

INTRODUCTION: Respondent was recommended for interview in education and student life by one of his schoolmates in the Innsbruck Hungarian gymnasium. This schoolmate was interviewed in Innsbruck (see No.408). Respondent was described as a very intelligent boy who has interesting things to say about his experiences as student in the Jozsef Katona gymnasium in Kecskeket.

Interviewer asked respondent first a few questions about respondent's opinion and experiences during the revolution.

The revolution was a surprise. There was relaxation no doubt, especially since the 20th Party Congress in 1956. We were hopeful that something will happen, you could not live without hope. On the other hand we distrusted also the regime and we did not dare to hope too much, in order not to be too much disappointed if changes we have hoped for would not come true. The topic of change was very much in the air. In the school too, one of our teachers regularly brought the Irodalmi Ujsag into the classroom and called our attention to some of the articles in the paper. I remember also that we were talking alot about Imre Nagy. We trusted him, altho we knew that he is a communist. We trusted him because he was a Hungarian not a Jew. The top Communists like Rakosi, Gerö, or Hegedus, were not only Jews but they were Russian Communists. We could not think of them as Hungarians. We remembered also the gov't Imre Nagy was the Prime Minister of in 1953. This was the first experience of a change for the better under the communists and the opinion was that would Nagy form a gov't again, ood changes would come.

My experiences during the Revolution were not very interesting. Of course on October 23rd, when we heard about the happenings in Budapest in the radio, it filled us with excitement. On Oct 24th we were back in school, but later that day school was dismissed and I went home to my parents in Lajosmizse. When I left Kecskemet crowds were milling in the streets and demonstrators had pulled down the Russian monument. By contrast, when I arrived to Lajosmizse life there was quiet. Also, the change in Lajosmizse was rather quiet. A Revolutionary Council has been elected, a National Guard has been formed. At night the members of the National Guard patrolled the streets. I was on duty too, one night, but I did not wear arms. I made a trip with my father to Budapest after the victory of the Revolution. I took walks on the streets of the capital, but this was during the days when Budapest was quiet and I did not have any particular experience there. On the day of the Russian aggression, on Nov 4th, we were already back in Lajosmizse. There was no fighting in Lajosmizse. The AVO troops came back a day or two later. Some Russian troops came and went, but altho there were no fightings in our vicinity, the population was terror stricken. My father was of the opinion that we must leave the country. I agreed with him, while my mother thought that we should stay, because we could never get used to life abroad. But fear took hold of my mother too, when we heard about the arrests and here I should interject that my father had been arrested in Feb 1956 and he was released only on the eve of the Revolution.

It is not quite clear to me why my father was arrested. It was something about a letter that someone has written abroad, describing conditions inside Hungary and my father was involved in this letter affair. It was fear of arrest that drove us out of our fatherland.

Interviewer asked respondent about his school experiences. First, about relationship between students and teachers:

There weren't many communists among my teachers; in the whole gymnasium there were perhaps 4 or 5 communists on the faculty. But I should add that they were communists altho they were Hungarians. They were no Jews. The director of the gymnasium himself was of course a communist. He could not have been director had he not been a communist. His name was Adorjan Szabo. Among my teachers who were communists were Klekes Berecky and Madarasz. I was student in the so-called C-Section, which was a Russian Section, so called. It was so called because we learned Russian 7 periods a week. It was the section for the better students. It was the rule that the good students were studying in the Russian Section. But altho we were students in the Russian Section, we did not call our teachers comrades. We called them Tanarur. The order was that we should call our teachers comrades, but we paid no attention to this. From time to time we were reminded. The director issued orders to this effect and the teachers announced it in the class. But they themselves did not care to keep this rule. Not even the communist teachers. The director of the gymnasium and school inspectors often visited our classes.

During inspection time we used sometimes the word "Comrade" in addressing our teachers, but even then we called them often just Tanarur. The inspection laid more stress on what we were learning, whether our notebooks correspond to the textbooks. In other words whether we are not taught differently than the textbook prescribed it. As for political indoctrination, of course all the textbooks were written from the point of view of materialist, Marxist, anti-capitalist philosophy. Hungarian literature and history was taught in a way that the class conflict was emphasized. Also, biology stressed the communist ideas. The non-communist teachers lectured according to the textbooks, but they made us feel rather often that they do not believe in what they are saying. The derisive smile on the teachers' face betrayed very often what they had really ~~taught~~ ^{thought.} Also the students quite often allowed themselves cynical remarks such as "This was assuredly invented by the Soviets" The whole class burst out in a big laugh, but the teacher did not say a word. He behaved as if he did not know what was going on. In all fairness to our communist teachers I must say that they were good people and good teachers. They must have been communists by conviction, by idealism. I would mention in particular Madarasz, one of the communist teachers. He lived in real misery. He had 5 children. He worked hard. His clothes were worn out. He was certainly no privileged member of the society, on the contrary.

While saying all this I am aware that perhaps our school was not a typical one, but I think it is the more interesting what happened in our school. As for the effect of **Marxist indoctrination** on the students, many students were of the view that Communism is a good idea, but not a practicable one. What we thought is good in Communism were the following: The idea of equality, general welfare, freedom for all. Of course the communist regime did not follow these ideals. What the regime did was exactly the opposite of these ideals. I would say that Communism as it was practiced was the very opposite of what it supposedly was to be. In any case, the communist issue was no center of interest in the class life. We were talking about Communism here and there, but there were no heated debates. It was common consensus among us that what we really wanted was to get rid of Communism. I could not say what was it we actually wanted to have instead of the communist regime, we did not have any precise notions on that. Perhaps we did not even care what would follow once Communism would be gone. Of course, had we gotten rid of Communism, we would have cared more for what had followed it. This state of mind of the students was greatly influenced by their families. The central idea of family life was the expectation of some change, but here again I could not say what was expected from a change. Anything was thought to be better than Communism. Among the teachers the greatest influence on me was exercised by my room-teacher, who was a woman.

Her name was Mrs. Tibor Szabo. No relation to the director whose name was Szabo too. She was a real idealist. She worked for our good and she instilled in us the spirit of idealism. I think I owe to her much. She impressed me with the idea that knowledge is a great treasure and that to be more perfect is the greatest ideal man can follow.

Interviewer asked x respondent to say something about relations among students:

Relations among students were friendly, comradely, even now, after I left Hungary I maintain close touch with my former classmates. I am namely the only member of my class who fled to the West. In one of the letters I received recently, I was told that 2 of the students in our class are scoundrels. What the letter writer probably meant was that they were Communists. He probably referred to 2 boys whom we knew as Communistically inclined, but as far as I remember they were good chaps. One of the two was [REDACTED], son of a Communist Party member. The other was [REDACTED]. He came from a terrible family. His father was a drunkard and his mother did not look after him at all. Both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] often made communist pronouncements. I remember a few debates we had with them. But these debates actually were not violent ones. As I have said, Communism was no central issue in our student life.

Interviewer asked respondent to say something about the relationship between family and school:

I don't know of any conflict between my family experiences and school experiences. I realize of course, that my family was somewhat different from the others. I was the only child and relations within the family were very warm, very intimate. In other families boys and girls were very often neglected by the parents. Both my father and mother had great influence on me. My father was a very religious man. He was Catholic and so was my mother too. But my mother was not religious at all. She was almost an atheist. Her atheism had nothing to do with the communist regime, it was not developed under the communist influence. She was a sceptic. She often said "There is no God. The real religion is inside." Incidentally, my mother was an elementary teacher in **Lajosmizse** and a very good teacher at that. I followed my father and I was very religious myself. But this did not cause any conflicts with my mother. She never objected to my going to the church, while I often urged her to go to church, which she did not do very often. I adored both my father and mother, but my father in particular had great influence on me. He was in a way a strange man. I even wouldn't know what to call his occupation. He had a degree, the doctor of Juris prudence. Before the war he was working in the office of a catholic newspaper in Budapest, **Nemzeti Ujsag**. But not as a newspaperman. His job was administrative.

He held a job also in the Ministry of War. Later he became a businessman. He was in the lumber business. During the second World War he was doing military service. As he often said he had the misfortune to be called in more often than anyone else. He was on the Russian front and towards the end of the war he was taken prisoner in the vicinity of Eger in Hungary. He was a Russian prisoner of war for three years. When he came back he was in the lumber business again. Later, at the railways and then he worked at the VITUKI, an abbreviation for Hungarian Hydrological Research Institute. He held his job with the VITUKI until Feb '56, when he was arrested. My father was a very friendly man, everyone likes him. He has no enemies. He had a very optimistic nature and people like him for his optimism. But altho my father had perhaps greater influence on me, I adored my mother too. She awakened in me interest in the work of the great Hungarian patriot of the 19th century, Stephen Szechenyi. My mother adored Szechenyi. She thought of him not only as ^{the} greatest Hungarian, but the most sober Hungarian and she thought that this is what the Hungarians need - sobriety. She believed in evolutionary progress, in peaceful reforms, in gradualism and Szechenyi was her idol. Szechenyi stood for all that.

Interviewer asked respondent to tell something about his patriotism, and nationalist feelings:

"I am a Hungarian patriot, but I never experienced the extreme feelings of chauvinism. At home I did not receive such influences and of course in the school we did not receive chauvinistic education either. But I would like to say about the school that even the communist teachers stressed the fact that we are Hungarians. We were told on the other hand not to be excessive in our nationalist feelings. I do realize that the Hungarian nation has both great virtues and great faults. I would come back to Szechenyi. I think he best expressed what is good and what is bad in the Hungarian nation. During the revolution I remember there was great nationalist enthusiasm. I remember my father saying that the Hungarians proved themselves a braver nation than any of the others under Communist rule. When the revolution was victorious, my father expressed also the view that on the basis of our achievement we may improve our standing in the world to the extent that we may even receive territories which were taken away from us by our neighbors. He spoke about the old frontiers of Hungary."(Interviewer's Note: Upon probing respondent what he thought of the historic frontiers of Hungary, he said:) "Well, as a matter of fact, even though we were not taught at all to believe in a 1000-Year Hungary, actually we considered old Hungary as a perfect creation of nature. Historic Hungary formed a geographic unit. My opinion is that we are entitled to get back those territories from our neighbors, on which Hungarians are living.

But I believe also in a broader union with our neighbors, in a sort of federation, Danubian Federation."

Interviewer asked respondent to say something about his friends:

"I had two good friends. One was my friend since my childhood, the other I met in the gymnasium. They both were like myself, idealists. We liked to discuss such subjects as the problem of God, religion, marriage. We spoke less about political subjects, but if we did, we were cursing the Russians, that was most of the time what it amounted to. We spoke little of Communism or Marxism, but if we did we criticized it. We, all the three of us, believed that the best ideology is ~~Christianity~~ Christianity, ~~that is~~ ^{that is} ~~Christianity~~ with social responsibility, with a sense of responsibility towards the problems of the modern society. We were very keen in understanding what the social problems of the modern world are. I would perhaps call our ideology Christian Socialism. As I have said my Christian views were mostly instilled in me by my father. He talked a lot about God. Also my room-teacher, Mrs. Szabo, I have been talking about, had similar influence on me. Altho I would point out that she was no Catholic at all. She belonged to the Reformed Church. But she somehow strengthened in me the same influence my father had on me, altho Mrs. Szabo was not particularly religious, but she strengthened this sort of idealism in me, which I derived from my father's influence and my father's way of thinking about God and Christianity.

Interviewer asked respondent to say something about the Jewish question in Hungary, in particular about anti-Semitism:

"There were no Jews in my class and I never had any Jewish friends. I remember, however, that during the War my parents talked about the persecution of the Jews and they condemned it. On the other hand I must say that we young people were all anti-Semitic. The reason was, I think, that most of the good jobs in Hungary under the Communists were in Jewish hands. I should add that according to my experience in the West the situation is almost the same. The Jews control the money. I have no evidence that this is so, but in all frankness I do believe that it is so. "

Interviewer asked respondent whether he had any experiences with the DISZ.

"I was a member of the DISZ, as all of us were. I did not like the DISZ activities and I would say that they were in general not popular. There was dancing in the DISZ Club. I was rather shy and I did not participate much in these activities." (Interviewer's Note: Probing the respondent whether he could tell more about what went on in the DISZ Club, respondent answered:)

"The DISZ Club offered all sorts of entertainment to the students. It was the policy of the regime, I believe, to make the students into loyal supporters of the regime by offering them these entertainments. I know that there was a time when they offered even liquor in the DISZ Club. Later only fruit-juice was served.

I know also that in the DISZ Club boys and girls were free to do whatever they liked. There was no control. But I don't have any knowledge of sexual intercourse between boys and girls in the DISZ Club. I do know because I can speak from personal experience, that during the dance parties it has been an accepted custom to dance as closely as you could. Speaking about relationship between boys and girls in general, I would say that we were on comradely terms. But it was too informal. I did not like it. I think these new customs destroyed the ideal of womanhood."

Interviewer asked respondent what he would like to become:

"I would like to choose a profession in which I can serve the society. Perhaps I should choose between becoming a doctor, a teacher or a priest."

Interviewer asked respondent what he thinks of Hungary's future:

"I envisage a socialist Christian Hungary. I don't know ^{this is} whether/a possibility, but this is what I would like to see Hungary to become in the future. There should be no big estates, no caste system, I reject the social and economic system under which Hungary lived in the past. God beware to bring back the past. "

INTERVIEWER'S RATING: Respondent is an intelligent boy, somewhat slow in expressing himself, but he gives considerable effort to express himself accurately. Since he is not particularly articulate, he has considerable trouble in speaking the precise way he evidently is trying to speak. He is frank, he was cooperative, rapport was excellent. However, it seems to me that he knows relatively little about the life of others. He is an introvert, he is a sensitive boy, he is, I would say, a unique case rather than a typical one.