

CHILD INTERVIEW: CODE NO. CH-15F

Interviewer: Mrs. Varga

Date: September 27, 1957

Place: N.Y.C.

I. Character Description

This 11 year old girl has a lower middle class background. Her parents are somewhere halfway between the workers and the intelligentsia. The mother keeps repeating "such and such manners cannot be excersized in OUR family." Her father had a fairly good income; they didn't have definite financial troubles, and the parents put a strong emphasis on the child's behavior, education and manners. She is a very pale, brown haired, good looking girl, extremely vivid and intelligent, somewhat precocious and independent toward the outside world, but becomes a real child immediately in family circles. This must have been due to their complicated family set-up. Her mother divorced her real father when she was four years old. Present father also divorced his first wife and has an 8 year old son in Hungary with his first wife. Respondent has regular correspondence with her stepbrother. She whispers when she tells me about this family affair and seems to be very much concerned about it, has a prematurely adult flavor in her speech and shows a certain responsibility for her "immature" parents. Of course she ~~didn't~~ didn't use this expression, but gave the impression of it. All these are subconscious in her, and the only sign of it might have been the strong emphasis the child put on "secrets." According to her judgement, those persons have the best character who can keep secrets, who, maybe, could keep her big secret. -- Respondent has a very strong artistic sense.

There are two things in her interview which may be worth mentioning: Everybody who speaks Russian is identified in the girl's mentality with some sort of evil; and -- if her information about her Communist teachers is right -- then those teachers were definitely afraid to speak in front of the frank young children and therefore "never explained anything" as she complains, and returns to it even defying a good teacher, in order to save their jobs.

CH-15-F

II. PERSONAL INVENTORY

1. Code name: CH-15F
2. Age: 11
3. Sex: Female
4. Religion: Protestant
5. Respondent spent all of her life in Budapest, Hungary, in the ~~IXth District~~ IXth District.
6. Finished 5 grades of public school, and started the 6th grade in the Fall of 1956.
7. Parents both living with respondent in U.S. Three of the grandparents are still living in Hungary.
8. Respondent lives in Summit, New Jersey, with her parents in their 5-room apartment with kitchen, and she attends the Roosevelt Public School in Summit, New Jersey.

III. THE SCHOOL SITUATION

- A. Can you tell us something about your school in Hungary?
Which were your school subjects?

"In school the subjects were geography, arithmetic, history, Hungarian language, reading and writing, Russian language, biology, chemistry, gymnastic, drawing and singing."

What subjects were compulsory?

"All the subjects were compulsory?"

Did you have any indoctrination courses?

"We did not have a definite indoctrination course, but in almost every subject our teacher talked about the Soviet Union. We had Russian language hour three times a week, but we didn't learn only reading and writing in these hours, but from hour to hour we learned about Russian history, Russian arithmetic, grammar, vocabulary, geography. We did not like the Russian hour because we didn't like the Russian language anyway. We couldn't pronounce the words. Our teacher was a woman of about forty years old. She was very aggressive. If we couldn't pronounce the words correctly she hit our heads with a ruler."

"But as I said before, we learned about Russia in every other subject. In geography, for instance, almost everything was about Russia. We learned about the Russian cities, rivers, economy, farming, the plants which grow in Russia. We learned the same things about Hungary, but it was about one third of the material in our book which was about Hungary, and two thirds about Russia. In arithmetic, we learned the Russian figures. We repeated ~~xxxx~~ what we learned in the Russian hour, and sometimes the Hungarian reading hour and the Russian reading hour were combined. We had to compare the two languages. Our Russian reading was about twice as thick as for any other textbook for the other subjects, and my copy book for the Russian language included 50 or 60 pages with narrow lines. For any other subject we had a copy book of ~~xxxxxx~~ 10 or 12 pages, and I filled two ~~xxxxxx~~ copy books for the Russian; at the same time, four or five small copy books for the other subjects.

"In history we learned about Lenin and Stalin and other great Russians. We were taught how good they were, and how well they led their nation. We also learned about the Czars, that they were envious and selfish. We read a story about a Czar who was first very good, but only because he wanted to use the people for his purposes. Therefore, the people later on revolted against him and the Czar died in the fights. His place was taken by a peasant who became a really good leader of the country."

Which subjects were liked most by you?

"Drawing, gymnastic and history. I liked the Hungarian history because our teacher always told us stories, besides what was in the textbook, and I liked drawing because my father draws very well, and I wanted to become as good a drawer as he is. Our teacher also drew beautifully. I marvelled at her drawings open-mouthed all the time." (Respondent shows her open mouth marvelling.)

Which subjects did you like the least?

"I liked Russian and arithmetic the least. I didn't like figures very much, you know, and I didn't like the Russian because nobody liked the Russians or their language. When they ~~xxxxxx~~ praised Stalin and Lenin, I always had to think about what they did against Hungary, and how they rocked the whole country. And they always lied. They said that the Russians liberated Hungary, but that was not true, and we all knew that."

Can you tell us something about your teachers now?

"I liked our form master very much. She was a dear person and she was always just. She punished those who didn't behave well, and rewarded those who were good with a certificate of merit. Or, if everybody was good, she took us for an excursion, or to the zoo. She was a young woman around 32 or 33 years old, and always full of understanding toward us. She taught gymnastics which of course helped a lot, because we all liked it.

"We had a man teacher in geography. He was around 40, but he was always grouchy. He never explained anything to us. We just had to recite the lesson he gave us last time. Sometimes he also taught us the Russian geography, instead of the Russian teacher. He was very strict. If somebody made just one word mistake, he gave him grade one. You know, this was the worst grade in our class.

"Oh, I just remembered that our biology ~~wa~~ teacher was also a man. We didn't like him either. He spoke too slowly, and he didn't like to explain things to us either. He told us that everything was invented by the Russians. He said once that wax was ~~discovered~~ discovered in Russia. I went home and asked and asked my grandfather, who was much older than the teacher, and who knew very much. He told me that what the teacher said wasn't true. This way I found out that the teacher told us about many things which were invented in Hungary, that those things were discovered in Russia.

"But I really liked our Russian teacher the least. She was the only one who hit us. As far as we knew, the teachers were not allowed to punish us physically, but ~~the~~ the mothers of many of my classmates went to the teachers and asked them to hit us, because we were very undisciplined. Therefore, the Director came in once in a while and if we were very bad, he spanked. But this

was all right; we deserved it. However, the Russian teacher always beat us when we made the smallest mistake. She was a Russian. She came to Hungary only ten or twelve years ago. She spoke broken Hungarian. Her real language was Russian. She always told us that we need the Russian language, and if we spoke well, she said, we would be taken to Moscow. She was a silly one. She thought we would take it as an honor, but we didn't. We didn't want to go to Moscow. We were interested in other cities very much. We wanted to go to Austria, or Czechoslovakia, but not to Russia; not to Moscow. You know, we had a girl in the class who talked very good Russian. Her father was a prisoner of war in Russia, and they had a friend, a Protestant priest, who spoke Russian fluently. He was very strict with this girl and he forced her to learn the Russian language too. The teacher wanted to send the girl to Moscow because of her good knowledge of Russian, but the girl told her that she wouldn't go to Moscow, and refused her offer. This priest whom I mentioned before tried to court the mother of the girl, but ~~she~~ the mother refused him too, and she said that as long as her husband wouldn't come back, she wouldn't go out with other men. This priest had a good friendship with our Russian teacher, and he also wanted to send the girl to Moscow.

"At the end I just want to mention our drawing teacher. Her I liked the most. She was twenty one years old and a lovely, lovely person."

Did your teachers treat all children equally?

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

"No. All the teachers practiced favoritism with Eva Parkas. She always flattered the teachers, brought them oranges and other gifts. I don't know how she could do it, because her father was an usher at the amusement park, and of course all the teachers were much nicer to her if she didn't know the lesson, or if she did anything wrong. They always consoled her and said that it would be better for tomorrow if she knew the lesson the next day. Even my mother favored her. She chose her to sign my copy books. I just couldn't understand that. She was a bad girl. When she started to fight with me, then finally I was the one who took home a report about it, and she was consoled by everybody. We didn't like her. Nobody liked her in the class. We showed a good face, of course, because we were afraid she would tell it to the teacher and then finally we would come out the losers. But we all hated her from the bottom of our hearts. She always had new dresses. I also got new dresses, but not so often, and I didn't wear them every day, only on Sunday."

Were your teachers Communists? And how did you know it?

"Our Director was a Communist, but she didn't teach me. Our geography teacher was a Communist, the Russian teacher was a Communist, and our singing teacher, but she was forced into the Party. I guess the same was true of our drawing teacher. We

didn't have too many Communist teachers in our school, because you know, this was the former Ranolder, which was given to the state under certain conditions, and one of the conditions was that we wouldn't have too many Communist teachers. (Ranolder was a famous Protestant denominational school in Budapest, which was confiscated by the Communists. Interviewer's Note.)

"It wasn't difficult to see who was a Communist and who wasn't. The Communist teacher didn't believe in God. They always talked about Stalin and Rakosi instead. We could even see well who was forced into the Party, and who took part in it willingly. The Russian teacher was always so happy to tell about those things of Russia. The geography teacher too. But our drawing teacher and singing teacher didn't speak gladly about Communism and its slogans. It could be seen on their faces."

Tell us something about your classmates now. Who were your friends, and how did you come to know them?

"My dearest friend was the girl whose father was a prisoner of war in Russia, whom I mentioned before. Her mother was a doctor and she worked in a laboratory, and her father had a Gaz factory before he was taken to Russia. But his factory was nationalized anyway, in connection with a Grosz trial. I had another friend too. Her father was a very good baker. She could keep secrets so well. We always played that we were already big girls, and all of her sisters kept our secrets. We all played together. They had very good manners. I loved their grandmother. She was just like my own. We talked about everything together -- who was our bridegroom. Of course we all chose one. I liked her older brother. He was a beautiful boy. But we talked very much about Communism too -- how bad it was, and how they Russians exploited us. I asked her and she asked me. We also always agreed in things, and even if we fought sometimes, which of course happened, we never talked about our secrets to anybody. We very often slept at each other's homes too, and I talked to my friends just about everything."

Whom did you not like at school?

"I didn't like the one whom I mentioned, who was favored by all the teachers, and there was another girl. She was so finicky and envious ~~and~~ she could never keep any secret. I didn't like these two girls."

Were there any Communists among your classmates?

"I don't know. We have never talked about that."

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

"Oh yes. We had a girl whose father was very smart. He was

an engineer. Our class master said that we couldn't talk to her as just to any other girl, because she was a very intelligent girl. She didn't like improper talk. We always had to watch our ~~xxx~~ mouths when we talked to her. Oh, she had a beautiful voice! She was a solo singer, even on the radio sometimes she sang. And her marks were always the best in the class. We saw from the first minute that there was something of value in that child. We liked her very much. She was very helpful. She didn't look down on us because she was smarter than we were. We could feel just a little bit that she was conscious of her superiority. But everybody was her friend; even that girl who was favored by the teachers was her friend. But, you know, the teachers didn't favor this other girl at all."

Let's say there are two children of your age. One of them is the daughter of a man who once was a lawyer, but is now a common laborer. The other is the daughter 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?

"For me, it didn't count whose father was who. But, for instance, Eva Farkas would never talk to someone, or never make friends with someone, whose father was a bricklayer. The other girl, you know, whom we looked up to, she didn't care. Her second best friend was the daughter of a steel worker. If somebody was a Communist, I would have played with her just the same, but inside I wouldn't like her so much. I once had a friend whose mother was a Communist. They lived in the same house as we did. But I didn't care, as long as she was honest."

XDid you have religious instruction at school, or at home?

"No, we didn't have any religious instruction at school. We went to a separate Sunday school. Every Sunday, there was first a Mass, and then there was a club room. They set up a little altar there, and all the children gathered at that place, and there we had our Sunday school. Sometimes we gave performances at that place. I liked it very much. The priest who taught us there was the same one who married my parents. At school, we had to hide the fact that we went to the Sunday school. If they learned about it, our marks were made worse. They were always lowered by one mark. We talked about the Sunday school with our classmates, but we never mentioned it to our teachers. On the other hand, it was funny. Across the street from the school there was a church. After school, when all the teachers left, we very often sneaked into the church, and you know whom we found there? Our teachers! Even our Communist teachers. The Director was in the church very often. They had to play up that they were Communists, because they would have lost their jobs."

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

"I told my parents about everything at school. I even talked about my bad behavior if I did something wrong. Then my mother reprimanded me, but this was all. If I talked to her about what we learned at school -- what we always heardix, that

the Russians were so good, and so smart -- she told me that it wasn't so. Very often, my father talked to me about these things too. He explained to me in detail why the Russians are no good, and what is different from what we learned at school. I always believed what my mom and what my daddy said."

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

"I ~~xxx~~ never talked about things I heard at home at school. My mother told me that it could make trouble for us. She said that father could be imprisoned if I opened my mouth. I could talk to my girlriend about it, but to nobody else. I got used to it, and I watched very carefully all the time never to talk about things I heard at home."

D. What did you do after school hours?

"I went home and did my homework. Then I ate my supper. I read a little and then I went to sleep. If my homework wasn't too long, then of course I could go to play."

What did you read? What books?

"I loved the historical novels, but I also liked detective stories. I borrowed those books from the Public Library, Children's Section. I read quite a lot of fairy tale books too."

What other amusements did you take part in?

"We went to the movies twice a month. Also, we went to the theatre or to the amusement park. In our neighborhood, there was a milk tavern. I liked that. Or we went to the pastry shop, and ate very good pastries."

Did you take part in any sports?

"I was not allowed to do any sports. I had myocarditis."

Did you play with other children? And what did you play?

"We had a large court in the back of the house, and we played with all the other children from our house. We played weddings, momma and daddy, the game of tag, hide and seek. We also liked to play that policemen caught us and punished us. Just all kinds of games like that."

Did you participate in the Pioneer Movement?

"I was a Pioneer from the 4th ~~xxx~~ grade on. It was something like the Girl Scouts here. We went outdoors on Sundays. We collected stones, and plants, but only girls. We had only girls in our group. Sometimes we had our Pioneer meetings and we had to put down everything that happened there in the form of a diary. At these meetings, they told us that the Pioneer Movement was found

out by the Russians, and they told us stories about how Stalin and Lenin helped the Pioneers. We didn't like these meetings, but we had to belong to the Pioneers. Just everybody had to belong to this movement. Once a week we went to these meetings at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and they ended around 6 or sometimes 7. We really would have liked to play instead of attending these meetings."

IV.

Now tell us something about your family. What did your father do, and your mother?

"My mother didn't do anything. She only helped my father. My father was a painter. He painted pictures and scarves, and repaired some furniture. The City Council bought the things he made. My mother always worked with him, especially during the last few years. We had a one-room and kitchen apartment, and my father had a corner as a workshop. My parents were at home all day long. We lived in the IXth District. It was a large apartment house owned by the City. First, as I can remember, we lived with grandmother. She had a two-room apartment with kitchen. It was very nice. Then we moved out to Zuglo (a suburb of Budapest) into a two-room apartment, and from that place we moved into the house where we lived before we came out, in this one-room apartment with kitchen. It was on the same block where my grandmother lived.

"I had a separate sofa where I slept, and my parents had a large double sofa which could be opened up for the night."

Who did the housework? Did you help too?

"First my grandmother. Later, when my mother started to work continuously with my father, a woman came in to help. She worked for us and for grandmother as well. She cooked, and pressed, and did the laundry. Before I always helped grandmother, but since this woman came in, I didn't have to help -- unless she was sick. But I had to go shopping at the market."

V. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

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

"If we behaved very well, or we prepared our lessons excellently, then we got from the teacher an honorary letter for good work. This was the only reward we got at school."

B. Were you ever punished at school?

"I told you before that our Director came in once in a while and punished us physically, and also the Russian teacher who always hit our heads. But the other teachers never touched us. They sent us out to the corridor if we didn't behave well, or we got a report of unsatisfactory conduct, and we had to take it home and show it to our parents."

C. Were you ever punished by your parents?

"If I got such a report, then my parents punished me, or if there was any complaint against me at school. My father beat me up twice in my life, once so that two of my teeth fell out. I don't remember why, but if he hit me, it was very strong. He had a heavy hand. Otherwise, my mother used to spank me with a wooden spoon -- you know, with a cooking spoon. My grandmother, too. My grandfather was the only one who didn't beat me, because he was too strong, and therefore he was afraid to hit me."

VI.

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

"I think the revolution happened because the Hungarians started to demonstrate and the Russians couldn't stand that, and therefore they shot at the Hungarians. Then, the soldiers distributed their weapons, and the people started to fight. Many people died. I heard this when I listened to the radio. Mother saw many things from our window, also, because it was just across from a ~~was~~ police barrack, where the Russians moved in later on. We children weren't allowed to pass in front of the building, because our parents were afraid that the Russians would shoot us. I also saw many tanks burned out, and we saw the shooting from the back window. It was in the evening, and as the ammunition blew up it was like a firecracker. Everything trembled -- our whole apartment."

B. What impressed you most during the revolution?

"When Imre Nagy said on the radio: Help! Help! You know, I felt that we really would need help. We were told that the Americans would help. We ~~we~~ didn't know whether they would come, but I wished so much for them to come."

C. Did you take part in the revolution?

"I didn't take part in the revolution, because my parents didn't allow me to go into the street. But I was informed of everything. (This is a word by word translation of what respondent said.) I heard about the demonstration from my uncle, who went to see it, and came up to us and told us about it. I knew that the Hungarian people wanted freedom, because the radio said it. I knew it from the first minute on. But I could go to the street only with my mother. She took me out when everything was quiet. The shops were open, but we couldn't go directly to the baker for instance. I had to climb the fence and ~~we~~ jump into the court of the other house where the baker lived, and come back with the fresh bread using a ladder. Oh, this was fantastic, what wonderful bread we got during the revolution! It was always fresh and warm. Later on the bakers were ~~was~~ not allowed again to bake fresh bread every day. Again we always ate dry bread. Just one thing was missing. We couldn't get any alcohol during the revolution, because the Russians drank everything."

VII.

What would you like to be when you grow up?

"I would like to become a day care center teacher, or a nurse in a children's hospital. I like the small children very much, and I always wanted to work with them. But now my mother tells me that I should learn English, because there are very few people in Hungary who talk English, and if we go home to Hungary then I would be able to work in a lawyer's office or in the Parliament as a stenographer. However, I still would like to do something with children. I love small children. I asked my mother for a sister so many times. I don't know why I haven't a sister, or a brother; it wouldn't matter."

A. Tell me, what is a good father like?

"A good father should love his children. He should take the child to see many things. He should help her to prepare her lessons, and explain everything she has to learn about. But he shouldn't be too strict with the children. He also should buy dresses for the children."

What do you think an ideal teacher is like?

"He just should be a good teacher. He should never beat the children, and shouldn't be unjustly strict. And they have to talk about the subject very much. This way we can remember the things better."

What is a good mother like?

"A good mother should be somehow the same as a good father. She should help the child to take care of herself -- teach her how to dress, how to wash herself, and also how to take care of the household. She could keep the apartment clean, and wash for the children."

What are the three worst things a child can do?

"To steal, to lie, and to deceive."

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

"A child should be taught to learn everything at school that she has to, to have a good sense of responsibility, and to learn to work well."

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

"I would say that she is a liar, she is a thief, and she is a bad student."

VIII. SPECIAL SECTION

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

"Schubert -- he was a great musician. I like music. The second is ~~Frank~~ Columbus, who discovered America. I learned it in history. In the Hungarian history book, there was a little bit about America, and I learned it from there. And the third one was Sandor Petofi. He was a good poet. He was always on the side of the peasants, and he didn't like the great ones, the lords, because they exploited the peasants and serfs. They let them work very hard, and they didn't give them money for it. I learned this from our reading book~~X~~ but I know also that this is the truth, because I have all the poems, the Collected Poems of Petofi, and he wrote about it. But my father told me too, and my grandfather also."

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

"Eisenhower and Zoltan Kodaly. He is a wonderful musician." (Her eyes light up when she talks about music. She cannot mention a third one.)

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

King St. Stephen - "St. Stephen was very religious, and he was a very just king. I read about him in our reading book, and also I read books about his activity which I borrowed from the library."

King Mathias - "King Mathias was a good king. I heard about him in school a little, and my grandmother always told me stories about him. I learned this slogan from her too: "Mathias has died, and justice is gone with him."

Frank Rakocsi the Second - "Rakocsi was a great Kuruc. ~~It~~ (Kuruc means a soldier in the insurrectionist army of Francis Rakocsi, fighting against Hapsburg oppression in the 17th and 18th centuries. These persons sympathized with the nationalist cause of Rakoczi.) He helped the Hungarians and defeated the Labanc." (Labanc is a nickname of pro-Austrian soldiers during the 18th century. The Hungarians called the overzealously loyal Hungarians to Austria during the Hungarian War of Independence. Interviewer's Note.)

Alexander Petofi - "Petofi was a wonderful poet. He liked the serfs because he himself came from a serf family, a very poor family."

Stephen Szechenyi - "Szechenyi -- I didn't learn anything about Szechenyi. Is this bad?" (Respondent asks this question with a lot of anxiety in her voice.)

Francis Deak - "Francis Deak always helped the poor."

Teresia Maria - "Teresia Maria was a very just queen of Hungary."

Bethlen - "We didn't learn about him."

Michael Tancsics - "Tancsics was a very good Freedom Fighter. He helped the poor. He himself was very poor."

George Dosza - "Dosza won the war against the Turks."

Nicholas Horthy - "Nicholas Horthy? I don't know anything about him."

Joseph Mindszenty - "I don't know anything about Mindszenty either, but I heard his name."

Imre Nagy - "We would like him very much to become our leader. He is a very good man."

R

IX.

Finally, tell me, what strikes you as being completely different in the U.S. from Hungary?

"The school is different. Here we have to be at school all day long. At home we went to school from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. or from 2 to 5 P.M. only."

What are the things you like most about the U.S.?

"I like the best the hamburgers, spaghetti with meatballs, and Pat Boon. He is a very nice man, and he doesn't jump when he sings."

What are the things you disapprove of in the U.S.A.?

"Oh, I don't like green peas, Rock and Roll, and Elvis Presley! He jumps like a goat."

THE END