

CHILD INTERVIEW

CH - 20-M

P

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Interviewer:

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I. CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This kid was one of the most charming subjects I had. He is the only son of a former career officer, and his parents seemed to have always found time to give him much of their time and tenderly loving care, despite the fact that both were working.

The boy is maybe precocious, but in a sweet and appealing way. I had no difficulty in getting his answers, and had nothing to explain. He is bright, alert, serious and intelligent. He has very good manners, soft spoken; his appearance is clean, and well groomed.

His ambition is to become an aeronautic engineer. Within a jiffy he made a couple of minutely drawn rocket propelled cars and planes, quite correct technically, and also a Cow-Boy, in Durer style anatomically correct and showing great talent.

He has a strong sense of justice and sets a very high moral standard. His attitude toward most things reflect of course his parents' attitude.

II. PERSONAL INVENTORY

1. Age: 8 years

2. Sex: Male

3. Religion: Evangelical

4. Respondent was born at Fuzesgarmat and lived there for 21/2 years, the rest of his life he spent in Budapest, except for the period of their deportation. The family lived at the Obuda district, on the right side of the Danube.

5. Attended elementary school in same district, started in the second grade when the revolution broke out, he was admitted to the 3rd grade here in the States.

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6. Both parents of his are here with him in the US. Grandparents remained in Hungary. At present the family lives at 83rd St. on East Side, where they have a three room apartment, plus kitchen and bath. Both parents are working, father at the Schwartz toy factory and mother at the American Express Broadway office. (foreign checks dept.)

III. THE SCHOOL SITUATION

A. "What can you tell me about your school in Hungary?
"Which subjects did you have?"

"You see Auntie, it was very difficult for the teachers in Hungary to teach us, because they always had to say that we were "liberated" by the Russians and what's more they were controlled whether or not they were teaching us this."

"Our subjects were arithmetics, reading, writing, singing "conversation" and gymnastics."

"What did you talk about in your "conversation" classes?"

"Mostly it was about natural history, about electricity the water power, and such things, but also we were told much about the generosity of the Russian army, how they fed us etc. and such lies."

"And what about your reading classes?"

"Here we read fairytales, and also poems by Petofi. But do you know that they had the cheek to alter his poems, or to omit a line now and then."

"How did you know this?"

"Grand-Dad used to read his poems to me, and I have found out for myself that our Reader did not contain his complete poems."

"What kind of songs did you sing in class?"

"These were mostly about the valiant Russian soldiers, We sang very little Hungarian songs, and no folk songs at all."

"Which was your favorite subject?"

"I liked arithmetics, then writing, gymn and of course I liked always to draw."

"Can you tell me why you liked these subjects?"

"Well, you see I love to count, and work with figures, here too I am very good at it, I attend the parochial school of the R.C. nuns at 82nd street. Even though I belong to the Evangelical Church. Our priest is quite mad at us for this, but I think this is silly of him."

"Gymn I love because it gives me the opportunity to get some exercise which is always very difficult to get if you live in a city."

"The drawing of course is something I can do real well. I always had a "5" in drawing. I expect you know that this is the best mark you can get in Hungary. I always had 5-s in every subject, and was what they called a "champion student".

"Now I would like to hear something about your teachers

"We had the same woman teacher for all subjects, except singing and gymn, which were taught by two men. I also had German lessons from an Austrian man, he taught me in his apartment."

"Did you like or dislike your teachers?"

"I did like all of them more or less, even though the gymn teacher was quite strict with us. You see the woman teacher was strict too, but in a different way, more delicately, you understand what I mean don't you?"

"Did your teachers treat all children equally?"

"As a rule yes, but somehow they had to be much nicer with the kids of AVH force men, these were after all communists, that's why%"

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"Did you have any communist teachers?"

"I really cannot tell for sure. You see they had to teach in a communist way, or at least defend communism. It happened once in our school that a teacher was taken away by the police because instead of the Communists, he was praising the Hungarians. Of course, the Police was not at fault either because they had to execute orders, regardless whether they liked to do it or not."

"Tell me now who were your classmates?" Or rather who were your friends?"

"I had two really good friends, the father of one was an officer in the Fire Brigade, the other's dad was a laborer in the Gas Plant. I had also 3 other friends but these were not really good friends. The officer of the Fire Brigade was a friend of my dad's and the other kid lived near us, that's how we became friends. We always went and came from school together, we also attended the German lessons together. We mostly played soccer, or ball, raced on our scooters, or played soldiers"

"We also talked a great deal about machines, and how to invent them he and I we both want to become engineers, and I would like to invent something that has not been invented yet in the aeroplane line. He wants go to into shipbuilding and I for aeronautics."

"Were there any kids at school you did not like?"

"Yes, there were two boys, I did not care for them because they were very bad boys, they were always uncooperative; they did not study at all but played in the streets."

"Were there any kids you looked up to?"

Everybody in our class looked up to the ones who were good students, and who were always willing to help them in their studies. I don't want to brag but my two friends and myself we were pretty popular with the others except with the communists, because we were always willing to help them."

I probed the child regarding with which boy he would rather make friends, the son of a former lawyer or a former worker. He answered:

"I would make friends with the boy whose father was a lawyer before the communist regime, because since he had to become a common laborer now this proves that he was a good man in the past and the Communists oppressed him now."

When I pointed out to him that neither of the parents is a communist, he said: "then I would probably make friends with the other boy too, but he never could become a very good friend of mine, since we belong to a better class socially, and the boy of the lower class would probably prefer to associate with his own class."

"Did you have any religious instruction at school?"

"None at school, but I attended religious instructions every Sunday, when we went to church, at the vicarage."

B .

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

"Only once did I not tell, when I was punished by the teacher for fighting with a boy over a silly matter. Otherwise we always discussed everything that was happening at school. But unfortunately, since both of my parents were working, I could not be very much with them, I usually spent my time with granny. Nevertheless I preferred to believe what my parents told me because I knew that the teachers at school were not allowed to tell us the truth, or else they lose their jobs."

C.

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

"I never discussed family matters at school, daddy and mummy told me not to, as nothing good would result of it. Therefore I talked with my friends only about commonplace things."

D.

"What did you do after school hours?"

"It depended also which shift I had to attend. We had our classes alternatively one week from 8 to 11 and the next week from 11 to 3 pm."

"But as a rule I first did my homework. Then if mother wanted me to do an errand for her, I went out and did some shopping etc. Also I played with my friends, mostly with my electric train. You know, auntie, I had an electric train that cost 600 frt. I believe this would be 125 dollars which is really a terrific amount."

"I also read a great deal. All sorts of tales, than the Adventures of Munchausen, also the story of Janos Vitez and cowboy stories. Then I read a very interesting book on the yellow danger that threatens Europe, you know what this means don't you? It's about how the Chinese and the Japanese will eventually take over from the white races all over the world. Then I also read a lot about Hungarian history, but these books all were books that were printed before the communist times, and belonged to my mother. I also read "Toldi" (this is a three volume long epic poem by world famous poet Arany on the life and deed of a Hungarian national hero. Interv.note) Mother hid these book with her sister in law when we were deported."

"I attended the movies once or twice a week, sometimes with my parents, or with my pals. You know movies were not too expensive. I have seen some fairy-tale films I remember."

"My parents also taught me sports. I learned how to swim, daddy taught me how to fence, we fought with sticks instead of foils; (the kid showed me all the fencing positions). Then I played tennis with Mummy, there were large tennis courts along the Danube near to where we lived."

"I did not belong to any youth movement. My parents would not let me because lots of accidents happened there, and the bigger boys never looked after the younger one properly."

IV.

"Tell me now something about your family. What was your father's occupation?"

(I talked to the father's boy when he brought him to the interview, and found out that he served in the same cavallery regiment of my brothers' and in fact knew them personally. He was a graduate of the Hungarian Officers' Academy and a career officer, who, of course was sacked and persecuted by the communist regime.)

"Daddy worked as a factory worker at the Goldberger textile factory in Obuda. My godfather and Granddad worked there too. Mother worked as a typist-stenographer but you see the trouble was that she was sacked very often, because she never wanted to join the communist party. Poor dear, she had so many jobs."

"Where did you live when in Hungary?"

"We lived in the III, the Obuda district, I believe you know where this is don't you? We had two rooms and a kitchen but no bathroom only a John, the bathtub was behind a curtain in the kitchen. Six of us had to live in this apartment, you see after being released from deportation, we just could not find any other apartment. We were three of us, then my godfather and granny and granddad," -- "I am afraid the nest was very small for such a big brood", he added wistfully.

"Who did the housework?"

"It was mostly Granny, but all of us lent a helping hand, I mostly went to do the shopping for her, or peeled potatoes, this I liked the best to do."

"It was also Granny who took care of me mostly after school. You see we paid her for all her work, because after all she need some money. Granddad had to go to work to, poor old man, he was 62 then, and yet he had to work in a factory. But next year when he reaches 64, I hope he can retire, and get his pension."

V.

Rewards and Punishments:

A.

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

"Oh yes, we received books at the end of the school term, if we had enough 5 marks. Inbetween we were given red stars to wear whenever we had many 5-s. But the moment I received such a star, I broke it and never wore it. I would have preferred to receive the Kossuth crest instead of that damn red star." (The Kossuth emblem is the traditional and true Hungarian crest. Interviewer's note).

B.

"Were you ever punished at school?"

"Yes, twice I was kept after hours, because I did not do my arithmetics lesson."

"there were also other punishments.. if anybody behaved badly, he was beaten with a cane, or when he was terribly bad the teacher sent a report-card to the parents."

C.

"Did your parents punish you ever?"

"Sometimes" he said with a smile, reminiscensing. "Mostly it was when I personally got into mischief or did some harm to myself, then I got a slap, but never on my face or neck. Mummy said this is bad for a kid's health, so I got it on my fanny. Usually my parents deprived me of something I cared for or wanted to do badly, also I had to kneel on corn in the corner, when I was naughty."

"Usually it was Daddy who did the punishing."

VI.

"Now I am going to ask you to tell me something about the Revolution"

A.

"I heard that the University students started the whole thing. They wanted the Russians to leave Hungary and that the old real Hungarian flag be flown from everywhere, without the Russian emblems. But then the AVH began to shoot, and they called in the Russians; We have heard on the radio that fighting is going on. Daddy too went to the Margaret Bridge to fight. Granny told me that blood

was flowing in streams all over the streets in Budapest. Much shooting was going on for several weeks in town."

"This is what happened during the revolution."

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

"Certainly, the Hungarians revolted against Russian oppression, because after all they had enough to pull the 'yoke of slavery' (as he put it) for 13 long years, and the Russians always wanted more and more from us. After all I can't see why should another country and people sit on the neck of Hungary. Nobody likes this. Then all food was sent to Russia, and we had to go hungry. Friends of ours, who lived near the Railroad Depot, saw how everything was shipped out from the country."

B. What impressed you most during the Revolution?"

Maybe I was most impressed by that boy of 11 who has destroyed 12 tanks with his Molotov Cocktails. Finally he was killed in battle and they put on his coffin the second Sandor Petofi."

"Also I was very much impressed by hearing from Granny that blood was flowing in streams in the streets of Budapest. And I was very much hurt to hear that in a church the Russians had shot on Jesus on the Cross."

C.

"Did you take part in the Revolution?"

"I did not. You see it was like this: only 8 days before the Revolution broke out was I released from hospital. I was treated there for inflammation of the liver. I really should have stayed there or at least in bed, but then when we left Hungary, daddy carried me on his back, and mummy and daddy crawled along the roadside, and the young man gave them signals with his flashlight."

VII.

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

(The kids eyes lit-up and with a broad smile and unhesitating he said):

"Aeronautic engineer of course. Since most kinds of planes are invented already I would like to invent something new in the field of design, for the comfort of the passengers, for instance television in the planes since air conditioning has already been installed on the aeroplanes."

"Tell me, do you have a television now?"

"Oh no, we don't own one yet, I see it when I go visiting friends. You see Daddy still has many debts to pay off first, instalment payments for furniture and all other essential things, so we must wait when all this is cleared then we shall be able to buy a television also."

"What is your idea what should a good father be like?"

"He loves his kid, and tries to fulfil his wishes. Then for instance as it happened once in Hungary the communists wanted to take away a kid, because he spoke badly about the communists, his father went with the communists into prison instead of the boy. Also I believe a good father must teach his child Hungarian history and religion."

"What is an ideal teacher like?"

"A good teacher must be very strict with the children, especially when the kids don't study their lessons. Not like here in America. Here they just write a note to the parents. A good teacher must teach me patiently until I have learned and understood everything well."

"What does a good mother do?"

She looks after her kid, cooks for him and whenever a child is asking questions she answers him patiently. Also she gives him money for ice-cream should he ask. She also should not do as bad mothers do who go out a great deal visiting with friends and then don't care about their children. Or a good mother should be like Mummy, who always talks over things that happen in the world, with me."

"What are the three worst things a child can do?"

"First of all if he does not obey his parents, then if he kills his parents - as I hear there are so many patri-

oides here- and finally if he is disrespectful to his parents and talks back.

"What do you think are the three most important things a kid should be taught?"

"Religion, and not go and play instead of his religion class, then to behave decently and respect his parents and finally to obey his parents and not to loiter around the streets."

"What are the three worst things you can say about someone?"

"That he doesn't fear God, is disrespectful to his parents and he kills."

VIII.

Special Section.

A. "Who do you think are the three most famous men in the world?"

"Jesus, Columbus and St. Stephen of Hungary."

Who do you think are the three greatest living people in the world?"

"President Eisenhower, Paul Maleter and the German Chancellor (sic) Mr. Adenauer."

"Who do you think is the greatest living Hungarian?"

"Otto Habsburg, who could have become king of Hungary."

B.

"I am going to give you now the names of a few famous Hungarians. Tell me something about each of them."

1. St. Stephen was Hungary's first King, whose right hand is still in Hungary of course its quite mummyfied now and terribly small.

2. King Mathias was also a Hungarian King who went around in the country in a disguise to find out what's troubling his people.
3. Francis Rakoczi was a great hero.
4. Petofi was a Hungarian poet who died in the 1848 revolution.
5. Louis Kossuth, he too was a great Hungarian of 1848.
6. and 7 regarding Francis Deak and Istvan Szechenyu the kid could not say anything.
8. Maria Therezia he confused with Queen Elisabeth and said, she was murdered when she left the boat. (This is true for Q.E. Who was killed by an anarchist in Switzerland, when stepping off a pleasure boat)
- 9, 10 and 11, the little boy had no idea who Bethlen, Tancsics and Dozsa were.
12. Nicolas Horthy was the Regent of Hungary.
13. Joseph Mindszenty was Hungary's Cardinal.
14. Imre Nagy was for three free days the Prime Minister of Hungary.

IX.

"Finally can you tell me what strikes you as being completely different in the USA from Hungary?"

"I think that first of all how people here greet the ladies so disrespectful, they just say "Hi" or Hello. Not courteously at all, then I also found that the traffic in the streets is vastly different from what we had at home."

"What are the things you like most about the USA?"

The seaside, the Empire State Building, and that people like animals so much here in the US. But I also love candy" he added as an afterthought.

"What are the things you disapprove of in the US?"

"I disapprove that kids are given weapons, its easy then to kill. Young children should not be allowed to handle arms.

I also hate to see how the cowboys here are killing off the Indians (he saw it several times on TV). After all the Indians were the natives, and it is not right for a newcomer to kill them off. Also I hate the bad air here in New York; this is about all."

END OF INTERVIEW