

Suddenly the Channels Opened Wide in Communist Hungary – Part 3

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Unification Church Missionary to Hungary



Celebration of God's Day in Budapest, 1989, during the communist era



I had yet another significant dream connected to the mission situation in Hungary while living in a spacious apartment in the inner-city part of Budapest. The flat was too big for one person, but I lived there by myself. In the dream, it was crammed full of people and the guests were even sitting in the bathroom and in the storage room, listening to the Principle. I was very surprised when I woke up because such a vision could never have come from my own imagination at that time.

(Two or three years later, in 1991, when many German members were mobilized to Hungary, that vision became literally true because the flat became the witnessing center and was filled with guests almost every evening. I even remember that guests really were crouching in the bathroom, reading the Divine Principle! I thought back to my dream through which God had given me encouragement at that lonely time.)

Part 3

Later the owner of this flat returned from abroad and doubled the rent. By that time, Martin Putz was also living in a flat that was relatively expensive and so we met and decided to do the mission together. The political situation had already changed drastically for the better, a factor which turned out to be an indescribable blessing for our mission. Through our being able to work together considerable energy was produced that enabled people to join our Church and to remain faithful. Although we continued to teach those people with whom we had made friends, we also started to invite people from the street, which was an important new step.

In this new climate, I felt that I should do one more strong indemnity condition in order to gain spiritual children. Should I fast again? Or should I do a 40-kilometer walk? Christa Segato was in our city for a visit and suggested that I do something more 'worldly.' So I took up an offer to teach German three times a week in the afternoons and evenings. As I had suspected, the course was quite difficult to teach and I

was exhausted. However, there was one very nice girl in one of my groups. Her name was Erika Hegedus. At the end of the language course she gave me a gift and I took that to be a sign for me to start teaching the Principle to her.

She listened to one Principle lecture after another and was always happy to come but after every session she had a tendency to start talking about topics that were completely unrelated to anything that had been taught. At that time, I was rather insecure about what and what not to say to people after lectures and I didn't even dare ask how much she'd understood because so many previous guests hadn't been able to grasp the meaning of the Principle. So I delayed the last lecture about the return of Christ and concentrated on building up a friendship with her. At Easter in 1988, while I was away from the center, Erika visited again and Martin told her about the Second Coming. When I heard about that, I was shocked because I was worried about her reaction. But to my surprise Martin told me that she was very moved by it and was thinking about it deeply. I was so relieved. Actually, Erika became my first spiritual daughter in Hungary. At the same time, one of Martin's guests, a medical student called Sandor, accepted the Principle too after listening carefully to all the lectures twice through. We realized that at last the breakthrough had been made!



Elisabeth with her husband Tony Cook from the UK

Those first two spiritual children were also a reflection of the change of atmosphere that was taking place in Hungary at the end of the eighties. The spiritual world really had opened its channels. Whenever we went witnessing, two or three people we spoke to would usually come back to the center and listen to lectures. They were open and full of expectation for something new to come. We couldn't even use such possibilities to their full extent. In spring of 1988, after Erika had joined, I found three spiritual children within one month! I found one spiritual daughter after praying to meet someone who could speak English well. Then, at my favorite witnessing place, which was a square in front of a church close to the University, I stopped one of the first young girls who happened to cross my path. After a short conversation, I asked whether she spoke any English, and she answered, "Yes. Actually I have a degree in English." She obviously didn't want to boast about it and spoke in a very humble tone but I could barely stop my jaw dropping and felt like jumping into the air. For me it was the sign that God had prepared her. At that time not many people in Hungary spoke English because the foreign language they had to learn at school was Russian. That is why we couldn't use any of our English literature for education and we were in such a desperate need for translations. When Agnes Nagy came to the center and listened to the lectures, she was enthusiastic although, like many others, she had no religious foundation. It turned out that she worked as a translator in one of the most prestigious publishing houses of Hungary, 'Akademia Kiado.'

Our spiritual breakthrough filled us with joy and energy, and we found even more spiritual children. In the evenings after the lectures, we usually closed the day with prayer and often there were ten to fifteen people praying together. One young brother experienced the fire of the Holy Spirit while we were praying. Another guest was so inspired by the atmosphere that she did a beautiful translation of some of our favorite songs, for example the 'Song of the Garden.' Those young people who had accepted True Parents were ready to do the most difficult conditions with us, such as to pray and study the Principle from midnight to 4 o'clock in the morning. That had the advantage that the young brothers and sisters learned to give Principle lectures right from the beginning. That kind of preparation turned out to be very precious when, about a year later, members from Germany were mobilized to Hungary and brought many

guests to our center. It was a joy for us to see that the young members were teaching the Principle with such enthusiasm and that there was hardly anybody who wasn't confident to teach. There was even one sister who wrote on her application for the CARP Beauty Pageant "My favorite hobby is teaching the Divine Principle!"



God's Day 1991 in Budapest, after the fall of the Iron Curtain

To further illustrate the kind of atmosphere in these days there's also the story of when I went witnessing at a Catholic Church with my spiritual daughter, Maria. I stopped a young man and began asking him some questions about God. His face immediately lit up and he replied, "Thank you for asking me these things. I have already decided that I want to join a religious group but I haven't yet found the right one." He came back to our center right away and joined after listening to the Principle. His name was Tamas Valcsak and, together with other young members, he was blessed in the 30,000 Couples' Blessing of 1992.

In January 1989, I was invited to go to the Blessing. The young members of our center were almost more excited about it than I was! I went to Seoul, but as I was still an underground missionary, I couldn't participate directly in the Blessing Ceremony. Together with a few other missionaries, I waited in a small hotel for the 'result' to come through. When the ceremony was over, the photographs of our spouses were brought to us. I studied the desperate looking facial expression of the person on the photograph I had received and thought that he must be a very unhappy, serious person. Nevertheless, I accepted the Blessing thinking that if God had prepared this person for me I would not deny him. Later I came to know that he previously had been blessed with an Austrian sister in 1982 but that she had left him, which caused him a lot of suffering.

However, when we met for the first time the day after the Blessing I was very surprised. The person who came towards me was completely different from what I had imagined. He was kind, friendly and from the way he talked I could see that he was full of inspiration. I wouldn't even have recognized him from the photograph and I couldn't help being surprised about Father's unique ability to see peoples' characters. When we shook hands for the first time I felt, "I can live with this person!"

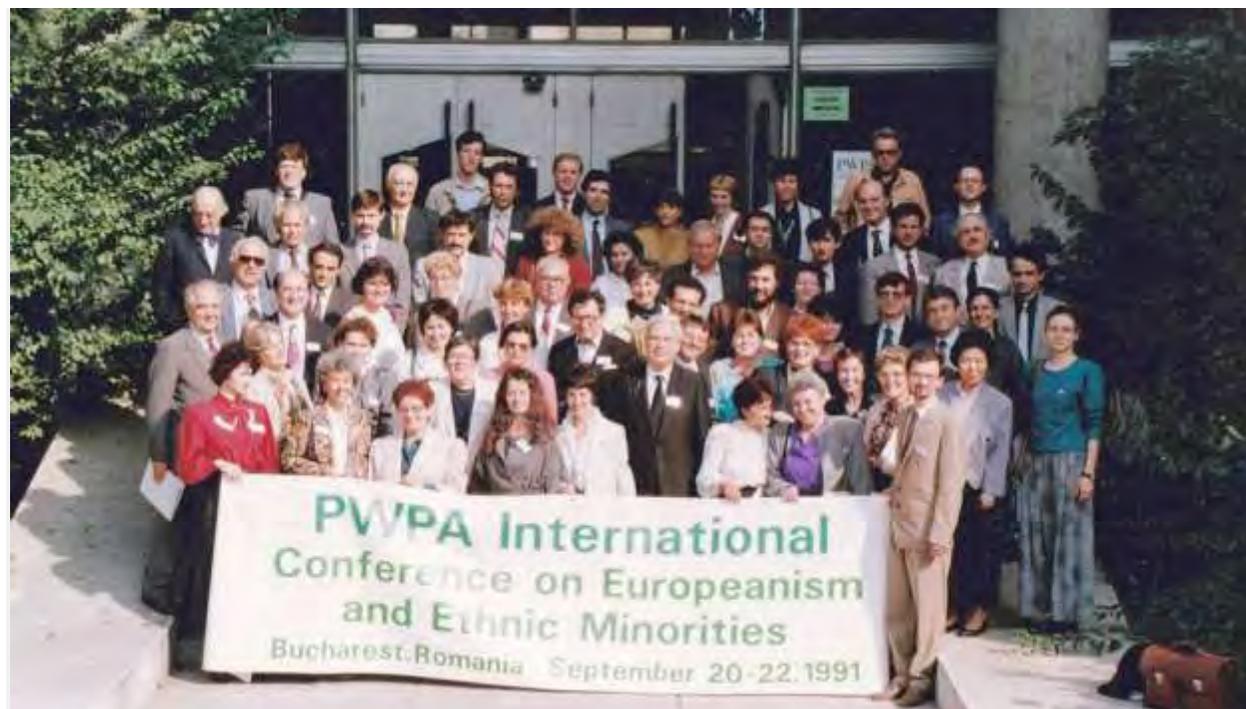
In our first conversation, I told him that I was a missionary to Hungary and that I was going to stay there. In my heart, I was afraid of his answer but to my complete surprise he answered: "That's OK with me. I can go there. Before I came to this Blessing I felt that I had to make myself free to be able to go anywhere." I was so relieved that I couldn't help crying. We were both very happy about Father's choice.

For the young members in Hungary the arrival of my husband was like a revelation. Some of my spiritual children asked the question, "So such a person can also be a member of our Church?" It became easier for them to identify themselves with us because he represents such different aspects of character than me. He likes rock music and appears less religious – and he wasn't a missionary!

Then I understood that, for some members and guests, the greatest difficulty in joining was that they had assumed that they had to become like me and do the same things. In fact, only being able to relate to just

the one member of a religious movement in a communist country made it a most difficult situation to anyone to accept.

For that reason, I'll always be grateful to the first members who could overcome the initial difficulties.



The foundation built up over many years of working quietly bore fruit in the years following the end of communism; many of the early PWPA contacts were met during the communist time.

***Elisabeth Cook** joined the Unification Church in 1975. She took care of PWPA in Hungary from 1989, at the time the Iron Curtain was dissolved. She became Vice President of the Unification Church in that country from 1992, and developed the Hungarian chapter of WFWP for four years from 1994 as president of that organization. Later, after moving back to Austria, Elisabeth was for some years the leader of our thriving church in Vienna. Just this year she was assigned to the position of national leader, in which position she was instrumental in the preparations to welcome True Mother to Vienna at the end of April 2018.*