

III. THE SCHOOL SITUATION

A. Tell us something about school in Hungary. What were your subjects?

"Our subjects were arithmetic, physics, Hungarian grammar and literature, singing, gymnastics, history, geography, zoology, Russian grammar, reading and ~~wir~~ writing, politics, ~~and~~ We also had a study circle for modeling in the afternoon, but this wasn't compulsory."

How many hours of Russian did you have weekly?

"We had Russian every second day, three hours a week. But we learned data concerning Russia in the other subjects as well. In Russian we had to read stories always of the heroism of the Russian soldiers, how they fought against the Germans and how they sacrificed their lives for victory. How the Russian soldier exploded with grenades they threw at the Germans. I didn't like the Russian hour. There were students who liked it because the language was easy. I knew how to read and write. I learned it regularly and always knew the lesson, but immediately forgot it afterward. I was not interested in it; I learned it only under pressure. Most of my classmates did not like Russian. Those who liked it maybe had Communist parents."

"We learned about Russia in Hungarian geography, too, but only in the fourth grade. In the seventh grade we learned geography of the whole world, and just proportionately about Russia. We didn't learn about America, only about West Germany from the West."

Which subjects did you like best?

"I liked Hungarian literature and history. I liked to read about the old Hungarian events. There were also Communist poems in our reading book. Of course, I learned them, too, but I didn't like to read them for enjoyment. They praised the Russians and the Russian army and they always told how good they were to the Hungarians. And we always knew that it was just the opposite."

Tell me something about your teachers now.

"The director at our school was a Communist. The directors were mostly Communist, and also the school supervisors. The supervisors always came to the Russian hour and they asked the questions of the students. The teachers watched us very carefully and if someone could not answer the supervisor, he got a very bad mark. But they didn't do it with every boy; they made exceptions and ~~xxxxxxx~~ there was favoritism. For instance, the son of the director was also in our class and they never did this to him."

How did you know that these teachers were Communists?

"I knew it. The Communists never went to the church. You know, under the fifth grade I studied in the country. I went to school in Balatonkeresztur and then later on we went to Budapest because my father and mother were ~~xxxxxx~~ already there working. We stayed with our grandparents, but during the revolution, toward the end, we went again to the country. For instance, there I saw how the Communist teachers ran to the churches with their children during the revolution as they never had before. At Balatonkeresztur the teacher of Hungarian grammar and history was a Communist. My parents told me that she was a Communist. In the country there were more Communist teachers than in Budapest. We had there altogether eight teachers, and three of them were Communists. In the country there were no old teachers; all the teachers were young, around 30. The director himself was about 40. Most of them became teachers under Communism."

Did you like your teachers?

"I liked my Hungarian literature teacher in Budapest. He was an old, very nice man. And he was a good man, too. There were some other good teachers in Budapest. They were old teachers from the old regime. We had to call them 'Tanar Ur'(sir) instead of 'Tanar Elvtars'(Comrade)."

Which teachers did you not like?

"In the country I did not like the Hungarian teacher and the director. They were against me because my grandfather had a wine store and they came to us and got drunk once and started to fight with my grandfather. From this time on they picked on me. But I didn't like them also because they were Communists. We could always notice who was a Communist because he mixes politics into his ~~sp~~ teachings."

Tell me something about your classmates now. Who were your ~~xxxxx~~ friends. What did you talk about?

"In the ~~scountry~~ country my best friend was the son of the Russian teacher. He sat next to me. But in general, I had good friendships with almost everyone. We played together and sometimes we talked about the war, what the Russians did when they came to our country. We talked about how they looked for German soldiers and how they shot each other and how the airplanes bombed our houses, but they were also shot. We also talked about Communism. In ~~gaw~~ general, the children didn't like Communism. There were classmates who didn't say a word when we discussed Communism. I knew right away in such cases that there was something wrong with such boys. Their parents must have been Communists."

"In Budapest I had only a few friends. I had one friend who was a very nice boy. He studied very well, he never smoked, and ~~a~~ never used dirty words, and didn't fight with others. He lived

very close to my house. But with him we never talked about Communism."

Who did you not like at school?

"In the country I liked everybody. But in Budapest there was a boy in our class who failed before and was much older than we were. He always smoked and he was very fresh with the teacher."

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

"No. In our class everybody was just about the same."

Let's say there are two children of your age. One of them is the son of a man who once was a lawyer but is now a common laborer. The other is the son 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 like the first one as a friend because the second is surely a Communist and the family must be quite different, too. The first one comes from a better family who was before a 'sir'. This makes a great difference. Such parents teach their children entirely differently. Those children who had Communist parents in these days were extremely wild and undisciplined."

Did you have religious instructions at school or somewhere else?

"In the country there was no religious instruction. Our Hungarian teacher told us when the question came up that it was not important. We didn't behave well that day and he kept us after class. We wanted to go to religious class. He said that it was much more important to serve out our punishment than to go to religious class. I myself attended religious class, only I had to

drop it the last two years when I was in Budapest. Everybody who wanted to get a bad mark had ~~to~~ just to enroll in a religious class. But it was interesting that there were some big Communists too who attended the religious class. It was good and interesting to attend those religious classes because the priest told us interesting stories. But I had a book of my own, the bible--or what was its name--I used to read from that book by myself, too."

B. Did you tell your parents what happened in school?

"Yes, I told my parents if I didn't like something at school and I also if I got a good mark. I told them whether my teachers were just or unjust."

And did your parents talk to you about school or what you learned there?

"My parents told me that what I learned at school wasn't true. History was taught differently in the past. And they also told me that the poems were also changed, that new words had been put into the old poems. My mother told me these things and I believed them."

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

"No. I never did that. With my schoolmates at school in Budapest we talked about the movies and entertainments. In the country we talked about the war and the events of the war, as I told you."

D. What did you do after school hours?

"First I wrote my exercises. Then I would lie on the bed and start to learn. On Wednesdays I didn't have to learn too much; then I went to the movies. Sometimes on Sundays, too."

Did you have other amusements, too?

"Yes, we went to the zoo, to the amusement park, and

with my father to the _____ Stadium."

What did you read, what kind of books?

"I read mostly fairytales which I brought from the library. But now that I grew up I also read some other literature. I liked Toldi very much. (This is one of the greatest Hungarian epics) I read a lot of _____ novels. And in general I read small books. I didn't read such big books such as "The Count of Monte Cristo". I just didn't have the patience to read for so long. I'd rather go to the movies and see the stories there."

Did you take part in any sports?

"Oh yes, we played soccer and we swam. I liked fishing very much and different games with the ball."

Did you participate in the Pioneer Movement?

"In the country I belonged to the Pioneer movement, but I didn't like to go there. However, it was compulsory. We were forced to go. It was a sort of honor to be a member of the Pioneer movement. We had meetings twice a week after school. There they told us about the advantages and the beauty of the Pioneer life and what kind of decorations we could acquire there. I didn't like those meetings at all. They dwelled quite a lot on them. It was very bad. In Budapest I did not belong to the Pioneer movement. I didn't even have to wear the necktie."

IV.

Tell us something about your family. What did your mother and father do?

"My father tried all kinds of occupations. He was a convoy for awhile. Later on he was a hair-dresser, and then also a barber for men. He worked for the railroad, too, as a constructor. He had a very hard time. If ~~my~~ Grandfather hadn't made some money and helped us every ~~now~~ once in a while, we would have ~~been~~ been very bad off. This way we could get along somehow. My mother worked in a coffee shop. When I went home from school no one was there. Either they were together in my father's shop when he was a hairdresser or they both worked at different places. Even I helped them myself on Saturdays, and then I got a tip once in awhile from the ladies who came to the shop."

Where did you live in Budapest?

"We lived in the 7th district. We had one single room which had its entrance right off the corridor. There was nothing else, just one plain room. Better said, it was a dark hole. We had two beds in it, a wide sofa. I slept on that with my father, and a folding bed which was opened everyday for my mother. We didn't have any running water in the room. I had to carry the water from the court. The house had a toilet for all the tenants."

"After school I was always alone. My sister was in the country in a boarding school. Therefore, the best I could do was just to lie on the bed and learn my lessons and read afterwards. I never ate any warm food, nor any fruit. Only if Grandfather sent some from the country. It was so good to go home to grandfather once in awhile."

Did you help your mother with the housework?

"My mother went shopping early in the morning. Then

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she came home and cleaned the apartment. She cooked sometimes, very seldom. There was really not much to help with. The whole place was so ~~sm~~ small. There was just nothing to be done. If she had anything, I helped her."

V. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

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

"They never gave us anything else but a good mark if our lesson was good or we answered the question well."

B. Were you ever punished at school?

"In the country the teachers punished us physically all the time. There were even a few teachers in Budapest who hit the boys. But it wasn't allowed there. We were usually beaten because we smoked, or we hadn't done the lesson. The Russian teacher in Budapest was very nervous. Very often he hit the boys or tore up their copy books if they were not clean. The Hungarian teacher was strict, too."

C. Were you ever punished by your parents?

"No, my parents didn't punish me very much. I got a slap in the face from my father once every three years. If I smoked or once I took his cigarette and gave it to my friends. Then he gave me a few slaps. I got some light punishment from my mother too if I came home late or I didn't go to the shop where she sent me. Once in awhile I even got a slap in the face, but in general she only shouted at me or told me to kneel in the corner."

VI.

A. Now let me ask you a bit about the revolution? Can you tell us why the Hungarians started the revolution?

"Because the Hungarians couldn't adapt to their circumstances. Communism made too much progress, and the Hungarians didn't like Communism.

"I saw myself what happened. In the afternoon I had to go to the study circle of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ modeling. When I went to this class, I saw a small crowd on the street, but when I came back from class there were already many people gathered. Streetcars didn't run and I saw big trucks packed with people running back and forth. When I reached home I thought already that was something was under way. A little later we went out again with my father and mother. The streets were covered with people at that time. There was no traffic. The cars could move only very slowly. People walked all over the streets. We went to the Stalin statue. There were terribly many people there -- maybe half a million. Once in a while the strong light of a reflector passed through the crowd. Maybe the Communists did it. We waited there for long. It was already dark. Then, finally, a man climbed on the statue and stood on its hand. The other people brought a track and put a rope around the statue's neck and wanted to pull it down. But it didn't move. It didn't want to fall down. Then they brought welding pistols, and caught the legs of the statue under the knees, and started to pull the statue that way. However, the rope broke and the statue fell right on the street; only the boots remained with a huge rod of iron sticking out of them. Then they started to pull the statue from the ground. Then we wanted to go home. However, we heard from other people that they went to the State Studio and that there was already some trouble at the Studio. They talked about ten or twenty people who died. At the beginning, they said, the people didn't have any weapons with them, but the blue police later on gave them their guns and told them that they joined the revolution too. They carried the pistols in large cases. Later on, even from the ~~X~~ Culverts the barrels of guns stuck out. We just had to pull them out. There were weapons all over the streets. We went toward the Radio with my father, but stopped at the Athenaeum Building, which was the headquarters of the Communist paper. When we reached that building, the people already started to break its doors. From inside, the political ~~X~~ policeman, the AVH man, shouted to the people on the street. We stopped with my father just across the building under a doorway.

There was an old man near us who shot at the windows of the building with a machine gun. Some people up on the top of the building finally broke the huge Red Star with hammers after they tried to shoot it down in vain. After about three quarters of an hour, while the people continuously shot at the building, two Jamoeces ran out of the building. The people jumped on them and hit them on their heads, and I thought they would trample them to death, but there were so many people we couldn't see what happened. However, later on we saw that they were still alive, only they had no skin on their faces. One man hindered the others from killing them. They ran into the next street. However, there were a lot of wounded and dead around. The AVH continuously shot from the windows, and the people shot from the building. The street was covered high with blood. Later on, two tanks arrived, and everybody disappeared from the streets. We ran into the National Theatre. When they emerged from the building later, they were still shooting. Afterward we didn't risk any more. We went home. My mother was very afraid. During the following days I saw different things. I saw when an AVH man took the gun from a Freedom Fighter. The other Freedom Fighters watched the scene from nearby and when they saw into which house the AVH men went, and watched in which window they could see him, they started to shoot at that window. Later on they went into the house, but they were afraid to break into his apartment. They didn't know what kind of weapons he had there.

"When we went out to line up for bread, because from that time on my mother didn't let me go out alone, we saw many Russian tanks. By the way, I have to tell you that we could buy excellent bread at that time -- always fresh bread."

B. What impressed you the most during the revolution?

"I saw young boys of my age fighting, or even younger. I didn't want to die so soon. But I didn't know how stout, determined the people could be. This made the biggest impression on me -- how courageous the people were. A mother could recognize her four children only from the shoelaces, because the Russian tanks simply squelched those children. And still the people went on fighting."

VII.

What would you like to be when you grow up?

"I would like to learn first. At home I wanted to become a veterinarian, but here I don't know yet. I want to be a sportsman on the side, but of course this is not a chief occupation. Maybe I will become a doctor of medicine here. This is a good diploma, and doctors can make a lot of money here too. I wouldn't want to become a millionaire. I only would like to have \$10,000 or \$20,000 in the bank. You see, it's good to be here in America. We haven't even started yet to earn money really seriously, and still it is much better here than it was at home already."

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

"A good father should be strict. He shouldn't quarrel with the children, but he should keep the family in order. He should never hit the children on their heads. He should teach his son, to show him good characteristics and tell him interesting stories. As much as he can afford, he should buy good things for his son."

What is an ideal teacher like?

"He should teach the children to be clean and exact -- to keep their things in order, and the teacher should be strict with discipline."

What is a good mother like?

"This I don't know. She should watch her children, keep everything clean and put everything in order."

What are the three worst things a child can do?

"To steal, to break into a house, or to kill."

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

"He should be taught order and tidiness, serious behavior, and to have only good abilities and qualities."

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

"That he is a robber, he is a murderer, or he is dirty."

VIII. SPECIAL SECTION

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

"Great scientists, surely, but I don't know their names. Maybe Strauss, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ Semmelweis. I heard about what a great man he was. And the third one is Petofi. I am sure I won't mention anybody from Russia.

XWho do you think are the three greatest people in the world today?

"Eisenhower, I don't know anybody else."

Who do you think is the greatest living Hungarian?

There is no great living Hungarian now. Only the Communists have great men.

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

King St. Stephen: "He was the first king -- an old Hungarian mighty king.

King Mathias: "He was another great Hungarian king; one of the most honored and just of the kings. He never made any exceptions. He put all the bad people in prison. He put on a disguise and mixed among the population. He went to the judges, to the courts, and if the judgment wasn't right, then he made justice."

Rakoczi Ferenc the Second: "He was a Freedom fighter against the Hapsburgs. He defeated the German troops several times. This is how we learned it at school."

Sandor Petofi: "He is one of the greatest Hungarian poets. He has great works. He died also in the freedom fights, fighting against the Russian Czars. He was seen last, already dead, by a Russian officer."

Louis Kossuth: "He was a great man who held great speeches. He took part also in the war of independence. He gathered his own army."

Istvan Szechenyi: "I didn't learn about him but I heard that he was a great Hungarian. The famous Bath, the swimming pool, was named after him, also because he was a great man."

Ferenc Deak~~XXX~~, Teresia Maria, and Tabor Bethlen. "We didn't learn about all these three, but I know that they learned about them in the 8th grade."

Michael Tancsics: "We didn't learn about him in detail; only that he was out in prison but people loved him and therefore wanted to liberate him. A big crowd went for him and celebrated him."

George Dosza: "He was the leader of the Peasant Revolution, when the people went to fight with hoes and scythes because they didn't have any other weapons. At the end he was burned on an iron throne."

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

Joseph Mindszenty: "We didn't learn about him."

Imre Nagy: "I don't know anything about him. I heard only his name."

IX.

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

"The freedom of speech -- that the people are not imprisoned, put in jail, who tell the truth. At home in Hungary, even if somebody sang an old song, he was put in prison. However, I sang those songs -- many such songs which were not allowed to be sung. It was really so silly. There were a few songs which the people just didn't want to give up singing, and then the Communists changed the texts. Instead of "Germans," they put in "Russians," and so they sang these songs with the new texts."

What are the things you like most about the United States?

"The television, the cars, and the iceboxes."

What are the things you disapprove of in the United States?

"Oh, there are only a few, but maybe I will find something. Oh yes -- I don't like the shape of the modern shoes. They have such a pointed nose. I mean the point of the shoe; what we call ~~székely~~ this is Hungarian "nose."

THE END