tell you that my salary was always better as my teacher husband. For example, Csilla can get much more, for example, but a teacher not. And Csilla for example also in the past she don't have a good salary in her job but now, she has also now two jobs and more.
- Thomas: She's at two universities. And you also are a teacher because you teach....
- Kollar: And I teach also German always, and I make a lot of things, near my job, I type always, if we don't have enough money I type at home letters, or for children finish examinations, the diplomas.
- Thomas: You have more skills.

- Kollar: Yes, a lot of typing and handwriting, and write, and I teach German. It was a time in the factory we could have got physical job, near administration job, and after the job, in the afternoon I did it, why not if I can get money for it.
- Thomas: But you enjoy working too.
- Kollar: Yes. I cannot remain in the house, what can I do if I can not work? I can do it a lot, but I don't like it because then I am alone at home at first, that's my program, but I like to come in in the morning to work at my workplace.
- Thomas: You don't like to sit home and watch the television, in other words.
- Kollar: Yes. Because the television is horrible and terrible.
- Thomas: Do you have in Hungary, do you have what we call public television, it is paid for by people and they have programs that are interesting?
- Kollar: Yes, two. Two public and the others are commercial. Terrible!
- Thomas: What about the public television? Do they have good programs?
- Kollar: Don't have money.
- Jakabffy: The public television is paid for, is run by the government.
- Kollar: They could not make good programs because they don't have money.
- Thomas: The government doesn't give them enough money to have good programs.
- Kollar: Not enough. In the past, in the Kadar era, there were so many movies.
- Jakabffy: There were beautiful movies.
- Kollar: So many television plays, movies. No more, no more. Only the news and the bad news on the television.
- Thomas: But they don't have the good movies anymore. Why not? Movies are not expensive, at least the old ones.
- Kollar: Old ones good.
- Jakabffy: We had always good actors, good actresses, very good, good dramas, and you could see plenty of them. Now there are no funds to finance that.
- Thomas: Where did the funds come from first?
- Kollar and Jakabffy: The government.

- Thomas: But the government doesn't give that now.
- Jakabffy: No.
- Thomas: Too bad. That is too bad. And there is not a method whereby you and Nick and others can give money to the station to bring good programs. I mean everybody.
- Kollar: It would be not enough. It would be so few people who can give that.
- Thomas: And people don't have the money to give.
- Kollar: It would be too little money for it.
- Thomas: But you are able I suppose to get television stations from other countries, Germany, Switzerland, France, are they good?
- Kollar: We can get also but they have not very good programs too. They have the same programs what we can have.
- Jakabffy: What we can receive which is on the satellite, those are commercial private TV stations and they sell or broadcast the same channels what we have got here.
- Kollar: We can get here also the same.
- Thomas: And computers, the internet, can you get things on the internet?
- Kollar: Ah we don't have enough computers at home.
- Thomas: The computers, the businesses have the computers?
- Kollar: Yes. Everybody is of the opinion that....
- Thomas: Most homes do not have computers.
- Kollar: Homes not. I have get from my sister from Canada because both my sister and her husband is also dealing with information for the IT but I had get a little laptop but I gave my daughter....
- Thomas: The laptop?
- Kollar: Yes. I don't have one at home.
- Thomas: So you don't have at home email access to your sister.

- Kollar: After I have to stay at home I will have, sure. I don't want to stay without a computer. I will ask my sister again a new one and they have a lot I think, they have a familiar business also.
- Thomas: And the internet, email and the internet are such....
- Kollar: I can use only here.
- Thomas: And only for business.
- Kollar: Only for business but we can do it I guess also, I can send a letter or email to my sister to Canada also.
- Thomas: But you don't have the opportunity without your own computer to get on the web and talk to people all over the world.
- Kollar: No, no, no. And we don't have time for it here
- Thomas: You don't have time here anyway. But at home you might have time but you've got to have the access.
- Kollar: But I will, if I will be at home I think I can do it already. I hope, that's my hope only.
- Thomas: That will hopefully work out.
- Kollar: I hope. I hope that we don't have to pay so many money for it because now it's not so cheap.
- Thomas: But some of these things are getting less expensive, they're coming down, because so many people are buying them, the price is coming down.
- Kollar: And also something will make by the government also that the line will be also cheaper, hopefully in the future, we hope, something we have to hope.
- Thomas: Who knows what we have in another 5 years, 10 years. There's always new in electronic development.
- Kollar: I say always that now the children are coming into the world with a computer together. So, for example, that's was also very difficult for us, for older people to learn it, after 50, I had to learn, the computer, I had a lot of laptop.....
- Jakabffy: Courses.
- Kollar: Courses, and here at the factory.

- Thomas: They taught you here?
- Kollar: Yes, yes. They teach us, it was also very good, and also for English, as the Americans came in, they could not without many, yes, they taught us, it was very good.
- Thomas: And they did not require you already to know, to know before they hired you, before you went to work for them, they could teach you.
- Kollar: No, no. I could speak a little and it was enough, and after that they taught me, they taught me we can go to the country for two weeks, and only speak English for that time.
- Thomas: Under the Kadar era, in the jobs that you held, you spoke magyar, Russian?
- Kollar: Russian and German.
- Thomas: Not much English?
- Kollar: Not much English. It was much more useful, the German. And the magyar. As a secretary, as a
- Jakabffy: Interpreter.
- Kollar: Interpreter.
- Thomas: And I've forgotten, computers came in in the '80's, didn't they? you did not have computers under the Kadar regime except maybe at the end?
- Kollar: No, no, at first it was after the change, after the change, about at the end of the '80's, the late '80's.
- Thomas: The late '80's. So you didn't have to learn that then.
- Kollar: I had to type. It was difficult, much more difficult, much different. It was a physical job, typist, it was a very difficult job. But I find at home also a lot.
- Thomas: Slower, harder.
- Kollar: Harder, harder. Not so fast. Cannot repeat so easy a word, if I have to change it, it was lots more harder to change mistakes. I think it was good, other, other, other. We can say it was much more, other, different. People, each together, was I think much more better.
- Thomas: When?

- Kollar: In the past. Much more friends, go together somewhere, go to the family, go to home, invited each other and nowadays everybody is alone. Which is nowadays the family together it is the better but some are unlucky always without family. I am very happy because all my children, my grandchildren living here in Szekesfehervar but a lot of people are living far far away.
- Thomas: And there was more sense of community, of people together, of families together, then. Now people, more individuals, live alone or just two together, they're separated from, yes. So it's two different feelings of life.
- Kollar: My children could build a house here in Szekesfehervar so I think that....
- Thomas: They are building a house here? Their own house?
- Kollar: Yes, yes, their own house. They had a flat at first, and two years ago they could start it, they can build own house.
- Thomas: And have they finished it?
- Kollar: Yes, yes.
- Thomas: Are they happy?
- Kollar: Yes, very happy.
- Thomas: And they have children.
- Kollar: Yes. Big house. They have to pay a lot, that's why I have to work.
- Thomas: Big houses are nice for children, though, when you have lots of kids.
- Kollar: I am living in a block house.
- Thomas: Do you like it?
- Kollar: I like it, I like it because it's in the city, I can arrange everything, I don't have a car, I cannot drive and it's much better for me, and my children are living here in the....
- Thomas: But you don't need a car.
- Kollar: I don't need it. I am traveling with bus also.
- Thomas: The public transportation is good?
- Kollar: It's not so good because the buses are coming with timing, they have a schedule, sometimes in an hour only, in a half an hour only, but I tell you, I have cheap costs for it, it's cheaper, cars are very very very expensive for a

family. For example, here at Alcoa all managers just have cars from Alcoa, this is good, but own car is very, very expensive. And change of cars is very expensive, old cars are expensive, new cars also expensive. But a lot of people has more, thanks the God. My children had already also 2 cars. If my son's wife goes for work, then they have also 2 cars. Because with children it's a little bit difficult to do some of it with buses, but alone it's good for me. Sometimes on weekends it's a little bit difficult for me to go to my children's but it's okay for me. I'm cooking for the whole weekend for them. And then I have to take it. Sometimes they are coming and pick me up but sometimes not.

- Thomas: The only problem with public transportation is in very bad weather.
- Kollar: Yes. I think it's worse in the summer because it is hot. For younger, no problem.
- Thomas: And what do you think about Hungary joining the European Union?
- Kollar: Ah, should be good, sometime, later, in the future hopefully. Not now yet
- Thomas: Why not now yet?
- Kollar: I think every beginning is hard, every beginning is hard, we have to learn also this new situation I think, and people has to also thinking about others, I think, and other countries and others that stay out, thinking about new jobs, thinking about learn abroad, but for the younger people, for my grandchildren perhaps, it will be good. Perhaps, hopefully. I hope.
- Thomas: But it sounds as if you think it takes time to work into it.
- Kollar: Yes. Nine or ten years, I think. After 10 years perhaps it will already be easier. But it's coming, it was only last year that we joined, we don't know now exactly what it is. But we hope it will be better.
- Thomas: I have heard Hungarians say that nobody knows exactly what it does mean for the country.
- Kollar: But I think nowadays intelligent people already thinking about it, what is this, but a lot of people don't know about it, nothing. It's difficult in the country for the people who are dealing with the agriculture, difficult, in the towns better.
- Thomas: Why is it more difficult for the agriculture?
- Kollar: Because they cannot sell what they have. It's harder and harder to them to sell it.
- Jakabffy: What they produce, they can't sell their own production. The western people, in Europe as well as in your country, get basic big amount of subsidation.

- Thomas: Yes, subsidies. But not here?
- Jakabffy: Very little, and that is occasional.
- Thomas: That is government policy?
- Jakabffy: That is lack of government policy and lack of government money.
- Kollar: That is both. And also there are others but this stands out.
- Thomas: Change is difficult.
- Kollar: Change is difficult but not bad. But we have to have changes.
- Thomas: We have kept you a very long time and you do have to have your lunch.
- Kollar: Never mind, but I have to go in to my office. They are looking for me already.
- Thomas: I do thank you very, very much for your time.