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## HUNGARIAN PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH CENTER

Until two or three years ago, the Center was inside radio and television. Now it is a separate and independent organization, with its basic budget (accounting to about 1/2 of its total budget of 30 to 40 million forints) provided by the Council of Ministers. The Center works for the television, the party, and various other organizations on a commission basis. Its major client is radio and television. It provides a weekly report (see report) which includes an appreciation index and program ratings used in determining programming policy, and special projects, on an additional commission basis, such as research on video use, teletext, etc. From the basic data base of the weekly reports, three monthly in-depth analyses and interpretations are provided to radio and television. An annual list of services and budget is submitted to radio and television. The basic cost is about 4 million forints of which approximately 2 1/2 forints go to the panel service.

Thelach

#### THURSDAY LUNCH

We are starting from a difficult tradition. That tradition stems from the modesty of Janos Kadar and his principle of avoiding cultive personality. From about 1957 to approximately last year (1987) this was a basic principle of television policy. The Kadar policy was based on the imports of television being in general information and presenting the situation of Hungary and the world but not to advance a personal policy. With the election of of Josef Grosz this policy has changed.

Mr.&Gerencser is General Deputy President of Hungarian television. he reports to the President who is a member of the Central Committee, nominated by the party, appointed by the Council of Ministers. The President's superior is Mr.&Pozsgai, Secretary without portfolio. Therefore, television is independent and on the ministerial level. They can criticize any other ministry, although should be more careful with the Council of Ministers. For example, the Prime Minister announced that there would be no price increases beyond 15%. However prices did increase. Television criticized it. The Prime Minister went on television and explained that he had a choice; &to keep his word and let the economy worsen or to depart from his promise, but safeguard the economy. He chose the latter.

The new policy follows the saying of Ference Beak: "Do not lie, tell the truth." Kadar's policy of no cultive personality changed with growth. He came from radio/television himself, and his skillful use of television was responsible for his elevation to the prime ministry. While Prime Minister, he advocated distancing the party from government. Now that he has become General Secretary of the party, he is not in such a hurry with that part of the policy and intends to use television to assist in his program. But the policy is still being implemented, although in a haphazard manner.

There is great uncertainty. For example, two new "intendants" were promoted recently to head the two new television channels, and unlike other such appointments, both of them come from within television. In other words, they are not party members from the outside appointed to preside over television. Whether this is policy or an accident, we don't know; &they are both young and able and well qualified people who might have been promoted anyway but this has not been the custom. It is hard to see now exactly what the role of television might be in the new

situation. Government, the television itself, and the whole country is in the midst of soul-searching. It is hard to be specific; many people try to be in the position to use television.

Grosz was Party Secretary for Radio/Television in the old system about 8 to 10 years ago. He was already then seen as the most dynamic and intelligent of the government people. The takeover was delayed by about one year. The old leadership did not believe that the party could be against them. Nevertheless, the change went fairly smoothly, and peacefully. Kadar is accorded great respect and treated with dignity.

The relationship of television to the party has changed on paper. In reality we don't know. The Party is to decide long-range strategy and issue guidelines but not dictate day-to-day policy. The plan is that the party policy should be realized by party members working within television as individuals but not from the top.

The Politburo has 11 members, the Central Committee 105 members. There are goals, guidelines, aims, various pronouncements, but there is no national cultural policy. In the parliament television comes under the cultural committee. There are no special committee for mass media, although there is much agitation to establish such a committee.

The program structure is in the handbook. Even if some elements change, the percentages are going to be valid. There are two channels that are both complementary and competitive. They compete for audience but complement in terms of information and programming. Channel 1 is more informational Channel 2 is more entertainment and popular. News on Channel 2 is briefer and "purer", less background. Channel 2 has more live programming, magazine type programming, film, sports, games, etc. The direct program control is held by the directors. They program according to the overall program structure. Specifications are more demographic and economic than thematic. Occasionally there are internal disputes but critical incidents, exercise of severe leverage, are rare.

One type of problem is illustrated by a program that dealt with a village in which in the uprising of 1956 the managing director of a small factory was to be hanged by the villagers. He was arrested and locked in the village council house and his worst enemies were appointed to guard him. But he was rescued and survived the incident. The manager has died but his two children learned about the making of this film and protested. They said it was a defamation of the character of their father to portray him as an enemy of the people. They wrote a letter to the

President of Television who stopped the film and it was never aired.

A total of three hours a week is devoted to programming in minority languages such as Slovak, Slovan, Serbian, Rumanian, Schwabian. There is no special broadcasts for Gypsies because they are not supposed to speak the same language, have the same culture, and it is difficult to program for them. However, this is a controversial matter in Hungary.

There is also a weekly program for pensioners and a program for women which is essentially a program for young mothers and pregnant women.

Children's programming takes 12% of total programming. Total programming is 100 hours a week. The program periods are from 9:00 -12:00 in the morning and 4:00 - 11:00. There is no transmission between noon and 4:00, after 11:00 p.m., and on Mondays. There is now a discussion to extend the programming and eliminate dark Mondays.

The Agitation and Propoganda (AGITPROP) is an elected committee of the Central Committee. It deals with television and is on very good terms with television. Its new chairman brought in an important change. He does not pretend to run television nor does the party. They deal with long range plans, general guidelines, and exercise influence mostly through party members who work for television.

Television has many foreign contacts with East and West Europe, Japan, China, and many other countries. These are contractual cooperative agreements. They provide the framework for the exchange of programs, production teams, services, national days, and commentaries about other countries. For example, there is now a contract for a Hungarian evening on Swedish television and of course a Swedish evening on Hungarian television. Relations are closest with the Socialist countries -- except, of course, Rumania. Neighboring countries have signed specific protocols or cooperative agreements for specific programs for the fall term. These programs are dubbed in the other country. Recently we have received many requests for direct cooperation with Soviet Republics, without going through Moscow, for Yugoslav Republics, such as Macedonia, Slovenia; from Chinese Republics, and of course we are working closely with the Finns. In fact we are building a joint department store with Finnish Television just as an investment. Other international agreements are with Sweden, Iran, Iraq, Thailand, Egypt, etc. We have a written agreement with Algeria, we are members of the OIRT, INTERMAG, the newspool. Two programs, 8HET and PANORAMA are on INTERMAG which is a Central European programming concept.

The introduction of new technologies is not very advanced except for Teletext. That is used as a tool of information. In 1982 we broadcast 102 pages now 60 pages. More than 1500 sets are equipped with Teletext decoders. There are more than 40 cable companies mostly operated and owned by local councils and some utilities. Three hundred thousand households are programmed for cable, serving over 800,000 viewers. That is ten percent of the homes. They have received Superchannel and Skychannel since September 1, and other cable programs.

INTERVIEWS WITH

ANDRE ACZEL  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Hungarian Television News Service

and

JANOS ELEK  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief  
Hungarian Television News Service

Television is a responsibility of the Council of Ministers but does not belong to any of the ministries. The president of television reports directly to the Prime Minister (now also General Secretary of the party). The new name of the department is current events.

The three divisions are news, domestic features and international features. News are typically one to two minute items. A new feature is eight minute analytical pieces that follow the late night news and close the day's program. Other domestic and international features include news magazines, documentaries, "panorama" (a forty-five minute magazine-type program every other week) "objective" (lens) a one-hour monthly program concerning socialist countries; "prism" (concerning defense and security one hour once a month).

The five to eight minute analytical pieces usually deal with an outstanding political economic issue, typically the important news of the day or the week. There is also a weekly news magazine called "The Week" (Aahet). The issues taken up on these features may generate more than one feature across many of these programs. For example, in one outstanding example, when a big company goes bankrupt, it will be discussed on more than one program.

There are no formal policies articulated. The editor of the day determines daily news, and there is a weekly plan discussed among the editors at the beginning of each week. The news and current events department works together as a single unit with its own crews and other technical personnel. Its budget is allocated annually at a meeting of chief editors, and it has to be justified each year. About 60 percent of the budget goes to the post office for telephone lines, also determined by direct bargaining with the post office. The staff of the department ranges from 100 - 160. The first program is 30 minutes at 7:30, the second program 15 minutes at 9:00 p.m. and the third closes the broadcast day (with the 8-minute feature). The main new development in television news is the recognition of the political primacy of television and its relationship to the state. We think that the elevation of Grosz was due to his skillful use of media, especially television. The new press law recognizes both the importance of television and its need for independence from direct government and party dictation. But that is not sufficient. The new press law will further guarantee its independence. One principal reason for that is that in order to maintain a balanced position in intra-governmental conflicts, television must be independent of the ministries and both the government and the party. Of course, ultimately, television is an arm of government. However, the great national need for public support makes it necessary for television to gain credibility and support and not be party to partisan disputes within the government. Intraparty and intragovernment conflicts, e.g., among ministries, are handled on the level of the president of television and settled at that level. No longer can ministries and other authorities lobby on behalf of their points of view with anchor people and camera crews. Such disputes are

now adjusted on the highest level within television, and then the editors are informed of the decision. The reason is that television wants to present the most balanced and credible story in order to build public support for the new and difficult policies of the government.

One outstanding recent example was an expose about an enormous deficit of a mining company that sold its product about four times the price it cost to produce. Different ministries, managements, and viewers joined the conflict. "Don't act against the miners" was the cry. But of course this was not against the miners but against mismanagement and confusing and discrepant policies. In the end, television was allowed to play the story as it saw fit. In general, we must be careful not to make television the vehicle for any bureaucracy within the government but to present conflicts, controversies, and important issues from more than one point of view, and give each major party an opportunity to speak for itself.

The role of the party is changing. It was decided at the last party congress that the party must withdraw from certain fields. That decision is not yet fully implemented but it is being implemented. The influence of the party will be political persuasion and not administrative measures. There is a need to recapture public confidence and to generate public support and favorable public opinion for the difficult economic decisions that have to be made. That requires new laws, regulations, etc. to guarantee television's relative independence from daily pressures and lobbying. The informal working arrangements of the past will not work in the future. Lines of responsibility must be newly defined and made explicit. Authority must be defined and independence assured. People directly working on projects should have the responsibility for it and

not people removed from these projects in the hierarchy.

The economic crisis is in fact conducive to this change. Thirty years ago reform could go at the expense of liberties because the economy was expanding. Today with shrinking economy and a smaller pie for everyone public support is essential to bring the sacrifices that have to be brought. And the way to avoid the mistakes of the past is to use television to build a more active public opinion, to present a plurality of points of view (not necessarily ideologies or perspectives) to give a chance for justified criticism to be aired, to report and interview managers and party deputies directly for example before the recent congress, to give people a realistic understanding of the issues, conflicts, and different arguments, and let them understand the stakes involved in important decisions.

INTERVIEW WITH  
ALAJOS CHRUDINAK  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Foreign Politics and Documentary Films Department  
Hungarian Television

In charge of all foreign transmissions, news and documentary programs. Also the anchorman on a popular news magazine "Panorama" and, according to surveys, one of the most widely recognized and popular personalities on television.

I have been head of this department for twelve years. I have introduced the policy of open, confrontational and fearless reporting much before Glasnost. Our objective in reporting foreign policy is to expose conflicting ideas directly, let each side speak for itself. We covered both sides of the Afghan war, went to Ethiopia and Eritrea, covered the Polisario as well as Morocco, the Israelis as well as the Arabs, etc. I too express my point of view directly or indirectly. Reporters are not machines. They should expose their own points of view but not suppress the others. This is a complicated world and viewers must understand conflict, opposition, alternatives.

Other departments are jealous of our freedom. But I have fought that out for myself. I am responsible for it and not any outside guidance. There are no controls; no one sees what goes on the air until we air it.

Of course, after we air and if we hurt some powerful group at home or abroad, there are repercussions and unpleasant scenes. Iraq complained to the government that we conveyed Iran's point of view and I stated that Iraq started the war, but of course it did! Iraq

threatened economic sanctions. There was a lot of pressure. Finally we agreed that we would not sell the Iraq clip on the outside (but we did and six minutes of our footage aired on all three American networks) and would not send it to foreign exhibitions. Ethiopia did not like that we talked to Eritrea, the Jordanians protested, Romania declared me persona non grata for reporting the sad fate of Hungarian minority in Transylvania. So they can argue, and the foreign ministry can argue but only after the program has been on the air at least once. Some of our programs offend government leaders, or party officials, or ministers because we give a chance for their opponents at home and abroad to expose their points of view. Sometimes I compromise in not repeating a program. But if they try to censor me, I tell them "you edit this program and be responsible." If I am the responsible I decide what goes on.

One of our programs is called "Objektive" dealing with socialist countries, often critically. We air that four times a year. Another is called "Panorama" which is a magazine type program about foreign events. The third is "Parabola" which is satire, often an irreverent parody on our events, leaders, and directions. We have no mercy on anyone, and when our leaders complain, I tell them that it makes them important, and they should have a sense of humor. We seek conflict and confrontation. I can do that because my programs have won prizes in Monte Carlo, Emmies in the United States, I gained the respect of people and take responsibility. We want to be dynamic and controversial. There are 60 people in our department, 16 editors.

Our policy must be independent of both party and government. We must represent the interests of both, and the viewers as well. If

they don't like it they can fire me, but they have learned to respect the fact that we assemble the largest audience of five or six million, and have a great deal of credibility and clout. Our independence and freedom to criticize and attack gained us that respect and credibility.

We are free to advocate the policy line we think is the interest of our viewers. We participate in political struggles, not just report it. In the new system where power is divided and no longer centralized, television must play a balancing role. We can only do that if we let contending parties speak for themselves.

For example, last week we had a "Panorama" program of 60 minutes with leaders around the world commenting before and after the reforms enacted by the party congress. We interviewed American, French, Swiss, Soviet, and many other officials, right-wing as well as others, speaking for and against, but generally explaining the need for reform. Of course we believe that the reforms are overdue. We carried the comments of the president of the World Bank giving his few views of Western conditions for new loans. We carried scenes from foreign broadcasts reporting about poverty, lack of housing, 40 thousand suicides a year, 800 thousand alcoholics, and showing the new houses and apartments of our government leaders -- scenes that required little commentary.

I was the last television reporter who exposed the sad fate of two million Hungarians in Transylvania in 1972. Since that time I have been personal no grata in Romania, and no other Hungarian television was allowed to enter.

In our "Panorama" program we expose, we confront, we let opposing sides speak for themselves, we engage in the political struggles and express our own point of view as well. Sometimes we comment critically about certain newspapers and other media, but usually we pay no attention to them. They criticize us often but with newspaper circulation of up to 200 thousand, and television viewing of 4-5 million, we are too big to respond. Most of our viewers would have never read a press article about us.

We take news clips from all over the world and all types of politicians, right as well as left. In the last program we aired, we collected views around the world from before the latest report on reform of our party congress, and afterward. We interviewed Raymond Barre, took clips from Worldnet, from leaders of the USA, USSR, Swiss, Australian, New Zealand, Italian, and many other governments. We also interviewed the president of the World Bank explaining conditions for new loans. We have to give our views a straightforward and direct exposure to the real currents in the world in order to gain credibility. But again, we do not hide our own point of view.

Another program is entitled "Parabola". It is an hour long irreverent satire on current events and people, with a viewership of up to 6 million. It is a sarcastic parody that spares neither ordinary people nor government leaders nor other programs, and often arouses controversy, opposition, pressure, and censure.

INTERVIEW WITH  
SANDOR ERDI  
Chief Editor, Art & Culture Department  
Hungarian Television

We are in a period of reorganization and transition. Television has a new president (appointed about a year ago) and everything is changing. The change is long overdue. However, the political and economic circumstances have made it possible only recently. The need for it stems from the basic conception of an effective and efficient television operation, and not from any ideological blueprint or outside influence.

My view of the reason for our current transition is that television is a strange and peculiar institution. Before the current change it was treated like another ministry, essentially a pyramidal hierarchical administrative structure. But it was long recognized that television has three functional components and they do not operate the same way. The first is the administrative structure which must be orderly, tightly organized, hierarchical. That is like any other bureau or ministry. The second is a factory. That is the production teams, the physical plant, the need for transportation, cars, garages, parking lots, etc. That can also be organized along general administrative lines.

But the third structure is that of an artistic and creative institution which can be hierarchically organized. The leaders are the creative people who are artists, directors, writers, musicians, etc. They require an essentially decentralized structure, greater freedom of initiative for creative work, intellectual mobility, even

competition, and great differences in style, even productivity, and hence compensation. It is this third component that pushed the reorganization and the abolition of old dogmas. The resulting new structure, to go into effect fully at the end of this year, will be described below.

While the structure is new to make it more effective, the goals and purposes of the arts and culture department are not new. In fact, the new structure is designed to facilitate and enhance performance for very stable and continuing aims. These aims are to make the best that world and Hungarian cultural tradition and creative cultural life offers available to the broadest public, not only in the capital, but in the provinces and across the entire country. In other words, our task is to democratize art, theater, music, individual arts, and to make them accessible to the whole people. Not being a commercial structure, we are not in competition for audiences but, on the contrary, work with all other arts and cultural organizations to extend their reach while at the same time enrich the programs we can offer. When you consider that a good book or play reaches perhaps 200,000 people while we can reach 2,000,000, providing both income for artists and cultural enrichment for the people, you can understand why we cooperate much more than compete. Of course there is competition for quality, for exposure on scarce time, for scarce resources, but that is another matter. There is no competition that would reduce or limit what we provide for our viewers.

We used to have four editors, one for TV plays and films, one for theater and serials, one for music and other cultural events, and one for "Studio"--the weekly cultural magazine. The new organization,

however, sets up ten independent production units. Five of these are devoted to drama. The first produces series, which is defined as all programming that has more than three continuing episodes. At this time the only series, and a very successful one, is called "Szomscedok" (Neighbors) which deals with a group of families living in a tenement. We plan to have more series as soon as we can afford to produce them.

The second production unit deals with musical drama such as operas and operettas.

The third produces TV plays (on tape) and films for TV, in three separate units: One produces it for 8:00 p.m. where the largest family audience is available, the other for 9:00 p.m. and the third for 10:00 p.m. In other words, each of the units programs a different hour for a somewhat different audience composition.

Incidentally, the reason for separate production units is my desire to make it possible for each unit to follow the production from its inception or proposal stage to final completion. When there are too many productions with one unit, they tend to lose track and cannot follow the production through to the end.

The sixth production unit is charge of "Studio" the weekly cultural magazine. That includes reports, talks, and examples of the cultural life of the country and the world. We would go out to a theater premiere and talk to the author and director, perhaps show excerpts we have taped from the play, and in general encourage cultural knowledge, interest and participation. We consider that to the in the national interest, and state policy of high priority.

The seventh production unit deals with theater. They make their own arrangements with theater managements across the country to pick up live productions, to tape performances, and even to co-produce certain theatrical performances. For example, when a successful play has had a significant run and its local audience seems to be declining, the theater management is glad to make an arrangement for taping or telecasting a production. This is cheaper for us than to mount our own production, profitable for them because they get more from television than would be the income from that performance.

The arts and culture department programs approximately 100 hours/week. They produce about 60 - 70 TV plays and/or films a year. The primary emphasis is on original production. The number of original productions depends on the budget. They are of course the most expensive. When that part of the budget is exhausted, for the balance they purchase productions from abroad which are much cheaper.

The series on "Neighbors" is produced in 26 half-hour episodes per year and broadcast every other week.

Of the TV play/film production, a little over 50 per cent deal with contemporary Hungarian plays, often commissioned for television. About 15 per cent of these are classic Hungarian, the rest current or new. The balance of the production is devoted to Hungarian productions of classical world literature. These are produced both for the domestic market and for a limited export market for Hungarian product.

Although one can give annual averages, the program for the week is not fixed but changes from week to week according to special events, sports events, and other seasonal programming.

The policy of foreign purchases depends on the budget. There is no fixed percentage of domestic product but the domestic production budget receives high priority.

There are about ten live and twelve to fourteen taped theatrical transmissions per year. The selection depends on the quality of the production and the kind of financial deal that can be arranged with the managements involved. The choice of theatrical fare also involves a certain amount of risk because of "bad language" and nudity that can be found on the stage. The television is occasionally "inundated" with telephone calls and letters voicing objections on those grounds. But, on the whole, theatrical transmissions are very popular.

Going back to the production units, the seventh is the literary editorial department. Its task is to popularize poetry and good literature. It consists with introducing literary figures and their work. Only rarely do they have critics or friends or others discussing literature; they consider that as appealing to a very small segment of the audience, with the writers, poets, and the works themselves being more important. The works are those of poetry, short stories, excerpts from novels. The task is to present and not just to talk about these works.

Much of literary programming revolves around special days and holidays such as August 20, Constitution day; Mothers day; Teachers day; and other days of special recognition and greetings to specific groups of people. Many of these involve poems and other special creations commissioned for these days. Birthdays of artists are popular, and camera crews occasionally go abroad to bring foreign authors and works to the Hungarian audiences. Such visits were

recently paid to Austria, Italy, and to Princeton (to interview Joyce Carol Oates.)

The eighth (or is it the ninth?) editorial office is that of graphic arts and visual culture. It includes city planning, architecture, industrial arts, photography, and of course fine arts, and ranges from visits to galleries and exhibitions, special shows about new paintings, profiles of artists, etc.

The tenth editorial unit produces music programs. These include classical music but also jazz, operetta, folk music and opera. (Rock music and popular songs are in the dim domain of the entertainment editor, a different department). This unit both transmits and discusses music, organizes competitions in conducting, performing, etc and is generally dedicated to bringing music as art to the widest audience.

The financial administration of the department is the task of the chief editor. He gets his budget from the office of the president, and allocates it among the production units, giving each a general task in terms of time to be programmed, number of plays and films to be produced, etc. but then leaves them free to make their own choices and arrange their own budgets.

The production units are small groups of three or four people who do all the planning and then hire their own staffs from the technical units available to all of them, and from outsiders. Proposals come in from the outside and commissions are decided by the unit leaders. Staff producers and other staff members have a fixed salary and a slight increment according to the number of productions they work on. For creative workers, however, the fixed salary is very small, backed

at the bare survival level, with the rest depending on how much they are in demand by production units. The production units are also free to hire outside talent.

The chief editor (director) of the arts and culture department is on the third level of the television hierarchy, below the president and the deputy directors.

**SPECIAL REPORT**

We have our own budget, and can keep most of our money, but we do not invest in educational, musical and other specialized programs. When we produce such programs or co-produce such programs, it is always in collaboration with the respective division of television. Our own co-productions are mostly for hard currency. We still maintain some of the earlier goals -- to disseminate the best of Hungarian culture, extend the work of Hungarian artists to the world market, diffusing Hungarian culture values, but increasingly the purpose is to make money, especially hard currency.

Co-productions serve domestic needs as well. They should not hurt the basic "AGITPROP" and aesthetic principles. These principles do not apply to our service division. For example, in 1986 about 14 foreign countries from abroad, mostly from the West came to Hungary to film documentaries about 1956 from their own points of view. We provided all services for them for which they paid us. Fifteen years ago there was a Hungarian who had to accompany every foreign crew to "supervise" what they were doing. This policy does not exist anymore. We realized that foreign companies will express their own point of view in any case, so we decided to provide services ourselves and make money from them. The foreign office used to give us permission as to which companies we may or may not assist, and what themes we may or may not collaborate with. There is no long such permission required or requested.

Since January 3, 1988, three new laws: 1) Free passport to any Hungarian anywhere in the world anytime. 2) Personal income tax. According the joke "Swedish tax system on Ethiopian salaries." 3) VAT - Value Added Tax, very unpopular with the enterprises.

We have about 30 fixed staff, partly production, partly administrative. But we hire the personnel we need from television and MAFILM as needed. I am a member of the Council of Chief Editors (See Hungarian notes), which is the top leadership group of chief editors, about 30 to 35, meeting with the Chairman of Television. We used to meet from once a week to once a month. These briefing meetings were and are held usually a day after the meeting of the Central Committee, which is the 103 top officials of the Communist Party, of which our chairman is a member (the political bureau has 11 members).

Under the new government, the Central Committee meets less often, and is not supervising or instructing day-to-day activities. The importance of the Council of Ministers and the Parliament is being enhanced. Since September 1, the new young heads (Fointendant) of both channels are from within television itself. Previously, these were outside full-time party apparatus members. We are not yet sure exactly what this will mean in terms of party direction.

Hungarian television is in bad financial shape, but we are doing very well. There is no limit on MTV enterprises profits, although television ordered a 10%% reduction of personnel. Hungarian television employs about 3,700 people, many of it unnecessarily. However, we are short of people and I think I will not follow the personnel directives. The number of people to be employed provides the only limit to how much money we can spend.

The new Central Committee directive is that we tell people the truth. This is difficult because there is a very bad mood in the country. Most people are unhappy, many people, including very rich people, complain about laws and conditions, ten percent of party members have left or were expelled from the party, people are afraid of a backlash.

INTERVIEW WITH  
DR. ANDARAS SUGAR  
Editor-in-Chief,  
This Week, The Sunday night current affairs show on  
Hungarian Television

A 60 minute review of the week's news.

As with every media, the owners, those who hold the purse strings, can dictate what we say and don't say. But it is realized that our independence is their guarantee of credibility. The situation is improving but it is still not good. Our budget is low, the pay is ridiculous, our critics are many and we are vulnerable. My pay is about twice that of a skilled worker.

Everybody watches "The Week" -- all the political leaders and intellectuals. They are watching it very nervously. They blame us for almost any shortcomings. The Kadar regime toward the end always blamed the press. It made my predecessor unhappy and he requested to be relieved and appointed ambassador. Now he is ambassador to Switzerland, a cushy job. He was fed up with all the criticism.

His critics, mostly orthodox elements, are now my critics.

We have a good tradition. Since 1962, when Kadar said "whoever is not against us is with us" we have been a hundred times more open than any Glasnost. In 1968 we had a call-in program about the Czech invasion with many critical questions. We have raised the issue of a multi-party system, of national minorities, and many others. We have few taboos. We finish our taping often an hour or even an half hour before air time so no one can veto it on orders of superiors.

However, guidance from the government and party comes in the form of orders through the president and our superiors.

We can state our objections which are often overruled in the name of political or economic necessity. I often say that the government policy is better served by our open policy but political loyalties and dependencies may overrule our objections.

For example, I carried the unofficial demonstrations last March 15. Afterwards I received a reprimand, my bonus was taken away. Perhaps after the party conference they will reverse that petty penalty, but I don't know.

The old information chief (Lakatos) was rude and authoritarian. He is now out. The style of guidance has changed. The old party department of propaganda and agitation may no longer be in charge of all media. The current proposal is to give media responsibility to a minister of state (minister without portfolio) (Pozsgani). We can then have more independence. We can implement our policy more often which is that if a minister complains, we invite him to air his complaints on our program, but do not retract anything. The last years of the Kadar regime, the policy was shortsighted and self-defeating. I think that is changing. I think it is largely up to the president of the television, who reports to the minister of state, to guard our independence. Does he do that now? "No comment".