

III.

A. "Tell me something about your school in Budapest" Which subjects did you take?

I started to attend the 6th grade in Fall 1956 at the district Public School. Our subjects were Natural History, History, maths, Hungarian language and reading, and from the 5th grade on we also had Russian- this was compulsory you know,- then we also had geography, calysthénics and singing.

"Tell me a little more about what you have been taught in history"

Well, first of all we learned about the stone age and all that had happened at that time, then we learned about the time when serfdom was still prevailing in Hungary, then about how Dozsa rebelled and fought for the freedom of the slaves. This was about all, since this was our first year when we were taught history."

"What were you taught in Russian?"

We had three Russian lessons every week.

"What did you learn in Hungarian?"

We read a lot from Peter Veres, his short stories, and all he wrote about his meeting with Rakosi and his working for him. Then we read a few poems also, the story of the 1848 revolution, animal stories and also stories about agriculture for instance.

I must tell you also that in the last year all songs which were mentioning Stalin or Rakosi were deleted from our notes.

Also we had discussions with our teacher. The one who was "headmaster" of the class.

"What did you discuss at such meetings?"

We discussed things that happened in the family, some children complained about their parents, that their dad was a drunk for instance, then the teacher told her how to handle the situation at home. We were also encouraged that for instance if we do not understand something at home, our parents, their behavior etc., we should ask the teacher about it, she will always explain everything and help us to understand.

Then we were told that the Americans are imperialists and want to conquer the world, and suchlike rot.

"Which was your favorite subject?"

I liked most natural history and geography, because I am interested in animal life and all sorts of places all over the world. Therefore, I was very much annoyed, you know- when I found out that half of our geography book was about the Soviet Union, and nothing about America, and very little about all other countries. We not only had to learn the geography

of the Soviet Union but also everything about their industrial development, trade, mining, etc.

"Who were your teachers, how many did you have?"

Our teachers were women, we had only one male teacher who taught us singing. Our class-headmistress taught us math and geography but we had an extra teacher for Russian language who taught nothen else but Russian.

"Did you like your teachers?"

Yes, we quite liked them, they were very strict with us all, but the headmistress for instance was like a second to us, always very nice. You know a classmate of mine with whom I still correspond wrote me that she too has left Hungary. The teachers were pretty fair with everybody, I remember that.

However, one of them who taught history must have been I am sure, - a communist.

"How did you know she was a communist?"

Well to begin with, she always praised the Russians, everything they did was all right, and she said that everything America does is wrong. She also used to say that life under the Horthy regime was something terrible.

I remember that our headmistress when I was in the 5th grade was a member of the communist party, but she became one only to keep her job. This one never talked like the other one.

"Which subject did you most dislike?"

We all hated Russian, whenever we had a Russian lesson coming, we chanted together "OOOH- Rosz" (which means "oh, how awful," this is a play on words because Russian is OROSZ in Hungarian).

"Did the teachers treat all children equally?"

I cannot say this, because those children who brought flowers or little presents for the teacher were always given a preferential treatment. But who on earth had the money for this? We certainly did not. But on the whole I can say that they were pretty fair with everybody.

"Who were your friends among your classmates?"

Three of us were very good friends, we lived in the same house and have attended the same school ever since the first grade. We always played together, and went on picnics together. The mother of one of the kids was a vegetable vendor at the municipal market, the other's worked as a secretary on some chemical plant, where her father also held a job and the father of the third was a bookkeeper at the Tata coal mines offices. We have heard

that this one was a member of the Communist party, but we did not care much as we knew he only did it to keep his job. The three of us talked everything over, and openly discussed things, but at school not, we did not care very much for the other classmates. We had one we particularly disliked, she was the kind of a girl who always wanted to impress everybody, was a busybody, a nosy one, a sneak. We had at school the "section leaders", I too was one. We had to see that our section behaves properly, and that the girls behave during hours and at intermissions. We also kept records of their marks which then were compared with those the teacher had. So it was very important how we classified the other kinds when it came to establishing the marks at the end of the terms.

Our marks went from 1-5. Mother told me that 12 years ago the marks were different, in fact just the reverse. 1 was the best, 5 the worst. Now 5 is the best.

"Did you look up to some of your classmates and for which reason?"

Yes, there were some we liked very much these were the ones who were the most helpful and who for instance if one of the kids had no bread for her second breakfast-break, shared it with her. There were only girls in our class, the boys were on a different floor, but even so we had lots of trouble with them, they were always up to some mischief.

You know, - I was quite amazed by the difference how young girls like myself behave and dress here as compared to what we did at home. After all I am still a child, and here girls who are younger than myself put on lipstick, paint their fingernails and toes, dress up like on stage and wear high heels. I really disapprove of all this. There is time enough to do it when you grow up, don't you think so? I am attending now the school for professional children. We are only 11 in the class and the school is coeducational. Here too, some of the girls behave really disgracefully with the boys. The other day a girl of 11, imagine she is younger than I am, - went behind a rock in Central Park and disappeared for quite some time when we were there for an outing with my class. When I asked the teacher whether she could not do something about it she said she will not interfere. Now, do you think this is right? I know one thing for sure, in Hungary we were not allowed to do such things, after all we are too young for this kind of thing. I think that it is right to be strict with children as our teachers were back home in Hungary. Are all these girls crazy? The other day, please forgive but I must tell you this, - I attended the performance of Tommy Sands at the Roxy, and you should have seen these teenagers, screaming like mad, behaving like a dog in heat, rolling their eyes, getting hysterics, just because that boy was singing. I also have seen that such young people marry here. They are really only children. At home it happened too that a girl of 14 got pregnant, but then she was expelled from school.

"Now let me ask you whether you had religious instruction at school?"

No miss, however, I attended religious instructions given

by a priest at a small chapel in our district, and made my first communion from the Rokus Chapel you know, I presume, where it is.

You know, mother had a much better education, at those times they learned so much more, you know she spoke several languages, and we were only taught Russian, what for?

B. "Did you discuss with your parents what happened at school?"

Of course, mother was like an elder sister to me, and I always told her everything that happened there, we had no secrets. You know she always told me how different everything is outside Hungary and how wonderful America must be, and at school we always heard only about Russia and that only there is every thing wonderful. And I can tell you quite frankly when I was a small girl, I myself believed it must be so. When I grew up, I myself found out that these wicked people were putting people in prison, killing them, for no reason whatsoever, or because they dared to say that they don't like Communists. So of course, I got fed up with all communist lies.

C. "At school did you talk about things that happened at home?"

Oh no, I was jolly careful about that. I remember an old lady whom we knew told me that two small children of about 7 and 8 were asked about their parents at school and they told the teacher that their parents dislike and hate the communists and do you know what happened to them? They were put in prison.

D. "Tell me something about your school routine"

Our school started at 8am and we were there till 1pm. Between classes we always had 10 minutes break, and at 10 we had our second breakfast break. Children whose parents were working stayed over at the day-school until evening or until picked up by parents. These parents had to pay 10 percent of their respective incomes for this, but these kids got breakfast, lunch, and dinner also at the day school. I went home after classes as I had my granny to look after me. However, I was during the whole summer in a summer camp from morning till evening.

"What sort of camp was this?"

This was the Pioneer camp. Every school had a camp-site at a large camping ground. We were taken out every day by a different teacher. Here in the forests we played games, we had a swimming pool got our breakfast, lunch and dinner. Mother paid about 12-14 forints per week for me for all the above. I was a member of the pioneers, and we always had to purchase stamps for our membership books, but with other wise we had not much advantages for being a Pioneer.

"Was this camp coeducational?"

Not our school's. We girls separated, but anyway we stayed

here only during the day. Boys were however, at different sites with their own schools.

"What else did you do in these camps besides sports?"

We had professional entertainers pretty of ten, prestidigitators, puppet shows, etc.

"Did you have any lectures to attend?"

No we did not have anything of this kind, only amusements.

"What did you read? Did you like reading?"

I loved reading very much and especially books about history. I read a book about the times when the Turks were still in Hungary, then about the Siege of Eger, books by Sigmund Moritz (popular Hungarian folk story writer; (Interviewer) also fiction but only novels written for young girls like me. I also liked to read short stories.

"What about movies?"

Oh we went very often to the movies, here in America, too, Mummy and I are great movie fans.

"What kind of movies did you see?"

We mostly went to the French and Italian movies because these were very very good, you know the Hungarian movies were not so perfect. And also mostly only in black and white. And we loved the color-pictures. Aren't those wonderful here? Especially the musical plays and revues. Oh boy, have you seen Funny Face? Then we ~~xxxx~~ have also seen a few Russian color pictures these were also very pretty.

"Did you participate in any sports?"

No except calysthénics at school that was all, I had my dancing after ~~xxxx~~ all.

"What did you play with your classmates?"

We played balls, skipped the rope, hide and seek, and suchlike games. Also mother taught us parlor games for instance giving the initials only of the musician, the initial of the opera and we had to find out who he was, what he wrote and his nationality.

IV. When asked about her family background subject told that she was a posthumus child, her father had been deported by the Nazis and never returned. She was told by her mother that he was salesman. Mother was a dancer, who - according to subject was all over Europe. Returned in 1940 from abroad and married. When father died she supported her child by doing all sorts of home craft work, and selling her valuables. Later she worked at cafeterias, night clubs, etc. However, their income did not seem to have been too much as the little girl said, "Sometimes I did not have the money to buy myself a roll for second breakfast."

Regarding their way of living, subject told that they had kept their old apartment, 3 rooms, bath, kitchen, and maids room. This latter and a large room they sublet, and kept the two other rooms for themselves. Grandmother, mother and child slept in the same room, each had her own bed, and used the other room as a living room. The child's grandmother did the housework, and she helped her a great deal cleaning the apartment, washing dishes and doing marketing. It was also her grandmother who took care of her after school.

When asked on what terms she was with her grandmother respondent said:

"Well you see she was just like all other grandmas, not like mummy who was a real friend of mine. Nevertheless I treated her with the respect that was due."

V.

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

We received no rewards, but got praised whenever we did some good homework, or also for instance when our work has improved.

B. "Were you punished at school?"

We were punished at school for instance if we talked during hours and did not pay attention, or if we did not study properly and got bad marks. We then were sent out from class and had to stand in the corridor, where the headmaster could see us and this was a great shame. Then we also were put into the corner, or had to write down 100 or 200 times what we have done wrong. Also the teacher could write a report to the parents. ~~this~~ This had to be brought back within a day signed by the parents.

C. "Were you punished by your mother?"

Of course, she punished me whenever I did something wrong, lied to her, or did not tell her everything. She punished me by depriving me of something I cared much for, for instance, ice cream, or did not let me go to the cinema with her. I think that such punishments hurt even more and last longer than if you beat up a child, because a beating hurts only for a short time, but it is really awful to sit at home the whole afternoon when you long to go to a movie.

VI. "Now let me ask you something about the revolution"
 A. Can you tell me why the Hungarians started the revolution?

I think it must have been because the Hungarians were fied up ~~wixrk~~ with communism and did not see eye to eye with the government that was oppressing everybody, putting people in prison and killing them.

"Did anybody tell you this?"

Oh no, I could see for myself couldn't I? After all we always were told we never had it so good, and we have to be grateful for ~~the~~ communism for every thing. And in fact what did we ~~have~~? Nothing? Do you know that a month before the revolution, friends of my mother told her about something that is cooking in town and people getting very ~~rxsitz~~ restless.

B. Respondent's impression regarding the revolution and her activities during that time did not amount to much as she spent most of her time in the cellar of the a-partment house where she lived. Here- as she said- they were mostly scared by the rumblings of the tanks and being found out- at the beginning- that they listened to RFE.

VII.

When asked what she would like to be when she grows up, this young kid had very definite ideas: "I want to make a career on the stage as a dancer. But of course," she added wistfully, "I still have to learn a lot."

VIII.

Given the names of famous Huggarians, respondents answers were as follows:

St. Stephen: he was the first king of Huhgary

King Mathias: he lived in the 14th century, son of John Hunyadi, whose wife was an Italian princess. He was very much liked by the people and he died young.

Francis Rakoczi the 2nd: he was the leader of the Kuruc people and he lived around 1700.

Sandor Petofi: born in 1823 as the son of a butcher and a maid, he became the greatest and most popular Hungarian poet. He was killed in the battle against the Russians in 1848 and his body still has not been found.

Louis Kossuth: leader fo the 1848 revolution in Hungary. He was also here in America. He wanted the Hungarians to

be free. He died at the age of 93 here in America.

Stephen Szechenyi (this name I added to the list of famous Hungarians, as Dr. Gleitman suggested I should do if I remembered somebody else; Interviewer). He also was contemporary of Kossuth and Petofi. A famous Hungarian count who distributed his riches for the nation. He also had the famous Chain Bridge built and gave extensively to many public institutions.

On Maria Theresa subject did not hear anything at all.

Neither on Gábor Bethlen

On Michael Tancsics, however, she rattled off the story, as evidently taught at school: M.T. lived also in the same period as Petofi. He was put into prison because he was inciting the people against the rulers. He wrote a book which he did not submit to the censors (at that time Austrian, Interviewer). When the people demonstrated in front of the prison he was finally released.

On George Dozsa too, she very readily answered: he stood up for the rights of the serf against the landowners, was captured and burned alive. He lived in the Middle Ages at the time of the Crusades.

Cardinal Mindszenty: He was the Primate of Hungary, and was kept in prison these past 12 years by the communists. I have heard about him only when the revolution broke out, when he was released by three Hungarian soldiers. Now he is at the American Legation where the soldiers of the American Marine (she probably meant Marines) and the Army are guarding him. He is of course an enemy of the Kadar government.

On Imre Nagy she had the following to say: he was our Prime Minister in 1953 but only for 3 months, because the communist party dismissed him. He was a really good Prime Minister, because at that time he wanted Hungary to be neutral like Austria, and everything at that time began to improve.

During the revolution the people called him back, and that gangster Kadar has dismissed him. Nagy is quite an old man, he wears glasses and has gray hair.

When I told the subject that the interview is finished, she was quite disappointed and said, "but you never asked me anything about America!" I would like to tell you my feelings also. (it seems that the child's mother prompted her)

Therefore I asked her what she thought of this country and what she liked and what she disliked. Also whether she wants to return to Hungary.

She said:

I think that America is the greatest country in the world

and more progressive than the European countries are. I hope she will remain a free country forever.
(This is evidently inspired by her mother)

I like very much the way how our teachers at school treat the kids much like a good friend and that they are not so strict with ~~them~~ us as back home. It seems to me that here the woman wears the pants, and I like it.

I was greatly impressed by the kindheartedness of the people here and how helpful they are every where.

I do not like, however, how the young girls of my age behave, and their relationship with the boys, I think is disgusting.

When I am a citizen I will return to Hungary, even if it is not yet free, because I want to see my old granny who is 72 now- if she lives then- before she dies. When I am a citizen I hope I shall be allowed to go into Hungary, Don't you think?

THE END