



Murder in Budapest

Death for Defenders of Freedom

With others

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Letter to the editor: *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1957, 8; as 'Budapest Sentences', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 June 1957, 6



József Gali on trial, Budapest, 1957

TO THE EDITOR

25 June 1957

Oxford

Sir, – We wish to put on record our horror at the death sentences just passed in Budapest on three young Hungarian intellectuals – Gabor Foeldes, one of the most talented stage producers, the

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outstanding young playwright Jozsef Gali, and the journalist Gyula Obersovszky.¹ The last two were given comparatively mild sentences by a lower court last year and the result of an appeal to the Hungarian Supreme Court is that they have been sentenced to death without any further evidence being produced.

We can think of scarcely any more blatant and cynical example of judicial murder in recent years. The case of Gali is particularly revolting. A very sick man, who lost both his parents in a Nazi concentration camp, he is now to be destroyed because he edited a Hungarian newspaper during the brief hour of Hungary's freedom and wrote pamphlets calling for passive resistance after Hungary had been raped by the Soviet Army.

How can a Government which punishes a 'crime' by death ever again refer to itself as democratic? If these sentences are carried out the moral isolation of the Kadar Government from the civilised world will be complete.

Yours etc.,

A. L. P Norrington, President, Trinity College
C. M. Bowra, Warden, Wadham College
Isaiah Berlin, All Souls College
Miriam Lane
F. W. Deakin, Warden, St Antony's College
Alan Bullock, Censor, St Catherine's Society
Christopher Hill, Balliol College

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¹ Despite international protest, Gábor Földes (1923–58) was executed six months later. The death sentences of József Gáli (1930–81) and Gyula Obersovszky (1927–2001) were overturned. Both were imprisoned, but released in the early 1960s.