

Actors' Cabaret Sketch

In a previous letter, a Hungarian woman now in Israel described two anti-regime skits performed by Hungarian actors during a private New Years' Eve party in Budapest (see DIB #608, 5/25, page 13). The following excerpt from a subsequent letter from the same source describes the third skit performed on this occasion.

"...The scene is a luxuriously furnished room, where two people are impatiently awaiting the 'kosseur.' (The 'kosseur' refers to the make-up man who gives important officials the look of proletarians - Ed.). 'What will happen to me if the kosseur fails to come?' says one man, wringing his hands. 'My career will be finished.' At last the bell rings and the kosseur appears, dressed in a smock like a masseur and carrying a bucket full of mud. 'Where have you been all this time?' says the man. 'You're not the only one I have to take care of,' the kosseur replies, whereupon he dumps the bucket of mud over the man's head and begins rubbing it into his face and clothes. 'Your hands are not red and chipped enough,' says the kosseur. 'Didn't I tell you to hang them out of the window at night? Who will believe that you carried plaster for bricklayers when you were a boy? They'll know at once that your father was a wholesale merchant if you wear pants like those you have on. I told you to put on the ones you bought at the flea market. You can take X. as an example' --the kosseur gives the name of some big boss -- 'it was I who made a big shot out of him, because he followed my advice. For two nights he hung his hands out the window till they froze...' The skit ends with the hero covered with dirt and in rags, all ready to go out and act as chairman of the meeting."

Theater Ticket Sale "Organized"

The same source, a Hungarian woman now in Israel, writes further that in Hungary "people only go to the theaters if they have to. The sale of theater and movie tickets is organized. Poor E.G.

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is one of those entrusted with the sale of tickets. She gets 15 to 20 tickets at party meetings, which she peddles among her friends. If she can't get rid of them it's just too bad for her, for then she must pay for the ones left over. It is the same in all factories and ministries. This is called 'organization of the public,' as otherwise, whenever a Russian play is produced, the theaters would remain empty. They keep trying to bring Russian plays to Budapest, but the public wants none of them. On the other hand, they flock to all English, French or Italian pictures, even to the ones that are not so good, and despite the fact that these, too, are propaganda pictures because no other kind would be admitted; the public doesn't care, so long as the pictures aren't Russian ones.

Actors Talk against Regime

"The actors are naturally against the regime," the same source continues, "for all art needs freedom, but I know of only one case of open criticism that stirred the town. Joseph Timar and George Solthy -- perhaps you may remember them -- members of the National Theater, spoke loudly against the regime and the Russians in their dressing room. There was a big scandal, of course, and as Solthy was the guiltier of the two he was taken by the AVH. We heard nothing of him for two years, but now he is acting again.

Timar was barred from the stage for a year, and during that time he was supported by friends. If a private individual had dared to criticize the regime, you can imagine what would have happened to him. Actors and artists are exceptions. They made out that Timar and Solthy had allegedly been drunk, in order to bring about a mild sentence."

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