

We also had composition and written math. texts to solve. These were always at a separate hour, I mean not at the Hungarian grammar or math. classes."

"What about history?" "This only the 5th grader had, we did not yet have to study history"

"And Russian?" "We didn't have to learn it yet, this subject came at the 5th grade too."

"Which were your favourite subjects?"

"I liked best mathematics, and gymn of course."

"Tell me why you liked maths. and gymn?" "You see I knew maths. pretty well, so it is natural after all that I like it. Isn't it? As for the gymn, I liked it best because we were allowed to play around a great deal. I remember now, I also loved drawing, because we were always allowed to draw what we wanted, there was no compulsion about it."

"What about your teachers? How many did you have? Were they male or female teachers?"

"We had three teachers, all of them were ladies, the school Master only was a man."

"One of them was what we called the class teacher, she taught us maths., composition, Hungarian, drawing. Another teacher taught singing and yet another gymn. There was one thing I did not like and that was that I had different teachers every year."

"Tell me now something more about your teachers." (I let the boy ramble along, as if he were talking to himself, sort of monologue rather, and only now and then I prodded him to go on)

You see the "class teacher" was a funny lady, she was very moody, for no reason whatsoever, she would fly into a temper, and next we knew she was all lovey dovey again. She also had a very swift hand, and doled out slaps left and right on our faces and our rear end too, whenever we annoyed her too much. Because we did, sure we did, we were pretty naughty, you know. You see it was not permitted to beat children but she did not care what was allowed and what was not."

I asked him about the age of this teacher which he gave as around 40 the mother collaborated this statement

"You see she was a good teacher, and explained things well but we had to be quick with our answers or else she was much annoyed."

"The lady who taught us singing was nice with us, but strict concerning our books and notes. We always had to have them with us, anybody who forgot them at home, was punished. I had no notes or book on singing, because books were very expensive and I did not get anyone from school. You see it was like this, we were issued slips by the school, and given books by the school on the strength of these slips. However, if the supply ran out, this was the end of it, no more books. So I had to share a book with my classmate, who sat next to me. You know, our school benches were in a row, (not like here) and there was only a steel bar between each seat, so it was easy to share a book.

"We all loved the gym teacher, because she let us play and fool around a great deal. We had gym once a week, we had athletics, played soccer, or other games, mostly in the school hall or outside in the yard."

"We disliked the "Schoolmaster" (Headmaster) very much, he was very strict and very quick in sending reports to the parents. After three such report-cards, which we called "report-card with the big seal" you were expelled from school. Our teachers too sent reports to our parents, whenever something was wrong, but these reports were not dangerous. There was also a lady headmistress, this one we liked because she was very nice with us always."

"Did you know that any of your teachers was a communist?"

"No I really do not know, and could not say for sure, but I was told by my cousin that many teachers had to speak as if they were communists but were not in their hearts. I remember she told me they had a teacher who at school always was praising communism, and yet she always met her at the Sunday mass."

" " all teachers had their pets, I believe mostly they were nice to kids whose parents they knew."

"What about your classmates?" "Who were your friends?"

"Of course, I had very good friends at school, and they were real good ones too, because I took good care of whom I chose to become my friends. These friends were reliable and stood

by always, not like some of the classmates who said they are my friends and a few minutes later threw stones at me. How can you trust such people? My friends and myself we were the only ones who attended religion classes also, and so we became very good friends. But even so, not even with these did I speak about politics. I talked to them about everything else but not politics.

"Why?"

"You see my parents told me not to, and I knew if I give away anything they might be put in prison. You see my mother was in prison once."

"Were there any communists among your classmates?"

"I knew of two, whose parents were communists. These two always praised communism, how wonderful it is, and also spoke about the Pioneer movement as something wonderful. They always tried to tell us that we must be proud of being pioneers, and what sort of duties we have since we are pioneers."

"The boys we looked up to were those who were the best students and top grades and were respected by all of us."

"There is something else I want to tell you; my four best friends, about whom I spoke before, we never told on each other. But you should have known the rest of the class, how mean they were, running always to the teacher to report on the others for all sort of silly little things."

"Did you have any religious instruction at school?"

"Yes we had if our parents wanted us to attend. My parents signed me up to these instructions. There were 52 of us in one class, but only five of us attended religious instruction. There was a priest who came to our school twice weekly."

(The kids mother told me that every year when the children were registered, the parents had to declare that they wanted or wanted not their children to attend religious instruction. This registration always took place in presence of a communist official, and parents were under duress regarding their decision. There was a great deal of disussion going on at those registrations, and very few parents were able to stand up against it.)

B.

"Did you tell your parents what happened at school?"

"How could I have? You see my dad, and mom came home very late from work and I saw them very seldom." I even had to go and seek help with my home work from a girl older than myself, who lived in the same house where we lived."

"Also, you know, there was not much reason in telling things that happened at school to my parents, because I knew that these things were mostly a pack of lies, and I believed only what my parents told me. Do you know how stupid they were, expecting us to believe that for instance it was a Russian who invented the steam engine? Now what do you say to this? I know it was an Englishman, Fulton by name."

C.

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

"I think I told you already that I did not, and that my parents warned me not to."

D.

"What did you do after school hours?"

"First of all I did my home work, but sometimes it also happened that I started to play first and do my homework after, however, Mummy did not like this system at all."

"What games did you play?"

"We nearly always played soccer. You see where I lived there were a couple of boys, who were ardent soccer fans. Even though they were older than myself, they always let me play with them. We also played different ball games, but soccer came always first. You know that the Hungarians were champions in soccer, don't you?"

"Did you read and what kind of books?"

I read mostly the books by Jules Verne, then the books about Tarzan, also Hungarian fairytales. My parents bought me these books. Once I was away for the Summer in the country, and there I subscribed to a circulating library, but I gave it up to get books from there because I found out that they had only communist books, printed specially for the Pioneer members, they were sort of fairytales. But I did not like them."

"Did you ever go to the movies?"

"Og yes, and very often too. You see being a member of the pioneers we had our membership card, and were given a movie pass with which we had to pay 1 frt. only for admission. I liked best the comedies, where you could laugh a great deal.

"What about the Pioneers, you mentioned you belonged to them?"

"You know you had to belong, more or less, and they promised always a great many privileges that went with this membership. We received special caps to wear and in the first year blue, and in the third year red neckties. We also had to take the oath."

"Can you remember the text of the oath I wonder?"

I am not sure I remember all, but it went like this: "I here you had to say your name - Geza Bastanov, pioneer of the Hungarian Peoples Republic I hereby vow, that with all my strength I shall serve the interests of the Hungarian Peoples Republic". Then there was also something about Rakosi on this oath, but I cannot remember any more. We also had to make a statement, when we left the Pioneers. Because you see on October 18th, a week before the revolution broke out, all of a sudden, we were told that we were free to quit. Even so that the leader of the Pioneers at our school, a woman, threatened us with the consequences, after the first three or two stood up and declared that they want to quit, the others got encouraged and finally 28 of us left. We had, of course to return all our insignia, badges neckties etc. The others who remained, were promised free movies etc. but the promises were not fulfilled, and we had a good laugh at their expense." (I asked the kid whether or not at the end of the oath they said "so help me God" and he was most emphatic about it that they did not)

"What can you tell me about the day schools?"

You know, all kids whose both parents had to work, attended these schools. We went there after school hours, regardless which school shift we attended, you see we were constantly shifted around and had classes sometimes in the morning sometimes in the afternoon. Here first of all we had to do some of our home work, but we mostly played, we liked it better of course. I liked to play chess, and did a great deal too. Then we also had other indoor games, parlorgames etc. The Day Schools were open even during the vacation time and also on

holidays, which was quite good for our parents as they had to work all year round and on holidays also as they worked on a bus and these run every day. We received our lunch or dinner also at the dayschool, but my parents had to pay for it. This was always figured out according to the income of the parent. I paid 24 forints per week."

IV. "I shall ask you now about your family, what did your father and your mother do for a living?"

"Father drove a bus, and mother was a bus conductor."

"Where did you live?"

We lived in Buda part of the city, I expect you know where the Sashegy is? Well right below the mountain there we lived. One of my grandmothers lived with us, and she did most of the housework, Mummy only when she was at home on days when she had to be on the night shift on the bus. I did not help in the kitchen, the women would not let me do this, but I helped to clean the apartment now and then and mostly helped in the garden as each of the lodgers had a small part of the communal garden assigned. We grew a few flowers, not much though."

V. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS%

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

"We were rewarded for good marks. The teachers gave us small cards with a big 5 on it (this is the top mark) and when we had five of these small ones we got a 5 larger one and after five of these we got a large diploma. At the end of the school-year we also received books. There was a boy who at the beginning of the school year had the lowest marks, and by the end of the year had straight 5-s. He got such a book, but I did not, despite that I too had straight 5-s. But I was told that he got the book, because it was a greater effort for him to improve so much than for myself, who always was a pretty good scholar."

B. "Where you punished at school?"

"Of course we were, as I told you, our teachers did not care much whether or not physical punishment was abandoned. If they wanted, they doled out a beating. We also were made to kneel in the corner or to stand up for a certain time. We had to write down for instance 100 or 50 times our offence such as: I was rude with a smaller boy" I did not learn my lesson'etc. *KL*

Also as I told you there were the reports the teachers sent to the parents. For bad conduct we had to take home, what they called "blue" cards signed by the headmaster.

C. "Did your parents punish you?"

"Of course they did, it was usually Dad who gave me a good thrashing. But for minor offenses I was locked up in the apartment, not allowed to go out to play soccer; I was mostly punished for not coming home after school, sometimes I forgot the time, or coming late from play. Also once I was terribly bawled out for having pilyed in a cave that during the war was an underground air raid shelter, and which was supposed to be dangerous."

VI. "Tell me now something about the revolution."

A. "Can you tell me why the Hungarians started the revolution?"

It was because the university students were fed up and could no longer bear the slavery. (I asked him who told him this?) It was a generally known fact, and the reason was that everybody was fed up by the oppression.

B. "What impressed you most during the revolution?"

"The most wonderful thing was when the news came that the Russians are withdrawing from Hungary. But you know, he added, - unfortunately this was not true."

C. "Did you take part in the revolution?"

"I don't quite know what you mean? I did not fight, that's true but whenever I could I escaped from home, and this was easy at that time because my parents were never at home at that time and I stayed with grandmother, I was roaming in the streets. Climbed on tanks and trucks, waved flags, the old Hungarian one, and kept myself shouting hoarse. I also was there at the Parliament Buildings when we yelled for Prime Minister Nagy to come and speak to the crowd. The slogans we shouted most were "come on, join us in the fight" and such things. Whenever we heard shooting, we went out, but I feared the tanks, and hid well whenever one was approaching. Once I found handgranades in a doorway, and took these apart. Once I have seen how the Russians started to shoot into a crowd that was queeing up for bread. You should have seen how people scammed for shelter.

When asked for the motives, he said: "I wanted to see everything that was happening and managed to see quite a lot. One day I saw a whole armored regiment, 48 tanks, 32 armored cars and 3 big anti aircraft guns when I was peering out from our door-was. We then started yelling at them "What the hell did you come for?"

Regarding the reaction of parents to this behavior, he said: "Of course I got a good spanking, whenever they found out because as they told me, they were fearing for my life."

VII. "What would you like to be when you grow up?"

"I would like to become either an electro-engineer, or a mechanical engineer."

When asked for the reasons: "I am terribly interested in all sorts of machines, and machinery, you know I take all watches apart (I asked him whether he can put them together again, upon which he answered with a laugh: "well of course not YET")

VIII. SPECIAL SECTION

When asked about the different famous Hungarians, his answers were very scanty. He apologized handsomely for not being able to give answers on many of them, but he said "you see we did not yet learn history at school, and thus I don't know much."

Of St. Stephen: "He was a king, I have seen his mummified right hand once." ... King Matthias: "I have read about this king, he was the one who always was just, he was known for this"....

On Francis Rakocsi II: "I have seen a movie made on his life and his battles". On Alexander Petofi: "I had a little book at home with his poems, and read it. He died in 1848 at Segesvar Regarding Louis Kossuth: "He too was a freedom fighter, he died in Italy."

About Istvan Szechenyi he did not know, never heard his name and about Francis Deak he could only tell that he must have been a celebrity as there was a square name after him, in Budapest. He did not hear about Maria Theresia either, nor about Gabor Bethlen.

Regarding Michael Tancsics, he volunteered the information that he too fought in 1848 when he was liberated from prison, and he added that they read something about him at school. Amazingly enough, the boy-contrary to other kids- did not know a thing about George Dozza.

In reference to Mindszenty, he said that he was a famous priest who was liberated by the freedom fighters during the revolution.



All he knew about Horthy was that he once came into Hungary riding a white stallion and having had a lot of shiny medals on his breast.

Regarding Imre Nagy, he remarked that he was there when he spoke from the balcony at Parliament and asked everybody to go home and resume work; he added that he also heard that he fled to the Yugoslav Embassy, where from he was abducted and taken prisoner by the Russians.