

Warm-up question:  
TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

"In the last year my father manufactured children's toys at home. My mother helped him and we children, whenever we had some free time, also helped my father."

How come your father could work on his own?

"Well, you see, Miss, it was like this: my father was called a loafer and that was after he quit his job working for a foundry. He became very sick because of the terrific heat in the foundries and then coming out in the winter he got, I don't know what you call it, you know those stiff joints, and he couldn't bend his back, etc. so he quit the job. The Communists labeled him a loafer. At that time my mother had the working permit to work at home with the toys, and when my father quit the foundry, he started to help my mother. So, the license was transferred to his name."

Where did your father sell the toys he made?

He sold them to the state stores and also to private people. Very often he went on fairs all over the country and sold the toys on his own. This way he made more profit on them. Whenever he was away, my mother still worked at home and we were helping."

Where did you live, and to which school did you go?

"We lived at Kispest, which is the 19th district. I attended the public school there, which was a state school. I finished the 8th grade, and then I enrolled at the school for industrial ~~apprentices~~ apprentices in the Fall of '56. But, during the summer in '56 I worked with brick layers."

How come you worked for brick layers, why were you allowed to do so?

"You see, I had a very good chum whose father was a brick layer, and so there was a shortage of help on a big building project, and my friend pulled some strings with his father and so we were recommended, and the two of us worked for this company for the whole summer."

Can you tell me something of how you lived? Who did the housework, etc.?

"You know, Miss, I wonder whether you know how the workers lived in Hungary at that time. We lived really awfully bad. We had one room in which we cooked, slept, and worked. I shared a bed with two of my sisters, the third one slept with my parents. Later, an uncle of mine gave me a cot so I could have a bed for myself, and then the three little girls slept in the second bed, my parents in the third one. My mother worked at home, so she also did the housework, and looked after us children. You, see, this was one of the main reasons why my father joined the Communist party in the beginning, because he thought that they promised so many good things and he hoped that they would help him to get a decent apartment. But, of course, nothing came of the whole thing and we continued to live in that one room. My father was even Party secretary in the district, but even that didn't help him at all. So, after two years, he got fed up with the Communist party and never paid his fees any more and never attended any party meetings. Finally, they expelled him from the party."

\*Tell me something about your school.

"I quite liked school, I must admit that, although we were a little bit crowded. There were 31 in the class the last year I attended school there."

What were your favorite subjects?

"I preferred math and physics, and also geography and history. But, you know, Miss, the trouble was that it

didn't matter how hard you studied. If you didn't get good marks in Russian, then all your other marks were graded down. So, I really disliked the Russian language, and therefore, all my marks were rather bad."

Why did you dislike Russian?

"You know, the letters are completely different from ours, and also, it is an extremely difficult language. Besides, who the hell likes the Russians, anyway?"

Tell me, were all children treated alike by the teacher?

"NO, the boys who belonged to the pioneer movement were always treated preferentially, and usually got better marks."

Why didn't you belong to the Pioneer Movement?

"It was like this: I was supposed to join and to attend the initiation ceremonies, but I had no clean clothes. Mother washed my slacks and shirt and they didn't dry in time. So, by the time I got there, the ceremony had started and I was not admitted." So, it was really quite by chance that I was not a member."

Now, tell me, what did you do after school hours?

"Well, either we had to help our parents with the work at home, or there was something which I liked very much. That was soccer. I used to go out to play with the boys whenever I could. I also liked swimming a great deal. Very often, during the Russian language hour, we sneaked off under some pretext and played soccer."

How did you manage to get away from Russian class?

"You see, very often we had to bring some money when there was a drive to raise funds to pay for some party purposes. We got the money all right from our



parents in the morning, but pretended to have forgotten it. Then, when Russian hour came we said we must go home to pick up the money. So, we just left, and after the Russian hour was over and we had our rice soccer game, we went back to school and produced the money that was in our pockets all the time."

Did you have any religious instructions in school?

"At the time when I started school and I was in the 1st grade we still had religious instructions. In my 2nd grade we were allowed it ~~if~~ if we wanted it. But, later on, my parents thought ~~it~~ it wiser not to have me attend religious classes at school. Nevertheless, I attended religious instructions at my former teacher's home. This was in great secrecy. It was also this same teacher who prepared me for my first Communion, and it was only in '55, when I was quite a big boy, that I made my First Communion, due to not being able to attend regular religious instructions. You know, we found out that the head school master spied on the children who ~~want~~ want to church, and one friend of mine got into trouble for this. My parents did not even admit to the family, to my uncle, for instance, that I was attending religious classes, because my uncle was an out-and-out Communist."

Tell me, how were the teachers at school?

"The teachers were very strict with us. If we misbehaved we got a good spanking or a couple of smacks in the face, or a good rap on our knuckles with the ruler."

But, I thought that physical punishment was abolished in school?

That's very true, Miss, but, the teachers didn't give a damn about it. Also, you know, ~~xxx~~ I think that children must be beaten up ~~down~~ and then. Imagine how naughty we would have been if we hadn't been beaten up now and then at school or home. I think

it's quite right if the older people are strict with us."

Can you tell me something about your teachers...were they party members?

"Yes, I know the head master of the school was a member of the Communist District Committee, and a party member. Also, we knew that some of the teachers belonged to the party. Therefore, we never talked, except at home."

Couldn't you have denounced your teacher for hitting you, which was against the rules?

"I guess we could have done so, but it would have been in vain, anyway, since the head master was a Communist and the party members were hand in glove, and he wouldn't have forwarded the ~~sa~~ report anyway."

How were your schoolmates?

"You know, those children who had parents who didn't care what their children were doing were really awful. We had a band of hooligans at school and, for instance, they broke all the windows at school and rioted, and, all together, were very undisciplined. I think this is really a terrible thing. ~~Why~~ Why should children behave so bad?"

What happened to those children in the end?

They were finally expelled from the school and put in reformatory ~~sa~~ schools."

Tell me more about your subjects; what did you learn?

"Well, we had the Hungarian language, then we had Hungarian history, ~~xxx~~ but, after 1948, we only learned Hungarian history at the Hungarian language hour. We learned a great deal of Russian history and, when I was in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, we had what they called political lectures. We also had, as I said, math and geography, etc."

Tell me something more about those political lectures.

"We did not have any manuals for that subject, and everytime we would discuss another topic which was based on current events in Hungary or world political happenings. Then we were told a great deal about the Communist doctrines, about the aims of the Soviet Union, about peace, disarmament, etc."

Tell me, did you believe all that you were told in the political lectures, and did you ~~like~~ believe in these doctrines?

"I must admit, Miss, quite frankly, that in the beginning everyone believed them. I believed, too, because they sounded awfully good to me. But, as I said before, my father couldn't get ahead even under Communism, and he was unable to get a decent apartment so, somehow, that made us think. So father quit the Communist party and I, myself, started to have doubts about whether everything was as good as they were telling us. My eyes were completely opened, however, at the time of the October revolution!"

Tell me why and how your eyes were opened during the revolution.

"I read the twelve demands of the university students and, to my mind, everything they asked for was right and I really couldn't see why the Communists did not want to grant us these demands. After all, we were Hungarians, weren't we? Then, I couldn't understand how anyone could start shooting against a defenseless crowd as they did during the revolution when the people were asking for something that was right and due them. I also saw that the workers ~~from~~ from Csepel came in big trucks to the Radio Building and I also thought that these people knew perfectly well what they want, and it must be right what they are asking. You see, the AVH and the Communists always played dirty tricks on us. At the Radio Building I also saw how the AVH people dressed up in white doctors uniforms and were hiding in ambulances and tried to sneak into the Radio Building with arms and ammunition."



Well, maybe we will now turn to the events of the revolution, since you are mentioning the Radio Building. Tell me how the revolution started. What did you do on October 23? Do you remember?

"Oh, yes, I remember very well. I attended my classes at the Apprentice's School. It was in the 6th district. I went home around 4p.m. You know, I have to pass the National Museum building on my way home, and so I saw there was a terrific crowd around the building and around the Radio building. Then, I saw that incident I was telling you about, about the ambulance cars and the student demonstrators searching the cars. But, I thought better, took a street car and went home. When I arrived home, my father, who had a ticket for a movie, said he didn't want to go, because he wants to hear Gero speak over the radio that night at 8pm. So, I was sent to the movie instead of him."

What happened the next day?

Next morning we woke up very early and, contrary to the usual news on the radio, all we could hear on the radio was music. This amazed us very much. Then, all of a sudden, we heard the government's proclamation saying that armed bandits and fascists, and goodness knows who else, have attacked peaceful citizens in the town, and shooting is going on, and all kinds of such things. However, in our district everything was peaceful and no shooting was going on yet. I was sent to get some cigarettes for my father and when I went to the streets I heard shooting in the distance. I also met the father of a great friend of mine who was coming home from the city and told us about all that was going on there. His buckets were full of all kinds of ammunition and he also said the weapons and ammunition can be got at the Soloksariut, where there was a factory which allegedly manufactured lamps, but was really an arms factory. When I heard what this man had to say, I thought that things had really got going now, and I quite liked the idea. I wanted to be where things were happening, and so, I went and hitched a ride on one of the trucks that was going to town. As

shelling

we drove along Ulloiut, ~~smoking~~ and shooting started in ~~earnest~~ earnest. I must admit, Miss, I was really quite scared. We met many trucks and tanks already flying the Hungarian flag, and really, it was very thrilling. Finally I landed at a big apartment house opposite the Kilian barracks. And whom do I meet there--one of my very best pals! He is now in France. He also escaped from Hungary. This friend of mine is much older than I am, he is 22, and he was carrying a Mauser rifle. He also had a couple of hand-grenades hanging around his belt and he explained to me how to use them. So, I ~~went~~ went along with him and helped him pick up ammunition and rifles which we found in the deserted Russian tanks. Little by little it got quite dark and evening came. I could not go home because there were no street-cars running. I decided to stay on in one of the apartments in that house. I can tell you this night was something awful, Miss. I wasn't even hungry I was so scared. ~~xxxxxx~~ There was a great deal of shooting going on and I was told that Russian mine-throwers ~~were~~ rumbled along the streets fighting like mad. During the night fire started in one of the apartments in the house next to us and somehow the smoke seeped down to the cellar where we were hiding. We escaped then thru the cellar of another house. In the morning the fighting went on fiercer than ever. Then I took my courage in both hands and came out to the street. I was ~~his~~ lucky enough to meet a man who lived near us and I knew him. He asked me if I wanted to go home with him. So, I thought I would follow him, and along we went. We crawled along the walls, dodging the snipers. On our way home I saw a big police car that carried policemen and emergency squad, I think some were, and they were stopped by the Freedom Fighters. The car was overturned. All the policemen surrendered and begged the Fighters to give them civilian clothes. So, the people went around to the houses and asked everyone to give some clothes to the policemen. The Freedom Fighters sent all the policemen who had families home, and only accepted those who were single to fight with them. On our way home we also met several Russian tanks which had lost their way and asked for directions. So, we sent them to the Ulloi St., which we knew had been



mined by the Freedom Fighters. In the end, we hitched a ride on a motor bike, but were stopped by Hungarian soldiers who wanted our identification cards. When arriving home, I didn't find anybody, and, very late at night, my father, who had also been in town, came home. When he learned that I had been in Budapest and had gotten home that late, he gave me a terrific beating. Nevertheless, next day, early in the morning, without saying a word, I sneaked out of the house and went back to town again.

I walked all the way, climbing fences around the football grounds of the Fradi, and arrived at the St. Leszle Hospital. I asked which way I should take in order to get to town the quickest way. I saw everywhere burned out tanks, even a couple of Russians' soldiers who were shrunk and looked like mummies. It was really a terrible sight. Again, I went to the same house where I had been the day before. My friends told me that Col. Maletor ~~was~~ had his headquarters there. I also was told that the nearby Corvin Theatre was used by the Freedom Fighters as a munition depot. Somebody gave me a pistol, I think it was the kind the Hungarian police used. I helped to carry the ammunition to different places and to distribute it to the Freedom Fighters. Now and then I fired a couple of shots, but mostly just in the air. I knew that my pistol would not be ~~as~~ effective against the tanks, anyway.

When night came I again walked all the way home. And again my father gave me a terrific beating. I asked him why he was so mad at me and he said that he has seen enough young boys being killed in the fighting and he doesn't want to lose his only son.

I had taken the pistol back home with me."

Tell me now why you decided to leave Hungary and  
~~leave~~ your family, and come out from your homeland?

"You see, it was like this: a couple of days later I was standing outside in the street playing with the kids when a man approached me and asked if I

knew--and then he said my name. I said 'that's me'. So he told me would I please come to the headquarters of the Party in our district. So I went with him and there he questioned me for quite some time, in fact, he gave me quite a grilling. Also, he was insisting to know whether I had any arms or ammunition. I thought that maybe someone had spied on me when I was burying the pistol outside in the garden and had denounced me. I admit, very frankly, I was scared.

On November 4 I again met my friend with whom I had been fighting in town. He begged me not to tell a soul that he had taken part in the revolution. So, I thought some thing was wrong with the whole situation and maybe we had better keep quiet about everything.

So, you see, we were all very afraid of the consequences. Then I discussed the matter with some friends of mine. Two were 16 years old, one was 18, and the other was 19. At first I thought I would try to get to Holland where an uncle of mine was living.

Finally, on November 22, we started and hitched our way along the country via Doroghaes to the border."

Can you tell me something about what you disliked about the schools at home?

"I think that the political lectures were quite unnecessary. After all, we were children, so why did they want to fill our heads with world politics and everything that happens in the big world? Also, these political lectures were extra curricular. We had to stay after hours to attend them. I think it would have been much more useful to have let us learn foreign languages or history--but, real history. As I said, I liked history and physics and math. I also was very fond of the hours for singing and drawing. The only time when I was interested in the political lectures was when they discussed sports and sports politics, altho I didn't see what politics had to do with sports. I hated very much that they talked so much about Russia and Russian people, and they were always praising them to high heaven. I can only tell

this one thing:at school the children did not like the Russians and very few of the teachers did.

I remember I was in the third grade when my father told me he was expelled from the Communist party and that he never got any help from them. They did not even give us a decent apartment. So,I followed my father and I ,also,thought that,after all, Communism was not so good. My parents complained all the time how difficult it was to make both ends meet. They had to pay very high taxes since they ~~xxxx~~ worked on their own. I heard different things at school from what I heard at home,so I rather believed my parents. So,therefore I thought that all that the Communists teach they don't practice.

At school we discussed the situation only with very close friends and kept mum in front of the others if we didn't know how they thought."

Also,imagine how much we had to pay for my education. All the books and the copy books I had to buy for classes cost about 80 forints every year,which is a terrific amount considering what my father was making. He always told me that when he was a boy, he had to pay very little for all his books. Then again,there was another thing that struck me. The Communist always said that everyone could practice his religion freely,and yet we had to go in secrecy to attend religious classes. My little sisters were baptized in great secrecy,and so on. So,somewhat things didn't click."

Now,tell me,how did your parents discipline you.

"Well,as a rule,I got a good beating,but,very often,if I had been up to some mischief,I would not be allowed to go and play soccer,which was by far the greatest punishment. I did not mind getting a beating, but I did mind not being able to play soccer."Z

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Did you read,and,if so,what?

"I did like to read a great deal,but mostly books on history. However,I did not like the books we were



always told to read at school. These were on the alleged Russian heroes."

Can you tell me if you heard that something was brewing before the revolution?

"I remember very well about a week before the revolution my mother told me that the university ~~and~~ students are planning a big demonstration for the re-establishment of the holiday on March 14. That was all I knew."

What impressed you most when you came to the United States? What was so much different from home?

"When we were in Munich I was so impressed to see the wonderful military camps, and then, also, here at Camp Kilmer. America is a wonderful country and much more prosperous than I ever believed. You know, at home we were always told that people here are unemployed, they have nothing to eat, they live in poverty. And what do I see? I see just the contrary. Then, again, we heard how the Americans oppress the Negroes, and what do I see in Munich? The commander of the camp is a Negro. Also, at school I see that Negro attend school just as we do. I have a suspicion that the Communist propaganda was describing America as it was in 1700 but not as it is today.

I also was very much impressed to see that people of my ~~own~~ own class, what we would call a simple man, live so well. Everyone seems to have everything, they have cars, lovely apartments, beautiful furniture, etc. And what wonderful food."

Can you tell me what you have in mind when you grow up?

"Oh yes, I know. I wanted to be the same at home... I want to become an automobile mechanic. I already tried to enroll for classes in this kind of employment in Hungary, but because of my bad grades, which I got because of my bad Russian, I was not admitted to those special classes. After having worked for the summer as a brick layer, I enrolled for a brick layer apprenticeship in Hungary."

There is one thing I wonder if you can tell me.

What do you think is the most important thing for the Americans to know about the Hungarian revolution?

"Oh, this is a very easy question to answer. I think the Americans ought to know that it was the Hungarian workers who revolted against the Russian domination. It is very important that everyone should know that it was not the ~~ix~~ rightest element that started the revolution in Hungary, but the working class themselves. No one wanted a capitalist system but everyone wanted Hungary to be independent and free. I think people in Hungary wanted to become a neutral country like Switzerland or Austria. You know, this was among the points the students wanted and I read it and thought it was a very good idea."

Did people talk about what the Western people would do in connection with the revolution?

"Oh yes, everyone spoke about the United Nation troops they were expecting. But, not for an occupation force. We only wanted them to come to restore order and to supervise the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Everyone was waiting for Western help, the more so because the entire revolution was not at all organized. And when I think of it, I still don't understand---The Russians are allowed to give assistance to Nasser, so why is the West not allowed to give assistance to the Hungarians?"

Did you ever listen to the foreign radios?

Yes, during the revolution everyone listened to Radio Free Europe and the people put their radios on their window sills, turned on full blast. Before the revolution at home we often listened to the Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America, but very seldom to B.B.C. As far as I remember, we could hear Radio Free Europe more clearly than the Voice of America."

Try and think hard before you answer this question. Why do you think it was the young people that rebelled against Russian domination? After all, you have known nothing else.

"Don't forget, Miss, Communism hasn't been in Hungary for such a long time as it has been, for instance, in

Russia. Our people, our elders, always told us that in old times things were quite different. Also, our parents told us things that were different from what we were being taught at school. I think this is why we children were not completely taken in by Communism, and thought that there is something worthwhile to fight for. Also, ~~as~~ I think that the younger people like to follow new ideas and we always want to better our lot. This may have been why the young people were so enthusiastic about the revolution."

Is there anything you think is not right here in America or something you do not like?

"There is one thing which gives me a lot to think about. That is, I do not see how the American parents and school teachers exercise their authority. From what I have seen in school, the American children are not disciplined at all, and no one does anything about discipline. I have already told you that I think it is very important that children be disciplined and taught to obey and respect their elders. After all, that is what the parents and teachers are for... to bring us up and lead us in the right way."

-- THE END --