

Miklós and Mária Hitter

The Price of Freedom

Cegléd – 1956 November 24 to December 1

Our dear Children,

The past few days, and most likely many more days to come, are grief-laden for us. And probably today's gray sky will never clear up completely for us.

So you have left!? And you left the two of us to ourselves, us the old ones who stand at the edge of the grave, with the hopeless feeling that we may never see you again? We may never again hear your voices, the sharp-tongued back-talk of our suddenly grown-up little grand daughter, and we cannot hold you close to our hearts any more. We cannot expect your return home Saturday nights, and we won't have to prepare our love-packages of wine and other goodies for you any longer. We will not celebrate the holidays with you; we will not spend peaceful quiet friendly evenings with you any more.

The door of our life closed suddenly and painfully. And the only suitable sign above the door comes from Dante's writing: "Lasciate ogne speranza" – Abandon all hope.

We are trying to become a little calmer, to convince ourselves and let others convince us that we have to overcome our selfishness and consider only your interests. But we are not very successful at it. We realize that you want to live your own lives for the 35-45 years you still have ahead of you, and although you have a right to do so, this realization does not help in healing our broken hearts. We are without present and future, and our life seems to be senseless and aimless. We have no more hope in this life. All of life's beauty and joy died for us. And what do you imagine for your future? To what shores is the stormy and capricious wind of life going to blow you? Especially now, in the middle of a bitter winter, when you left in almost flimsy clothing, thin shoes – without snow boots! – on your difficult and uncertain voyage! And you will have to work wherever you go! And what are you going to do – under what economic and personal conditions – among what type of people? It is easy to paint a rosy pictures but to make them come true is uncertain and probably also difficult.

We are writing all this not to sadden you but to ease our own pain. You may never receive and read this letter.

Otherwise, the radio broadcast this first message last Sunday (Nov. 25): "to Dr. Miklós Hitter and family in Cegléd, do not worry until you receive a phone message". We did not actually hear it, we were just told about it Tuesday morning (Nov. 27). And at 4 p.m. we had a phone conversation with János Boronkay in which we heard what actually happened. Obviously, we left for Budapest the next day. There we heard the details and read your farewell note. Since then, Anyu is constantly reading it – crying, by now without tears. I returned Thursday, she on Friday. We brought back with us your dirty laundry, your silver, your scarves, etc. We inventoried everything but left everything in its place – locked. For the next few months, until we hear good news from you, we will leave everything there, and will bring it all back home then. And we will try to safe-keep everything for you, and will account for everything – if the occasion ever arises.

At home the political and economic situation is still completely uncertain. As a lawyer I haven't earned a penny in the past six weeks; this is a great blow since we do not have anything to sell. And we have to pay for everything to be able to live. Of course, everybody here is telling us we should be happy about your certainly better future, and this should comfort us. All this sounds good, but it is not enough for us – we wanted to spend the little time left to us with you. Seeing and hearing each other, helping and supporting each other, even if struggling, but always hoping for a better, happier future, free of all politicking. With half of our hearts

we hope that you won't succeed in your escape and will return; the other half wishes you the very best with our most sincere love. God is going to chose the better way both for you and us which we hope will result in happiness for the rest of your lives. I am trying to quote and preserve in my heart another thousand-year old Latin proverb according to which " dum spiro spero" – while I breath, I hope.

We hope that God will provide the opportunity for us to see each other again in this life so that we can embrace you – I just hope we won't have to wait too long!

With lots of love and kisses to all three of you,

Your Mother and Father

Dr. Miklós and Mária Hitter

Grandparents to Ildikó Gajda, Dr. and Mrs. Hitter wrote this letter to their only daughter and granddaughter after discovering they had fled the country after November 4, 1956. The Hitters lived in Cegléd, Hungary, and frequently visited their family in Budapest. Dr. Hitter, whose house was confiscated by the government in the early 1950's, had a law practice in Cegléd. Although it was his greatest wish to see his family once more, he died in 1959 without ever seeing them again. Mrs. Hitter traveled to America in 1963 and lived with her daughter and granddaughter until her death in 1976. She attended her granddaughters wedding and knew both of her great grandchildren.

Ildikó Gajda is the granddaughter of Dr. Miklós and Mária Hitter.