
Document 24

"Autobiography of J. Peter of C.P. U.S.A." with "J. Peter" handwritten signature, 25 January 1932, RTsKhIDNI 495-261-5584. Original in English. C.I. is the abbreviation for the Communist International.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF J. PETER OF C.P. U.S.A.

I was born in August 1894 in Cop (Hungary, now Czechoslovakia). My father, son of a needletrade worker, was employed on the railroads as brakeman. After a short service, he was released, I don't know the reason why, and got a job together with my mother in a restaurant in Cop. A few years later they opened a small restaurant of their own in the same town, which had about 2000 inhabitants. They always struggled to keep up the family.

My mother, daughter of a locomotive fireman, was cooking in the restaurant. My father died in 1913. Mother lives now in America with my brother, working in restaurants as cook. In the last months, she is unemployed. During the Hungarian revolution she was active among the women. Today she is reader of the Party paper and good sympathizer of the Party.

I was brought up by my grandfather, in this time already locomotive engineer on the railroads in Debrecen. Was there from the age of five years, going home to see my parents only on school vacations. Finished my schools in Debrecen. After graduating from the high school (gymnasium), registered in the university in Kolozsvár. Never attended the lectures in the university because had no ways and means to keep up myself. Was working in an office in Debrecen, and went for examination only. Because of lack of funds was compelled to teach students from lower grades in the high school.

In 1914 at the beginning of the world war was enlisted in the army. Was serving in the infantry. After a few months drilling was sent to the front, where after a few months became an officer automatically. (According to the laws the high school graduates will be promoted to reserve officers) Was at the front, with a few furloughs, till Sept 1918, when got a longer furlough. From this furlough never went back to the army, the revolution broke out.

Have two brothers. Both of them actively participating in the Hungarian revolution. One of them skilled machinist, the other unskilled factory worker. Today both good sympathizers, read Party press, support Party, vote Communist. Have two uncles in Hungary. One a machinist, actively participating in the Hungarian revolution, jailed by the whites after the revolution, today not active, but good sympathizer. My other uncle petitbourgeois businessman, never sympathized with the movement. Have nobody in the family who belongs to any other political parties.

Have divorced my wife. She was and is a member of the Party and Y.C.L. since 1924. Today she is an active Party worker.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

I have mentioned before that had four years elementary school, eight years in high school (gymnasium) and 3 semesters (year and half) in the university.

Document 24 *continued*

During this period, especially when attended high school, got in contact with the labor movement through my grandfather and uncle, who were members of the railroad and machinist unions. Attended many union meetings. Later I lost my interest in this problem and only during the war started to think about these questions.

Did not finish my study because the war broke out and had to enlist in the army. In 1918 had a chance to continue my study, but gave it up, because of the change of my conceptions about everything. Was already classconscious fighter.

In the Party did not have any schooling. All my knowledge is from study circles and selfeducation. I read Marxist literature since 1918. Mostly independently. Read and fairly intensively studied Political Economy. (From Marx; Capital, Value-Price-Profit. Wage Labor and Capital, Contribution to the Critic of Political Economy. From Hilferding; Das Finanzkapital, From Luxemburg; Die Akkumulation des Kapitals, From Lenin; Imperialismus the Last Stage of Capitalism, and other books on this subject, like Bogdanov, Lapidus etc. The same time I read some of the books of bourgeois authors on Pol. Economy.) Read Marx's-Engels writings on the French, German and Hungarian revolutions. Read superficially Marxian literature on philosophy. Read and studied Lenin's following books: State and Revolution, Infantile Sickness, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Very deeply studied Lenin's works on organizational questions (What is to be done, One Step Forward.) Have all collected works of Lenin published in German and read it superficially. Studied more intensively Lenin on the national and peasant questions. Reand and studied Stalins works published in German, especially the organizational part of Leninism. Carefully followed the theses and resolutions of the C.I. congresses and plenums. In the last two years especially studied the organizational problems of the C.I. and the Communist Parties.

Have no much experience in literary work. Was writing articles about actual organizational problems in the Party publications.

Speak, read and write perfectly Hungarian, read perfectly, speak not fluently German, (lack of experience) speak, write, and read english (not perfect).

POLITICAL LIFE

Did not belong to any other Party before joined the Communist Party. Joined the Party 1918 (october) and since than I am a member without interruption. I was among those who organized the first Party group in Cop among the railroad workers in 1918. During the Karolyi regime the Party group did good work among the railroad workers in this very important railroad center. Before the revolution the locomotiv repair shop was organized almost entirely. The Party had influence in every department of the railroad center, with the exception os the locomotiv enginers and station officials. But in both places had good connections.

During the revolution was elected in the Directorium of Ung county. In this

Document 24 *continued*

period most of my time was spent among the railroad workers. Participated in the fight against the Czech and Roumanian white army around Cop. Organized workers in the Red Army. After the revolution was working in the Uzhorod [Uzhgorod] district of the Party. Was appointed as sub district organizer in a peasant territory with the Headquarters in Cop.

Was working there for two years. Agitating in small towns among the peasant, organizing the agricultural workers in a big farm (Tisra-Salamon) and organizing a strike for higher wages better conditions, for recognition of the union, collective agreement. This militant strike was won by the workers. Organized a strike among the ditchdigger on a government job. Strike was hundred percent, but was broken by terror. We were arrested, with all the leading workers.

We had a militant union in the locomotiv repair shop and among the locomotiv firemen.

During the mobilization against Horthy at the time of the royalist puch [putsch], was organizing Party groups in the regiment in Cop. With fairly good succes. The Internacionale became the official song of the soldiers. The regiment became unreliable.

In 1921 was called in to Uzhorod and was assigned to work with Gaty, who was the head of legal office of the Party (Party attorney). During the period when Gaty was in jail, I lead the office and [illegible].

In 1922 was elected on the District Convention in the Controll Committee, 1923 as chairman of this Committee. As such became a member of the District Executive Committee.

The following were my activities during this period. Organized and lead the first big study circle in Uzhorod and Cop. Was the instructor in these circles.

Reorganized the Party on the Vertrauensmanner (delegate) system. Was the had of this body in Uzhorod.

During the municipal election was responsible for the Uzhorod elections. In the same time the District Committee assigned me to help the Cop Section Committee in the election campaign. Organized the campaign in this territory and agitated in Cop and the surrounding peasant towns. In this election we succeeded to get the majority of the votes in 3 towns in this Section. In Cop even up to day the Party has the majority of all votes and majority of the town council.

The Party appointed me as representativ of the Party in one of the subcommittee of the Uzhorod City Council.

1922- and 1923 was the organizer and head of the Proletkult movement in Uzhorod Districts. Organized the red scouts group in Uzhorod.

In 1924 was transferred to the C.P.U.S.A. On the end of this year the Buro of the Hungarian Federation appointed me as organizer in Chicago Districts. Was working there about 9 months. Spending all mine time organizing and agitat-

Document 24 *continued*

ing among the mineworkers in Southern Illinois, steelworkers in Gary, Ind. Harbor, Hammond, automobil workers So. Bend.

In 1925 was called back to New York to work on the editorial staff of the Uj Elore. Was elected by the national Convention of the Hungarian Federation to the National Buro. In 1927 was appointed by the Central Committee as secretary of the Hungarian Buro. In 1928 was participating on the 6-th world Congress of the C.I. as fraternal delegate.

As Secretary of the Hungarian Buro has responsible with a small Committee for taking back the printing shop of the Hungarian movement, which was rented out to private persons. After this transaction the Central Committee assigned me to reorganize the printing shop so that the Daily Worker and the other Party papers could be centralized in one printing plant. We succeeded to centralize the Hungarian and Freiheit press in the hand of the Central Committee (1929).

End of 1929 was drawn in the District work of the Party. Was elected as head of the Language Department of the District. In 1930 March was elected as organizational secretary of the New York District and functioned as such up to the date when was sent by the Central Committee to the C.I. as org. practician.

As org secretary of the District was appointed as instructor to the full time schools of the District and the Central Committee assigned me to the National Training School in the same function. Was instructor in the class of Organizational Principles of the Party.

In 1927 was elected by the 5-th Convention of the Party as alternate to the Central Committee.

1930 was elected by the New York District Convention to the District Committee. Was a member of the District Secretariat till came to Moskva. (1931 Oct.)

Was appointed by the Central Committee to the Central Org. Department in 1930, was a member till came to Moskva.

Participated in all Party Conventions and Plenums from 1926, in U.S.A. Previously in all Party Conferences in the Uzhorod District (Czechoslovakia) and in the 6-th World Congress of C.I.

Have some experiences in illegal work. After the Hungarian revolution organized the literature transportation from Czechoslovakia to Hungary in one section (Cop). Was responsible for the Czechoslovakian end of the work. In New York District I was responsible with an other Comrade to build the apparatus. I must state the New York apparatus was not built properly. We entirely underestimated this face of our task.

The character of my work during the whole period more organizational than propagandist. In the first period of my party activity (Cop-Uzhorod-Chicago) was among the workers in all my activity (meetings, house to house canvassing, leaflet distribution, strike activity) later especially in the last period 1930-1931 as org. secretary of New York District was entirely working

Document 24 *continued*

inside of the Party. The connection with the masses only through the Party members in the nuclei and fractions. (small part through the fractions) Was working in a very burocrati way during this period, because of the whole burocratic system of the Party. From the C.C. down to lowest unit of the Party. I take the responsibility for my burocratic tendencies and don't want to blame the higher Committees for it. But it would be wrong to blame one individual only also.

This does not mean, that I didn't participate in struggles, demonstrations. I was there, but I wanted to emphasize that I did not have in this period daily direct contact with the non party workers.

In the fractional struggle in the U.S.A belonged to the Lovestone group. Came out to U.S.A after the lessons of the Hungarian revolution was already known by us and after learning from experience in Cehoslovakia how important it is to work among the peasants. Didn't understand the american problems, but the controversy on the Farmer Labor Party issue was very simple in my mind. Supported the group, which was for the winning of the farmers. Later on supported the Ruthenberg group, because was convinced that they represent the correct bolshevik line. Was factional in my actions in the Hungarian movement with the whole Hungarian Buro on the side of Ruthenberg and later Lovestone. On the 6-th Convention of the Party had some doutht [doubt] about the correctness of the group, but the factional tigh [tie] was more stronger than anything else. Did not hesitate for a moment to carry out the decision os the C.I. and carried out with conviction.

Was never reprimanded or any way disciplined by the Party.

PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL LIFE

In the U.S.A belonged to the Hungarian Sick and Death Benevolent Society. Was participating in the work of a branch and of the Central Committee of the organization. The organization has about 5000 members all over the country. Was not a member of any union.

In Czehoslovakia was working among the peasants as stated above in the election campaigns, strikes. For a longer period 2-3 months was assigned to the peasant organizer (Safranko) to help in the land ditribution campaign. Was working in this campaign, going from town to town in the Hungarian section of the District, organizing the small peasants and the share croppers. Was in daily contact with the workers in the above mentioned locomotiv repair shop in Cop, even in the time when I was working in Uzhorod, because every night went to Cop and came back next morning.

Was working only about eight months in the factory in New York (from febr. 1924 till Nov. 1924) Left the factory on Party instruction.

Participated in the Hungarian revolution (facts above) in every demonstration in Uzhorod and in Cop and vicinity. In U.S.A participated in the demonstration in New York, since 1930 as org. secretary with the org. department of the district organized and in many cases lead the demonstrations. In certain demonstrations did not participate openly on the instruction of the Central

Document 24 *continued*

and District Committee. Was participating in the strike preparation in Paterson in 1931, in the first days of the strike was out among the strikers and on the first day of the strike was helping to bring down shops. Later the District Org was assigned to this strike.

Was arrested in a strike of ditch diggers (Czechoslovakia) sentenced to two weeks. Was among those who were sentenced in their absence for their activity in the Hungarian revolution against the Czechoslovakian army to 5 years, but never was caught and later everyone got amnesty (Massaryk)

Was paid subdistrict organizer in Czechoslovakia after the Hungarian revolution till 1921. Was assigned in 1921 to the Party attorney's office, but not on the Party payroll. Worked in a shop from 1924 febr. 1924 Nov. (small metall, later small doll factory) Paid District organizer in Chicago (1924-1925). Paid member of the Uj Elore editorial staff (1925-1927) Paid secretary Hungarian Buro (1927-1929) Paid organizer-manager printing shop (Active Press) (1929-1930) Paid Org Secretary New York District (1930-1931) Org Practicant C.I. (1931-1932)

The chief points would be confirmed by the following leading Comrades.

1918-1921 Balazs-Ungvary-Cop, H. Feher (secretary Mukacevo District) all three in Czechoslovakia, E. Seidler in Moskva [Moscow].

1921-1924 E. Seidler (Moskva) Ivan Mondok (Charkov) E. Safrenko (Moskva) H. Feher (Mukacevo-Czechoslovakia)

1924-1932 Jack Stachel, W.W. Weinstone, R. Minor, I. Amter, E. Browder, C.H. Hathaway all in U.S.A.

J. Peter

January 25, 1932.
