

III. THE SCHOOL SITUATION

A. Can you tell us something about your school in Hungary?
What were your subjects?

"Our subjects were arithmetic, writing and reading, speech, drawing, singing, gymnastic, Russian and playing hour."

Which subjects did you like most, and which least?

"I liked arithmetic because I knew the most of it, and I didn't like reading and speech, because the homework was too much in these subjects."

Tell me something about the other subjects. What did you learn in each of them?

"In reading, for instance, we read about people who worked in the mines. The rich people closed them in the mines and let them work like slaves. They didn't let the miners out. Finally, however, they succeeded in escaping. When we read it, I was so sad. I felt such a sympathy for the miners. I didn't like the rich people. The reading teacher was a woman. She very often told stories about Stalin. I didn't like those stories very much. I put my head on the bench (respondent shows how she did it) and sometimes I even fell asleep. But when she told us fairy tales, those I liked very much.

"In the 4th and 5th grade, we had Russian language class, writing and reading. If I didn't learn the lesson, the teacher made me stand in the corner. Once she even wanted to hit me with a ruler, but the Director entered the room just then and hindered her from hitting me. She wanted to hit me because I couldn't answer her question. I didn't like the Russian language. It was so difficult to pronounce. But not only because it was difficult. I covered my ears when the teacher spoke Russian. On that day when she wanted to hit me, after the Director left our class, the teacher sent me home, and the next day they put me into a different class, into class B instead of class A. In that class the teacher was much better. She didn't force me to learn Russian. She saw I didn't want to learn, therefore she left me alone."

Tell me something about your teachers now. Did you like your teachers?

We had a different teacher for each subject. They were of every age. We had young, old and middle aged, but all women. I liked the teacher in the playing hour most, because she showed me everything, more often than to the other children, and therefore I could do everything a little bit better than the others. I didn't like the teacher in the reading hour. She was ~~unjust~~ unjust. She gave me and two other girls worse grades than three girls in the class whom she liked very much, and she always made

exceptions of those three girls. She loved them so much because, for instance, when ~~xxxx~~ we celebrated the day of the teachers, they brought her all kinds of gifts. My mother didn't have money and I asked a friend of mine to give me a few of her flowers, and therefore the teacher got angry at me because I brought only a few flowers. The others brought pastries and beautiful flowers. The ~~xxxx~~ teacher made very good students of those three girls. I mean she always gave them excellent grades. Even when they made a mistake or they didn't ~~xxxxxxx~~ tell something right, they got a five. When we cleaned the blackboard, we could see the teacher's book. I don't know why she did that, because those girls were really very bad girls. They hit me once with their schoolbags and ridiculed me because I usually got a mark two, but I never could really understand why I got those marks. ! I tried to walk with the other girls too.

Did you have any Communist teachers?

"When I went to the first grade, ~~x~~ one teacher was a Communist. She spoke Russian once with Russian soldiers in the corridor of the school. I understood a few words because my sister was forced to learn Russian in the higher class, and she learned the language day and night. I heard her repeating the Russian words a hundred times, and therefore I recognized a few words the teacher said, and I thought, "My goodness gracious, these people talk Russian." Therefore I thought she was a Communist, but I was afraid to talk about this, even with the other children. I didn't like the Communist teachers, but I left her soon because those children who studied well were moved into a higher class, and I myself was put, after months, in the second grade."

Tell me something about your classmates. Who were your friends?

"I had a very good friend, Ili. She is here now in America with her parents too, and Eva, who stayed in Budapest. Maybe she even died, the poor girl. They were my classmates, and Ili lived in the same house with me. I liked these girls because they defended each other. I was a little smaller than they were, and when the boys started to chase me, and wanted to hit me, they always came and helped me. The grandmother of Ili had a piece of ~~xxxx~~ land in the country, and therefore Ili was always eating. She brought something for me, too, very often. Otherwise, I have never gotten such things at home. I always ate very little. My father's salary was 600 forints, and my mother made 500. This was not enough. We usually played together with these two friends of mine. We didn't talk too much. We only played. But I didn't even tell them when I saw our teacher talking to the Russians. I was terribly frightened. I didn't even tell my mother. You know I was scared stiff that the teacher would ask the Russian to come to me and beat me because I didn't want to learn the Russian language."

Whom did you not like at school?

"I didn't like those three girls who were always privileged. I hated them, because they always ridiculed me. I went to the other side of the street when I saw them."

Were there any Communists among your classmates?

"I don't know. I have never asked them."

Were there any children at school who were looked up to by all the others?

"Yes, there was a girl. Her name was Anna. She was the tallest among those three favored girls. She always had a very good mark, and even received an emblem as the best student. But I didn't look up to her. All the others did. When she received that insignia she was initiated too, and every student had to pass her and salute her for ten minutes, holding their hands to their heads like soldiers. But I did it only for one minute, and then I dropped my hand, and covered it, and my head, with a flag, so nobody could see it. She was the only one who got this honor in the whole school. Oh, no, I am mistaken. There was another student in the 8th grade. These two always got this insignia -- about six times during our school years -- and we were forced to honor them."

Let's say there are two children of your age. One of them is the daughter of a man who once was a lawyer but now is a common laborer. The other is the daughter of a man who was a common laborer ten years ago, but now is the manager of a factory. Which of them would you rather have as a friend?

"I would make friends with that girl whose father was a lawyer before the war, and now is a worker. I would be afraid of the one whose father is now a director. I would be afraid that if they would beat me or accuse me of something. At school, the others accused me of many things so often. Once they said I broke the blackboard. My mother came in and she said that I never lied, and therefore she didn't pay for it. They wanted to charge her with the expenses of the repair."

"You see, if I wouldn't make friends with that girl whose father was a Communist, I would behave so because now during the war, the Communists would have won, they probably even would have killed us. But I wouldn't make friends with her otherwise either. I didn't like the Communists. I don't know why; I just simply didn't like them."

Did you have religious instruction at school?

"I don't know what this is. What do you mean?"

I mean a class where you were taught about God, or where you prayed.

"Oh, no, we never said such songs with prayers. We only said a poem on a celebration when the school was started every year, and we also had a competition that we would never leave each other, our schoolmates, because we should be sisters at school.

"But I went to the Church every Sunday with my mother or alone, because the church was very close to our home. My mother went often to the Sziv Church, which was far away, but my mother and father walked over there. When we went to the beach in the summer, we always went into a church first. There was an aunt next door, an old lady who was very pious. She went to the church even every noon, and I went with her sometimes. It was so beautiful; everything was so shiny. I myself didn't even know the prayer. My mother and father told me a prayer, and my mother also talked to us about the good God when we went to sleep after dinner. There was one among those stories that God carried his child on the back of an ass. So many beautiful stories were told to us by my mother. There were two sons, two boys, and one killed the other. And there was another man who stood in the river, and somebody poured water on his head."

Did you tell your parents what happened in school?

"I told my mother a little bit about what happened at school, but not everything. Sometimes it happened that I told everything, because I was afraid to lie. But it also happened that I had to take home a report on unsatisfactory conduct, and then I signed it myself. At school the other children accused me of many things, as I told you already, but my mother told me that she saw herself that this was not all my fault, and she wouldn't beat me for that."

Did you ever discuss with what you learned at school with your father or mother?

"My father used to teach me. He taught me also that prayer, and he regularly helped me to do my homework, but he never talked with me about the subjects. He just didn't mix himself into those things. Even if I said what the teacher told me, he never answered me. He just listened to it. He only told me if I made a mistake in the homework.

C. Did you ever talk about what happened at home when you were at school?

"No, I never talked about things that happened at home at school. Only if my mother told me that I should tell something definitely. I didn't like to talk about things at school."

If your teachers told you something different about the subject you were taught than your parents, what did you do then?

"If the teacher told us some story, and my father and my mother told me stories, I believed both of them. But I believed more in what my father and my mother told me."

D. What did you do after school hours?

"I went home, finished my homework, and went out to play. We played on the street, or in the court of the house. It was a large house with a big court."

Did you read any books?

"I read some books which my sister brought home from the library, but I didn't read too much. I read mostly fairy tales."

What other amusements did you have?

"We went to the movies once or twice, ~~xxxxxx~~ but I didn't like it too much because I always got a headache. You see, I have a headache even now, because we came in a car, and I got a headache from the smell. We didn't go too much to any place, because my father and my mother both worked, and when they came home in the evening they were very tired. It was very late. Nevertheless, we children would have liked to."

Did you do any sports?

"No, I didn't do any sports. I can't even swim."

What did you play with other children?

"We played hide and seek, and we played soldiers and war, and we also played the game of tag."

Did you participate in the Pioneer Movement?

"Oh yes, I was a Pioneer. I had a Pioneer book too. From the third grade I had to participate. We were told to buy stamps for the Pioneer book. Every day we had to buy stamps. One stamp cost ten filler, or sometimes twenty filler. We had to buy one, two or three. At the beginning I bought two every day, and when the book was filled we had to give it back and we got a new empty book. Later on, however, when I saw that I just spent my money and I didn't get anything for it, I wasn't so stupid anymore, and I bought only one stamp every day. In the Pioneer Movement we also had celebrations and meetings. Every Friday we had to stay at school from 3 to 7 in the afternoon. We had to learn different things -- to march like the soldiers, to salute, and then we got a small emblem. Mine was a little insect. Those who had better marks got fairy tale books sometimes. I didn't like these Pioneer meetings, but it was compulsory. They had such long speeches, and I was always so sleepy. They told us how the children should be, and we had to listen to it stiff, without moving."

IV.

Now tell us something about your family. What did your father do, and your mother?

"My father had a little shop in the house. He made leather ~~xxxxxx~~ wallets. My mother worked in a factory. But both of them came home about 12:00 o'clock every day to eat, because my mother's factory was also nearby."

Where and how did you live in Hungary?

Eighth

"We lived in the ~~Eighth~~ District, in a small apartment. We had one room and a kitchen, and a small shack for coal. We had three beds in the room. In every bed, two of us slept. We didn't have any bathroom. We didn't even have a faucet in the apartment. The water faucet was out in the court, as well as the toilet. We had a key for the toilet, and had to open it every time we went out. My mother cooked on a stove which had to be heated by wood."

Who did the housework? Did you help?

"My mother cooked. She got up very early morning, quickly did some cooking, and then she went to the factory, and my father too. Sometimes my godmother came over, and brought us food, and sometimes we went to her. When we, the bigger children went to school, my little sister was taken to my grandmother or to some of our godmothers. Everybody lived very close to us. When we came home, then my sister was brought home too, and we had to take care of her, to feed her, or sometimes all of us went to grandmother. When my mother and my father went to work, and we had to stay home, then they closed the door, because we were afraid of burglars. Very often we didn't know what we were supposed to do with our baby sister. Once I carried her and I was frightened ~~her~~ by a horse, so she fell off my back and broke her hat. Of course just a little, not too much."

V. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

A. Have you been rewarded at school for good work?

"Yes. The teacher praised me if I studied well, and my homework, my lesson, was good, I got a five in my copybook. Oh she put it in the big book that she used. But I never got an emblem."

B. Were you ever punished at school?

"Oh yes, very often, if I was bad, if I hit the other children. Once the teacher wanted to beat me on my back part, but I sneaked out of her hands and she chased me all around the room. Otherwise, I had to stand in the corner or ~~sxxx~~ apologize for what I did."

C. Were you ever punished by your parents? Why did they punish you?

"They punished me if I didn't behave well, but I was always bad. Usually my father exercised physical punishment. He beat me up with a leather strap very strongly. My mother hit me with a wooden spoon, or gave me a few slaps. This I got every day."

VI.

Now let me ask you a bit about the revolution.

A. Can you tell us why the Hungarians started the revolution?

"The Hungarian revolution started because the Russians came in, because one of the men asked them to come in. My older sister and my godmother went to the Szabad Nep, and I heard when they said that some great man asked the Russians to come in."

What impressed you most during the revolution?

"I was not let out in the street during the shootings, but I heard from my mother that there was a woman with a baby and three other children, and a Russian tank came and shot the woman and the children. They shot them with a machine gun."

VII.

What would you like to be when you grow up?

"I would like to be a stenographer and a typist. I like it very much. I find pleasure in it. This is my ideal."

A. Now tell me, what is a good father like?

"I would like a good father to buy me everything I want. He should give me money for ice cream and dresses, and he should buy me a typewriter and a telephone."

What is an ideal teacher like?

"If I deserve the good, she should give it to me. If I am bad, and if I deserve it, she can beat me, but if the teacher is bad, I won't allow her to beat me."

What is a good mother like?

"A good mother should take me for a walk if I am a good girl, buy me nice dresses, and for the other children. She should have beautiful blonde hair, and if I am good, she should ~~xxxxxx~~ not beat me. She should also wash the children before they go to school, and put them to bed in the evening."

worst

What are the three ~~xxxxxx~~ things a child can do?

"She could beat somebody up, break the windows, or just simply be bad."

What are the three most important things a child should be taught?

"She should be taught to be wise, to keep herself clean, and not to be a drunkard."

What are the three worst things one can say about someone?

"The three worst things that a child is bad, she was fresh to me, and she didn't give back my money."

VIII. SPECIAL SECTION

A. Who do you think are the three greatest people in the world?

"Stalin, Rakosi and Lenin. This was told us at school. I myself thought it was so as I sat. I didn't think of it then that they were Communists. But today, I think the greatest is ~~Mr~~ Imre Nagy. They wanted to execute him, but he escaped. He was a good man."

Respondent cannot name any other big, leading personality. Neither can she name any greatest living Hungarian.

B. Now we would like to give you a few names of famous Hungarians. Can you tell us a little about each of them?

St. Stephen: "I remember that there was a St. Stephen Hospital."

King Mathias: "I don't know who he was."

Francis Rakoczi the 2nd: "I don't know either who he was."

Sandor Petofi: "There is a book about him. He wrote poems. There was also a statue in Budapest of him. I saw it. And he was ~~xxx~~ also in our reading book. His picture was in our book and his poem; a picture as he said the Talora Magyar. The poor people listened ~~h~~ to him, but the kings disregarded his speech. He died in the war."

Louis Kossuth: "Oh there is a poem about him. He was a great man."

Istvan Szechenyi: There is a Szechenyi Bath in Budapest. All the old ladies go there, but I don't know anything else about him. Maybe he was a great man."

Respondent has no knowledge about Ferenc Deak, Teresa Maria, Gabor Bethlen, Michael Tancsics. 3

George Dozza: "He was also in our textbook at school. But I don't remember anymore who he was. I remember that there was also a poem about him."

Nicholas Horthy: "I don't know who he was."

Joseph Mindszenty: "I heard his name in Budapest. He was imprisoned."

Imre Nagy: "He was good. He tried to hide in Budapest, because the Communists wanted to kill him, but later on he escaped."

IX.

What strikes you as being completely different in the U.S. from Hungary?

"The food is entirely different, and I cannot get a line on, the streets are so different."

What are the things you like most about the U.S.?

"I like the most the chocolate, the candy, and the ice cream."

What are the things you ~~like~~ disapprove of in the U.S.?

"The many papers on the streets, and the dirt."

THE END