



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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Mindszenty the MAN

The crying need of our times is for noble leaders — for men and women who have the courage to stand fast against false propaganda, who persevere in their principles when they reach high positions, who remain loyal to the people who look up to them, who cannot be seduced by money or scared by power, who listen to the voice of conscience instead of the roar of the crowd, and who are willing to pay the price that leadership demands in terms of self-discipline and difficult decisions.

Great leaders are not usually appointed to their leadership role by a special messenger from God or by the good fortune of a distinguished birth. A Joan of Arc who has visions and hears voices which motivate her to lead in battle is a rarity in history. Most great leaders are ordinary, uninspired people who have made the decision within themselves (1) to accept the responsibilities of leadership, and (2) to pay the painful price that leadership demands. For most people, the responsibility is too heavy a burden and the price of discipline and perseverance is too high.

The last several decades have been singularly lacking in enough nobly-dedicated leaders on all levels to defend the ramparts of civilization against the enemies of freedom and religion. When we get too close to the famous and rich and powerful, we find that most of them have feet of clay. The glitter of their high office is all rubbed off by "inside stories" written by their secretaries or servants or confidants or ghost writers. Never has it been so true that "no man is a hero to his valet."

If we are to cultivate leaders to cope with our current crisis, we must know what kind of soil they sprout in, and what kind of climate will help them grow. Does a clergyman or rabbi want to lead his flock? Does a public official want to lead his or her country, city, or party? Does any man or woman want to lead a worthwhile organization? The same principles of leadership apply in every endeavor. So we must study the ideals, the training, the work habits, the rules of conduct, and the private lives of the few authentic heroes of our times.

This is why, in November 1971, I accepted the invitation of Dr. Joseph Vecsey to participate in bringing to American readers a biography of Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary. Dr. Vecsey is Cardinal Mindszenty's lifetime friend and personal secretary who has kept careful notes since 1934. His eyewitness records, which I have edited for Americans, give a true picture of Mindszenty the *man*, the values he found valid and lasting, and the source of his inner strength which enabled him to overcome "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

By any standard, Cardinal Mindszenty is a leader. He has accepted the responsibilities of leadership, he had paid the price many times over, and, without power or patronage to dispense, he has retained the loyalty of freedom lovers all over the world.

Cardinal Mindszenty happens to be a Hungarian. He happens to be a Catholic. But he fought for the freedom of *all* men, regardless of faith or nation. The principles he stands for -- with his mind, body and spirit -- are universal and eternal. He is truly a man for all seasons.

Much has been written about Cardinal Mindszenty's public life, the famous trial, the brainwashing, the imprisonment. But previous accounts have been written from the outside looking in. This book is a firsthand report from a Hungarian who was there at his side -- in the Cardinal's younger years when he was a parish priest, in his glorious days of high drama, and in intimate hours in his mother's home.

It was a fellow Hungarian, Sigmund Romberg, who made Americans march to the tune: "Give me some men who are stout-hearted men who will fight for the right." Cardinal Mindszenty is a stout-hearted man who has always fought for the right. The rights he fought for are the same fundamental values that made America a great nation. If we want to keep the treasure we have, let us heed his lesson of leadership.

If Power Remains With the Communists

Mindszenty the Man opens with an account of Joseph Mindszenty's first imprisonment -- as related by

his mother to Dr. Vecsey. It was back in 1919 when Joseph Mindszenty was just a high school religion teacher in Hungary, but he fully understood the Communists even then. He had founded a newspaper, and, in the highest tradition of freedom of the press, he was an outspoken critic of all extremist elements.

In his lectures and sermons, Joseph Mindszenty spoke against the Communist October Revolution of 1918. For decades afterwards, the people in the area continued to quote one of his oft-repeated sayings: "Remember, if power remains in the hands of the Communists, even your scythe and spade will be stamped: *Government property!*"

Realizing that they were unable to organize any Communist units in the area of Joseph Mindszenty's influence, and failing in all their efforts to secure his collaboration, the Communists arrested and jailed him. Fortunately, the Communist regime collapsed after about four months of bloody terror.

Champion of Religious Freedom

A summer of horrors came upon Hungary in 1944 when Hitler forced the Hungarian puppet Government to participate in the deportation of the Jews. All the Christian leaders in Hungary protested these atrocities, but Joseph Mindszenty, now Bishop Mindszenty, soon was conspicuous as the most vigorous and vocal. As Bishop, he turned every religious house under his jurisdiction into a sanctuary for Jews hiding from the Gestapo. Even though the Nazis threatened death as punishment for concealing Jews, Bishop Mindszenty ordered every Catholic monastery, convent, seminary, rectory, cloister, and church to open its doors to the Jews and hide them from the Gestapo. He told his fellow Catholics: "If today we do not keep sacred and inviolable the Jew's personal freedom, his common and civil rights, tomorrow we may find that we have lost our own." He called anti-Semitism "the basest tool of Nazi propaganda — a tool which seeks to undermine the very foundations of Christian civilization."

Bishop Mindszenty personally presented a memorandum of protest to the Nazis. His fate was determined by this courageous act. The Nazis arrested him on November 27, 1944, terming him "a dangerous enemy of the Government." After four and a half months of imprisonment, he was finally released as the Nazi war machine collapsed and the Soviet Army marched into Hungary.

Defender of Free Schools

At the end of World War II, Joseph Mindszenty became Cardinal and Primate of Hungary -- the spiritual leader of a devastated and starving nation. His remarkable leadership talents soon made him the shining beacon of faith and hope in the midst of the economic and political havoc resulting from World War II. Hungary was about two-thirds Catholic, but all faiths recognized him as the leader in their confrontation with the Communists, and understood completely that the religious freedom of the other faiths depended wholly on whatever freedom Cardinal Mindszenty could preserve for the Catholics.

The Communist bosses were frustrated by their failure either to intimidate Cardinal Mindszenty with terroristic tactics or to mislead him by their wily methods. Their efforts failed not only because of the

Cardinal's steadfastness of purpose, but also because, as a scholarly historian, he was thoroughly familiar with the methods the Soviets had used to persecute religion ever since 1918.

He had a complete knowledge of the literature describing the inhuman tactics used by the Russian Bolsheviks. He had studied the writings of Marx and Lenin. He knew that the Communists are deadly serious about implementing the Marxist-Leninist thesis that all religion is the instrument of the "reactionary bourgeoisie" and therefore must be liquidated as soon as practical.

For four years, Cardinal Mindszenty successfully defended all the Churches and schools against the accelerating Communist policy of false propaganda and terroristic harassment. During that time, the Communists were proceeding from a foot-in-the-door coalition government to total control, using every tactic of deceit and terror.

Finally, the Communists decided to shift their attack from a fullscale attack on religion itself, and to concentrate on Cardinal Mindszenty personally. The objectives and tactics spelled out by Lenin were supplemented in Hungary by Communist Party boss Matthias Rakosi. He developed the famous technique which he later candidly described in a speech on February 29, 1952 as "salami tactics," that is, the cutting off of his opposition slice by slice. His war against religion was tremendously helped by the collaborating clergy called the "peace priests" who foolishly thought they could save themselves by compromising with the Communists.

In November 1948, the Communists arrested the Cardinal's personal secretary, Father Andrew Zakar, tortured and brainwashed him for a month, and then brought him back in a pathetic, dazed condition. He walked with strange dancing steps and babbled incessantly that he had been among kind people who had given him "bits of meat."

His incredible conduct terrified everyone who lived in the Cardinal's residence. The police deliberately brought Father Zakar back so the Cardinal would see what a physical and mental wreck he was from brainwashing and drugs, and would get the message that, if the Cardinal did not cooperate with the Communists, he, too, would have his mind and will destroyed.

Even this diabolical threat could not frighten him or induce him to save his own skin by fleeing the country. His response to the Communist threat was to write the following prophetic declaration, seal it, and give it to the Bishops Conference to be opened after his arrest. "I never participated in any kind of conspiracy. I will not resign my office as Archbishop. I have nothing to confess and I won't sign anything. If you should ever read that I have confessed or resigned, and even see it authenticated by my signature, remember that it will have been only the result of human frailty. In advance, I declare all such actions null and void."

The Third Arrest

On December 26, 1948, an armed squad of the Communist secret police broke into the Cardinal's home and arrested him. There followed 40 days of day-and-night interrogation, hour after hour without any sleep, by brutal interrogators working in shifts. He was forced to stand with arms raised high for days at

a time under blinding lights, during endless repetition of rapid-fire questions. When he was physically broken by three weeks of grueling interrogation, tormented with pain, and unable to say "no" any longer, the "treatment" with drugs began. He never signed any confession at all, and the alleged "confession" released by the Communist Government was a complete forgery, full of misspellings and errors, obviously prepared by uneducated interrogators. No other victim ever defied his tormentors for so long.

When Cardinal Mindszenty's public trial finally opened on February 3, 1949, the effects of the drugs and Communist-style brainwashing were obvious to everyone. He looked like a man broken physically and mentally. Cardinal Mindszenty had been a man of vigor and independence; at the trial, he appeared awkward, submissive, slavishly obedient to every directive of the court. He "confessed" against himself in a long stream of self-accusations. If he forgot memorized lines and momentarily stumbled in reciting them, the court was always quick to help him continue the prewritten dialogue. It was a pathetic sight. Spectators could not help but sympathize when Cardinal Mindszenty and the other prisoners on trial pleaded guilty and recited their nearly-identical memorized "confessions" in weary, passive tones.

The trial of Cardinal Mindszenty, February 3 to 8, 1949, was one of the dramatic events of our era. The Communist-appointed "defense counsel" seemed to realize this when he said that it "will be remembered in world history." At the end of this mock trial, Cardinal Mindszenty was convicted of treason, trying to overthrow the Government, and foreign currency speculation, and he was condemned to life imprisonment.

Many people followed the news of the crooked trial with sympathy, others with admiration, all wondering where the Cardinal derived the spiritual stamina for such a superhuman ordeal. It is easy to see, looking back on his past life, how Divine Providence had led Cardinal Mindszenty through the vicissitudes of a hard life and prepared him well for his moment of truth. He had lived a life of discipline and difficult decisions. Two previous imprisonments (by Communist and Nazi tyrants) had not crushed him. His virtues had been hardened like steel in the furnace of sacrifice and suffering. His heroic character was based on an unshakable faith and hope in God, love for his Church and country, unassuming and humble demeanor, and steadfast loyalty to his principles and his people.

Those Few Days of Freedom

The most exciting chapter in the book is the chapter on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which describes how the Freedom Fighters released Cardinal Mindszenty after eight years of Communist imprisonment. This chapter was originally written in 1956 by Dr. Vecsey to Cardinal Mindszenty's mother, and it has all the drama of "I was there!" One of the 40 interesting pictures in the book shows Major Pallavicini, the officer in charge of the troops which liberated the Cardinal. A fine-looking man, it would sadden anyone to know that the Communists later executed him for his part in releasing the Cardinal.

Freedom in Hungary lasted only a few days. On November 4, 1956, a nation died while the United

Nations talked and the United States played the role of Pontius Pilate. The last desperate cries of free Hungary went out over teletype and radio: "Please tell the world of the treacherous attack against our struggle for liberty. . . . Help! Help! Help! . . . SOS! SOS! SOS! . . . We have almost no weapons—only light machine guns, Russian-made long rifles and some carbines. We haven't any kind of heavy guns. The people are jumping at the tanks and throwing in hand grenades. . . . The Hungarian people are not afraid of death. It is only a pity that we can't stand for long. . . . What is the United Nations doing? Give us a little encouragement. . . . We hope the U.N. meeting won't be too late."

As the Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest amid the street turmoil and confusion, Cardinal Mindszenty threaded his way to the American legation and sought asylum. It took some 15 minutes to secure approval from President Eisenhower, and that was the beginning of 15 years of captivity in the American legation. A prisoner on the fourth floor, with the Communist guards keeping constant watch outside, he was not, of course, mistreated; but he was denied visitors and mail.

When I met Cardinal Mindszenty in Vienna in November 1971, I was tremendously impressed with his steadfastness of purpose and persevering spirit. He still has his strong, unwrinkled face, his alert brown eyes, his vigorous speech, his sense of humor. Three arrests and 23 years of various captivity had not wearied him or infected him with that deadly disease of so many good Americans: "giveupitis."

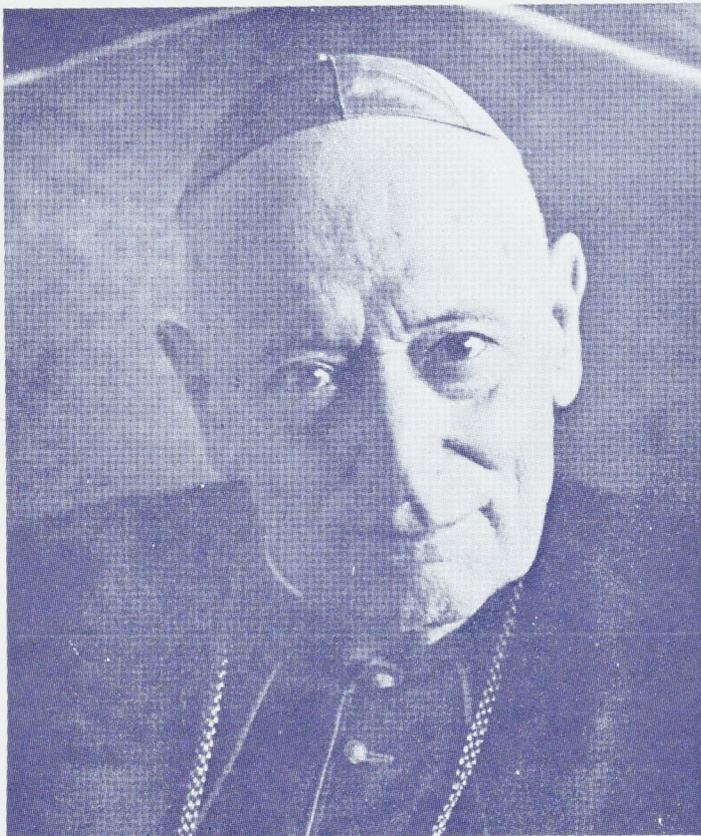
On Christmas Day, 1971, Cardinal Mindszenty reminded the world: "What I have previously condemned as evil and destructive, still is; and I will always be faithful to the principles which are necessary for the survival of Hungary and the freedom of its people."

Several years ago, I conducted a national essay contest for grade and high school students on the subject of George Washington. The 5th grade winner was a boy from Tennessee who concluded his essay with the line: "I admire George Washington because he never gave up."

Cardinal Mindszenty is one of the few present-day leaders who have never given up. If you are one of the 27,000,000 and have caught that contagious disease, "giveupitis," or have joined "Apathetics Anonymous," you need the inspiration of *Mindszenty the Man*.



Cardinal Mindszenty with Major Pallavicini



Cardinal Mindszenty

"Once I started reading *Mindszenty the Man*, I could not put it down. It gave me a spiritual lift. Each student in my classes will be required to read it."

--Dr. Anthony Kubek

"Congratulations on *Mindszenty the Man*. It is outstanding! All the first-hand information, all the details, all the pictures! This must be the greatest of your literary successes."

--Rev. Stephen Dunker

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Please Print!

"In a world aflame with violence and lack of concern for others, it is good to know that there are Christian leaders whose spiritual strength enables them to overcome adversity. Cardinal Mindszenty is such a leader, and this book gives a good insight into the remarkable character of the man."

--Billy Graham

"I am very happy indeed to endorse this book as an excellent work. It is a good, straightforward account. I found the work very interesting and enlightening. I believe that this great man, Mindszenty, comes forth with considerable power in the work."

--Norman Vincent Peale

"The price one man had to pay as a heroic leader of men is examined in a recently published book by Phyllis Schlafly. The work is based on writings by the Reverend Joseph Vecsey, Cardinal Mindszenty's secretary and friend since youth. It is an eyewitness account of the Cardinal's resistance to Nazism and Communism in his Hungarian homeland."

--Los Angeles Herald-Examiner

"*Mindszenty the Man* is a handbook of courage. His suffering of persecution for justice's sake is a nightmare to remember. For all reasons, he is all man."

--St. Louis Globe-Democrat

"The Vecsey-Schlafly book is a stirring personal account of the unique leadership talents of one of the most colorful and heroic figures of the 20th century. He fought the good fight not only for his own Church and country, but for the freedom of all mankind."

--Lutheran News

I strongly recommend this most readable book. Not only do we get here a highly personalized picture of Cardinal Mindszenty, but also a rare insight into the workings of a People's Democracy, and into the final goals of Communism -- among which the extermination of religion plays the leading role."

--Dr. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn

Phyllis Schlafly is the co-author of three books on nuclear strategy, *The Gravediggers* (1964), *Strike From Space* (1965), and *The Betrayers* (1968), which accurately predicted that the Soviet Union had a program to overtake and surpass the U.S. in nuclear weapons. She has testified repeatedly on national security before the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. She is the news director for a series of interviews with military and nuclear experts aired on 70 television and 50 radio stations. An honors graduate of Washington University and member of Phi Beta Kappa, she has a Master's Degree from Harvard University.

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