

Béla Török

In the Mainstream of XX Century – A Living History

**Part 2 -Refugees in Germany and Migrant Life in new Home in distant
Australia.**

(The published book in Hungarian has been translated by Leslie (László) Török into three parts. In Part 1, the author wrote extensively about his father, childhood, tertiary education, his university degrees and early employment. The third section of his book is about how he saw this period of History which I have translated in Part 3).

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General Mobilizing Order

At this time, a general mobilisation order was proclaimed—“*Officers’ Marching Order*”—which stated that all reserve officers, even those previously exempted, must report on the specified date and at the designated location.

On 6 October 1944, my thirtieth birthday, I had to register at the Train Barracks, where the remaining detachment of the First Reconnaissance Battalion was stationed.

The Justice Department’s policy was that no one requested dispensation, and so it was natural to obey the command. I later learned that this recall of reserve officers was one of the measures intended to ensure military discipline within the reserve corps at the moment of an armistice.

Personally, military service stirred mixed feelings in me. Ica and our two little boys had just returned to our apartment; she was pregnant, and the pantry was empty. In earlier times, I had been happy and eager to serve, but now my heart sank. The impending political truce was difficult to endure—and yet, despite my reservations, I was proud to don my uniform.

Once again in uniform, I appeared at the Department of Justice as an ensign and said goodbye to Gábor Vladár.

The sensitive Gábor Vladár clearly sensed that my call to arms might lead to Russian captivity. He emphasised that the government was only taking steps it believed served the interests of the nation.

To this, I simply replied: “Your Excellency should be assured that the front will fulfil its duty.”

Elastic Separation 1944-1945

I embraced Ica, kissed the boys, and—certainly with a heavy heart—caught the tram to Budapest and the Arena Street Train Barracks. The uncertain future, the receding frontline, and the confused political situation made this thirtieth birthday a very sad one.

I became a little more cheerful at the barracks, as I met quite a few old comrades and we caught up on each other's lives since we had last met. In a military sense, there was not much point to our call-up. The battalion was fighting at the front, and only a few soldiers were needed to maintain supply lines. There were no armoured cars or other heavy weapons at the barracks, as all available equipment had long been sent to the front.

Based on our marching orders, the number of officers reporting was between sixteen and twenty, yet they could not provide us with duties. So, we settled into the old volunteers' school dormitories and spent most of our time idle. Our activity consisted of a few hours at the guard station or in the office next to the officers who were actually working.

I remember the card games and listening to a portable radio brought in by one of our friends, tuned to reports from Budapest.

Among all the news, one announcement stands out in my memory: the fall of Szeged. I was deeply shocked. I could not imagine that my dear hometown was now under enemy rule.

Earlier, I had been able to visit home on short-term leave. This more recent farewell reopened the wound of departure.

This is how we reached 15 October. At noon, we were lying on our beds; some of my comrades played cards, and the radio was on.

The announcer said that an important statement was about to be made. We took notice and listened with rapt attention as Miklós Horthy made his fateful announcement. A stunned silence followed the news that ceasefire talks had taken place with a head of state and

that an agreement was ready to be signed. Our first involuntary thought was relief—that an end to this hopeless fight might be near. I also thought of home, of Ica and the children, and felt a glimmer of hope that perhaps we could be together again soon.

But then doubts flooded our minds. We had to face the reality of triumphant Bolshevik forces, and it was clear that our Hungary was no longer. Surrender became increasingly distasteful.

Many considered leaving the barracks to avoid participating in the humiliating act of surrender.

The political situation remained unclear. Here and there, we heard the noise of weapons, and the barracks command banned all leave. Then an aircraft roared overhead and dropped flyers. We read Ferenc Szálasi's "armed military command," and it became clear that the Germans would not accept Horthy's plan to exit the war.

Amid all the uncertainty, I was tempted to change into civilian clothes and go home, despite the ban. I struggled with the decision, discussing it with a fellow ensign. In the end, I could not break my oath and flee the barracks as a deserter. Some of my comrades, however, did leave. It was not difficult, as the rear area was not patrolled, and it was easy to walk into town.

So, I stayed. By nightfall, we received news that German–Hungarian troops had occupied the radio station, and the Chief of General Staff had issued orders that the war was not over and that troops were to comply with all directives.

Captain Pataky, commander of the barracks, told us at an impromptu officers' meeting that he would join forces with those supporting the continuation of the war. He also informed us that the commander of a neighbouring mechanised infantry division had made a similar decision. He added that he had telephone contact with the Mária Terézia Command headquarters, and they too had decided to continue.

The phone connection was intermittent, and political events remained confused. Around 10 or 11 p.m., Captain Pataky decided to

send an officer to the Mária Terézia barracks to get a clearer picture of the situation.

Pataky had a sidecar motorcycle courier available and asked me to carry out this reconnaissance.

Budapest's streets were deserted, with almost no traffic except military vehicles. The silhouettes of German Tiger tanks loomed, but we reached the Mária Terézia barracks without incident.

The duty officer's room was filled with staff officers. I reported to the senior officer and conveyed our commander's request for information.

The staff officer explained that city headquarters was also uncertain about the political situation. One thing was clear, he said: The General Staff supported the continuation of the war, but the political situation remained unresolved. Budapest was in the hands of German-Hungarian forces opposed to surrender, and negotiations were underway with the Governor to clarify matters.

By the next day, the situation was clearer. Forces had rallied around Ferenc Szálasi, the National Socialist Party, and the National League, which would form a government and continue the struggle against the Soviet Union.

Order was largely restored in the city, and there was hope that the situation had stabilised.

I received permission for a leave pass to confirm that my family had not been harmed. I visited the Ministry of Justice, my place of employment. I noticed a radical change. The atmosphere was still tense, but casual conversations—even among trusted friends—had become cautious. The new Minister of Justice, László Budinszky, was a Budapest lawyer and former Nazi party member and representative. He brought a young colleague as his personal secretary. My nameplate had been removed from the ministerial office entrance. Supposedly, it was to be moved to my old Draft Department, but it was not.

At that time, we did not know what had happened to Gábor Vladár. The new head of the Preparatory Department was Panel Judge Lajos Slezák, who, it turned out, was secretly a member of the Arrow Cross Party. I met him by chance in the hall. Aware of my expertise in German affairs, he declared that he would ask the Minister to exclude me from military service. This was natural, he said, because I had been István Antal's personal secretary and was known to hold right-wing views. I politely acknowledged his comments, but somehow felt that remaining a soldier under the current circumstances might be the wiser course. László Gál, an old family friend and Minister Counsellor, agreed and believed I was fortunate to be in uniform, as it protected me from persecution.

Among our circle, only István Bibó was removed from service. It was public knowledge, however, that many legal draftsmen who did not follow the German line continued to serve, making Bibó's arrest incomprehensible. When Lajos Slezák learned of Pista's arrest, he immediately intervened with the Minister, and as a result, Bibó was detained for only 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the Codification Division was already working with the nation's leaders, drafting related legislation. I know that this task fell to János Csiky and Feri Bacsó.

By then, I knew that the military evacuation of Budapest had begun. On 20 October, we received orders to relocate west of the city to the village of Tök. Supplies were shipped by truck, while the crew and officers had to march on foot to reach their quarters. The 30–35-kilometre journey was exhausting, especially as we lacked proper gear—riding boots were certainly not suited for long marches. We arrived by evening, and I was accommodated in the apartment of a Protestant minister's widow.

West of Budapest, food supplies were plentiful—perhaps because train and vehicle traffic to the capital had been cut off, and villagers could no longer send goods to the city. Milk, butter, meat, cream, and coffee were abundant. But for me, this abundance was almost

unbearable. My small family was nearly starving in Budapest, while I lived comfortably in the countryside. Militarily, I saw no way to contribute meaningfully to the war effort, and I spent my days in total disillusionment.

At this point, however, we received a decree allowing the families of replacement battalion members to receive army patronage. I therefore applied for permission to bring Ica to join me in Tök.

I received authorisation and was also granted two days of leave to arrange their transport. Ica, of course, was very pleased with the solution, as the food supply had become more difficult with each passing day, and neither my mother nor Ica's Ilu mama could help them.



As an Ensign in Army Reserves

I needed to secure a vehicle. I applied to the respective military garage headquarters. I was fortunate—Captain Gábor Gombos, the commander of my old training school for conscripted officers, was now in charge of the agency and immediately allocated me a small lorry. So, I somehow packed a couple of suitcases, Ica, the children, and Mária, our domestic help, into a small tarpaulin-covered truck. Mária pleaded with us to take her. She was from Miskolc, and at that time the fighting was raging around her home. She felt she would be safer with us.

The two-hour trip was not without problems. The truck broke down with engine trouble, and we had to wait on the roadside with the small children. A lorry from our own battalion saw us—it was not overloaded and was able to pick us up. We managed to settle into the Reverend woman's apartment, but it turned out the room was infested with bedbugs, and it took a few days to clean it satisfactorily.

I learned from Ica that the Justice Department was also planning to relocate to Szombathely, and our good friends István Arató and

Sándor Kálnoki Bedő had not forgotten us. They had arranged a place for Ica and the children on the planned resettlement train. Now that Ica was in Tök, however, this became irrelevant.

I then heard from headquarters about a plan to relocate our replacement battalion to Germany. One proposal was to move to the north-western part of Germany, to Bergen, where there was a large German military training ground similar to our own at Haymáskér. There, we would receive armoured vehicles in preparation for a counterattack. I had been allocated to this plan, and so my family and I were prepared for the eventuality. A few days later, I was informed that Captain Viszkidenszky, who had been on leave after minor battlefield injuries, had arrived at battalion headquarters and was directed to Bergen.

I went to Budapest once more. Béla, my brother-in-law, was in transit there, suffering from severe pneumonia and trying to recuperate in Székesfehérvár. My father also came to Budapest and was considering moving away from the nearby battles to join my sister Kata in Székesfehérvár. I met my mother and Károly too. We spent some very sad hours in an empty, deserted Hungaria restaurant. They both believed we should go west. They thought we were still young and could start over again.

We went up to our Káplár Street house. After a very painful farewell, my mother left, and I stood for a long time watching her go. That was the last time I saw her—they did not want to leave the city. I looked around once more in our home, then turned the key in the door to the apartment I would never see again.

Then came another reversal. I was ordered to serve on the eastern front. The fighting units needed an officer, a couple of sergeants, and twenty soldiers. With a heavy heart, I accepted the decision. The mood among the troops was no longer enthusiastic, and we had to be prepared for casualties after every attack. I was issued my combat gear, vests, and live bullets for my pistol, and was ready to be deployed.

I informed my parents of the change in plans by telegram. There was no news from my father, but my dear mother sent an encouraging message, though I knew her heart was breaking as she wrote it.

My family's fate caused me much anguish. While I was serving at the battalion, I felt at ease because I could support them through the everyday challenges of life. But I was not happy to leave them alone in such primitive conditions. We thought it best for them to go to Székesfehérvár, to my sister Kata's house, where my father was also heading.

On the morning of my departure, I went to headquarters a little early to arrange their transfer to Székesfehérvár. It was a sad and painful goodbye. Ica could not stop sobbing, but then she composed herself and tried to control her emotions.

Headquarters was like an anthill. I learned that the commander, Major Schenker, had been ordered to the war front, and command was taken over by Captain Imre Németh, who had just returned from the front after a minor injury. I knew him from earlier service. I reported to him and requested a lorry to relocate my family to Székesfehérvár. That was when Imre Németh learned I was also assigned to serve at the front.

To my surprise, he declared that he would not let me go. He told me he had received orders to relocate the Replacement Battalion in a few days to Csallóköz, which was only a staging point for a move to Germany. Imre Németh knew I spoke fluent German and was familiar with the local situation, and he announced that he needed me.

My first task was to organise, as soon as possible, the relocation of my family to Logérpatony. This village had been designated as a transitional accommodation point.

Ica, of course, was overjoyed and delighted by the dramatic turnaround and began preparing for the move. I started organising the project. I chose Bábolna as the first overnight stop. I knew the place well from my youth, having spent many beautiful days there, and thought it would be suitable for a night's rest. Because I knew

many local officials, I could ensure that the women and children entrusted to me would be well cared for. We arranged accommodation and supplies for a group of forty, and were ready to set off in a few days.

Just in time! In the evenings, we could see artillery fire, and one of our scout motorcyclists reported encountering Russian armoured vehicles beginning the encirclement of Budapest.

We arrived in Bábolna in the afternoon. I stopped the bus in front of the Casino (Social Club) and we looked around. Bábolna was also in a state of upheaval. The military headquarters was stationed in the stud headquarters building and in Tibor Szandtner's apartment. I then headed to the central district steward's residence to seek help. It was getting dark, and in front of Sanyi Horváth's home, I bumped into a gentleman who became quite indignant because I had swept past him thoughtlessly. I shone my pocket torch on him—and found myself face to face with my father.

It turned out that my sister Kata and her family, along with my father, had fled Székesfehérvár in her husband Béla Csabai's Opel Olympia motor car and had also headed to Bábolna, where they had lived for many years and had many good friends.

After this big surprise, I returned with Sanyi Horváth to our bus to look after the families awaiting placement. The casino was not booked, and we found plenty of space for the women and children in its spacious rooms. Ica, of course, was invited by Sanyi Horváth to stay at his home, and so the Török and Csabai families ended up heading in a common direction—to escape the war

Imre Németh arrived in his commander's car to take control of the situation. He welcomed the presence of Béla Csabai, as medical help was needed. Béla, however, could not report to his originally assigned division, but in this way, he was once again under military orders. Thus, both families reached Logérpatony the next day. The forward scout provided us with modest but adequate accommodation for the night.

There were many units in Logérpatony at that time. In fact, a German Air Force airport operated there, although they too were already planning relocation. From that point on, I became the Battalion Gendarmerie Commander, and once I became familiar with the terrain, I saw the German flying hero, General Galland, who was then commander of the departing troops.



General Galland

(Adolf "Dolfo" Joseph Ferdinand Galland was a German Luftwaffe general and flying ace who served throughout the Second World War in Europe.)

Then came December 24th—probably the saddest Christmas Eve of my life. We were together as a family, but there was no Christmas tree. The women tried to create a festive dinner. Kata baked the two hens she had packed into the car in Székesfehérvár. However, when we tasted them, we had to stop in disgust—the chickens were full of gasoline, and the meat was inedible.

As the military police chief of our troops, my life was not easy. Discipline was weakening. One morning, our commander gave permission for the women to take the bus to a nearby small town, hoping they could buy something there. I soon realised that the bus driver and soldiers were using this opportunity to trade on the black market. The bus was full of food intended for barter. I ordered the food to be removed from the vehicle. A corporal refused to obey. I drew my pistol and warned that I would have to use it if he did not comply. He hesitated, and I felt I had reached the final moment—I could no longer tolerate his defiance. I cocked the revolver, ready to fire, when the soldier, urged by his wife to stand down, finally gave in and removed the black-market goods.

I was later criticised at an officers' meeting for not using my weapon, but the commander supported me and said I had acted with

moderation. Later, both the soldier and his wife thanked me for my restraint.

Imre Németh understood the extreme conditions we were facing and did not object, but suggested that those who could should arrange their own food. The supply officer also tried to stockpile as much food as possible, knowing that ahead of us lay Germany, where food conditions were dire. Thus, not only the battalion's supply office but also some family members bought pigs from farmers, and many households slaughtered them. The farmers were glad to offload excess livestock, as regular transport to Pozsony had ceased weeks earlier. They felt the soldiers could take what they wanted, since it was now certain that everything would eventually fall into Russian hands. The farmers had no illusions about what the future would bring.

The makeshift abattoir, with fires burning the pigs, created an almost peaceful atmosphere, as everyone worked diligently to prepare an adequate food reserve for the journey to Germany.

Then the time came—we received our marching orders. I was at the front of the main branch of the battalion and left with six soldiers, having been selected as the commander of the group responsible for securing accommodation.

From that point on, the battalion relied on my knowledge of German, and I effectively became the battalion adjutant.

We set off in a small lorry, and in nearby villages, other military vehicles joined our division's "Accommodation Seeking Department." Of course, this section had a senior commander who arranged the necessary formalities for crossing the border. In the snow-covered countryside, we barely noticed when we crossed it...

Later, I often thought back to those moments—after all we had just lived through—our Hungarian history repeating itself, as exiled boots left their marks in the winter snow. In our century, it was the rubber wheels of automobiles that left traces, but our crossing of the border was painful, because by then, we had very little hope.

The last major German counterattacks had stalled after initial success, and the thought that kept our spirits alive was that, at the moment of German defeat, the Western powers would not allow the Soviet Union to claim victory over Europe.

Our truck raced toward Vienna, and perhaps we were the first Hungarian units in this sorrowful retreat to reach the once-pleasant imperial city. Now, however, it was bombed into ruin, and the roads were nearly impassable by the time we reached our designated destination.

The troops were placed in the German Defense Force Migrating Quarters, while the officers were directed to accommodation in the Officer Migrating Area. I was greatly surprised to find that we were housed in the

Habsburg

Bábolna to Vienna

Imperial Palace—it seemed almost incredible that we were given one large room for ourselves.

Perhaps years earlier, I had visited these rooms—possibly for a diplomatic reception or a dance evening when couples waltzed across the floor. Now, fifty to sixty beds were placed in the room, one for each of us. There was a washroom facility as well. Heating was out of the question, and the cruel cold blew through the partially broken windows. All we could do was strip off our boots and stretch out on our beds under a couple of blankets.

Perhaps we slept for a few hours, but more likely we shivered through the night and welcomed the morning. Within a few hours, all was well—we were together and ready with the troops to begin our next three-to-four-hour journey. By this time, we knew that the Czech village near the border, called Langau bei Geras, would be our quarters. The crew were better off than we officers, as they were satisfied with their bedding and served a hot, nutritious breakfast. In Vienna, the vast German supply organisation was still functioning.

In the afternoon, our vehicles arrived in the assigned village, and I made contact with the mayor—a fifty-year resident of Langau—who

received us very politely. It appeared that the villagers understood our situation.

Using the list, I had, I managed to carry out the task of finding accommodation, which meant the mayor had to commandeer rooms for us.

Then Sunday came, and I took my small detachment to attend Holy Mass at the village church. I spoke with the parish priest, and as I later learned, the fact that my soldiers officially took part in the service was well received. It made a very good impression on the local community and helped foster cooperation between the village leadership and us.

We even set up a dining area in one of the large halls of the local school.

When the battalion arrived with the family members, it truly seemed we had been fortunate in our transition from Hungary. Imre Németh expressed his thanks and appreciation that, overall, the placement of the battalion and families had taken place almost without error. There were a few complaints, but we managed to resolve them satisfactorily. The Török and Csabai families were housed in the large home of a family named Ries. Each room held five or six people, but in those times, this was considered a premier solution. The house had a large kitchen and many other amenities, so the women could manage the needs of the small children.

We were relatively well equipped, but the situation on the war front cast a shadow over us. In early February, we launched a new battlefield supply route. Our supplies were running low, and I gave one of my officers a pair of my Bilgeri boots and a fur-lined vest, previously reserved for me by the supply office. He left with a heavy heart.

We reserve officers could speak more openly in front of the crew, and we made no secret of the fact that the war was lost. Hungary held only a small area, and there was no hope of reversing our fate. Most of the soldiers were from Budapest and were deeply concerned about their loved ones in the besieged city. They headed to the front with

the intention of surrendering. Some believed that responsibility would fall on the officers. But we officers saw the situation more clearly and looked for ways to escape it. No one wanted to surrender to the Bolshevik forces.

Our command received an invitation to volunteer individually for the Hunyadi Armoured SS Grenadier Division, which was then being formed. Both my brother-in-law Béla and I thought that, on the one hand, we would gain time, and on the other, if deployed into battle, we would be volunteers—combat-ready and equipped to face the fortunes of war.

That is what we did, but neither the deployment of new troops nor the actual transfer to the Armoured Grenadier Division took place. Budapest fell, and the security of the Czech Republic was also threatened by the Russians. We had to consider continuing our withdrawal.

This is how we lived through March 15, our national day. The commander asked me to give an oration to the troops, highlighting the significance of the day. I could not imagine a more difficult speech for March 15. What could I say? It was already clear that we had failed, and the future was dark. I spoke about 1848 and how Budapest had fallen, but later the tide had turned and the country was liberated. I believed in this—and in a long exile. We waited in vain each March 15, and even in October 1956, for this to happen.

It turned out I could return to Hungarian territory for a day or two. At headquarters, a highly decorated sergeant presented a case to resolve a status issue. I do not recall the details, as such cases were common then. His superiors knew I had been a judge at the Ministry of Justice and asked for my opinion. I found that, under normal circumstances, the Family Law Department could resolve the matter. This raised the possibility of sending me to Szombathely, where the Ministry of Justice was still operating during its evacuation, to try to solve the case.

This is how I came to be in Szombathely in the last week of March, at the Ministry of Justice, which was housed in one of the court buildings. There I met old colleagues who were still serving. Many had not volunteered to leave Budapest, but staff numbers were still nearly at full strength, and it was heartening to see old friends. In the case of the non-commissioned officer, I presented the appropriate documents to one of the adjudicators, who promised a favourable decision.

One colleague drew the Minister's attention to the fact that, as a soldier, I was visiting from Germany. The Minister called me in, wanting first-hand information on the state of affairs in Germany. I spoke honestly. I said that, unfortunately, there were no new weapons, but pointed out that—even if public morale was low and hope scarce—there was discipline and order in the empire.

He knew I had studied the functioning of German unions and asked many questions on the subject. Finally, as we said goodbye, he expressed the hope that I would return to the Ministry of Justice as soon as possible. I politely acknowledged this, but the overall situation was such that I had only one thought: to return to my family and my duty station.

Early the next morning, I boarded a train to Vienna. I wanted to visit the Hungarian Embassy. I knew that at the time, Francis Vajta was in Vienna. We had previously met during my service in the ministry. He often visited István Antal during his time as propaganda minister.

The train, however, often stood for hours in open fields due to air raids, and I arrived in Vienna in the evening. I stayed near the Capuchin Crypt at a temporary officer's accommodation. The population was shaken by the air attacks. Vienna had suffered an air assault the previous night, and the hotel landlady was terrified at the prospect of another. I jokingly reassured her not to worry, as I was now one of her guests—and I always managed to avoid air raids. Indeed, I slept peacefully through the night.

In the morning, I went to the consulate. Francis Vajta was not there. According to the secretariat, he had travelled to Hungary the previous day but was expected back sometime that morning. He returned at 10 a.m. He greeted us sadly and said only: "Hungary has fallen, and now almost every inch of private land is in the hands of the Russians..."

He led me into his office and described our hopeless situation. He said he did not know what he should do next.

I was deeply shocked by the news. He reported that a massive aerial attack had struck Szombathely just one day after my departure. He had narrowly escaped being among the victims.

Great changes were also taking place at Langau. A few days earlier, Imre Németh had been ordered to the front, where he took command of a battalion in the Szent László Division. He could only have participated in the final operations, and we did not know his fate. Colonel Endre Zongor took over command, and Captain Tihanyi became his advisor to organise the continued retreat.

Use of vehicles and fuel was curtailed, so family members had to accept that only forty kilograms of luggage were permitted per person. One or two families had their own cars, which made their situation easier. Béla, my brother-in-law, was better off, as he had an Opel Olympia. Kata packed the little car with women and children to such an extent that Béla feared the axle might break and insisted that some of the packages be removed.

My challenge was that, once again, I was responsible for finding accommodation for the battalion, and I had to leave a day or two before my family and the appointed departure date. During these final stages of the retreat, cars could not be allocated, and the task was to use civilian railway transport in Bavaria to reach our destination: Eggenfelden, a small town where I was to report to Chief of Staff Colonel Francis Koszorús for further instructions. He was the commander of the armoured division responsible for

relocating the remaining troops and was in liaison with the relevant department of the German Defense Force.

In peacetime, the journey would have taken no more than a day, but now the railway connections were unreliable. The train stopped every two to three hours, and many times we had to change trains. In such cases, we often had to walk kilometres until we found a train line that had not been bombed.

I travelled with Mária, our domestic servant, because the battalion had an extra vehicle, and Béla's car was already crowded—with four children, two pregnant women (my wife and sister), and my elderly father, who was not much help. Mária was a lame girl with a



Vienna to Langau to Eggenfelden to Marklkofen

dislocated hip, so I often had to carry her bag for many kilometres.

But somehow, we struggled on to Eggenfelden. This was now Bavaria, where relatively peaceful conditions prevailed. At one of the Gasthöfe (German-style inns), I found Colonel Koszorús and reported to him. We received accommodation at the same location. The Colonel's aide was Lieutenant Egon Nezsényi, an old friend from Bábolna who had begun his military career back in 1937. When I was at the Train Barracks, he had been one of my subordinates.

By this time, I saw clearly that the war was lost, and I had no illusions—but it still struck me hard when Colonel Koszorús, in his cold, measured chief-of-staff manner, outlined his own situation and stated that we had come to the final days.

The village of Marklkofen in Niederbayern (Lower Bavaria) had been designated as the settlement area for the battalion, and Colonel Koszorús handed over liaison with the Wehrmacht High Command to the local authorities to assist us in carrying out our duties.

It was then that I met Lieutenant Ervin Hollósy, who had once been my commanding officer. He had been wounded at the Battle of Arad and joined my group as we set out for Marklkofen, which ultimately became the final station of the retreating battalion.



(The statue is a graceful testimony to the man who, under the orders of Admiral Horthy, deployed his First Armoured Division against László Baky and the collaborating pro-Nazi forces on July 5, 1944—temporarily preventing an Arrow Cross coup and halting the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Budapest. This unparalleled action remains the only known instance in which an Axis power used military force to prevent deportations. It delayed the Nazi takeover by three and a half months, allowing tens of thousands to escape or find refuge, and enabled Raoul Wallenberg to coordinate his successful and effective rescue mission.)

The End of World War II

Colonel Koszorús had been in contact with the appropriate division of the Wehrmacht General Staff for almost the entire war. His current responsibilities, though seemingly trivial from a military standpoint, were not easy to manage. The German Empire had already been overrun by refugees, and it was clear to those in charge that the movement of the masses could no longer be halted. It was understandable that local authorities were reluctant to cooperate; they tried to exempt their regions from the burden of admitting more refugees.

It took three or four days before we received the details of our destination and the command letters. During this time, the first units of the battalion began to arrive, along with the first passenger cars. Among them was my brother-in-law Béla's car. I was reunited with my little family, and we were grateful to have survived this difficult phase. I was especially relieved when they recounted how they had endured the arduous and dangerous journey of several hundred kilometres. At that time, American fighter planes were bombing roads in low formation, strafing anything that moved—regardless of the fact that nearly all traffic consisted of civilian refugees, often trudging along in sorrowful lines. In one such air attack, a comrade of mine lost his wife and two small children as they travelled in a village wagon, hoping to reach safety.

Our two families encountered a political-military conundrum when local authorities, acting on a false rumour, believed that the Szent (Saint) László Division had defected to the Russians. As with all rumours, there was a kernel of truth: one of the division's Chief of Staff officers had indeed defected. But the division itself fought bravely to the very last hours of the war. Nevertheless, a German military commander decided that the Hungarian "retreat" must be stopped. A roadblock was set up near Passau in Bavaria, where the

entry of luggage-laden cars was banned. These vehicles were herded into designated areas and courtyards and confiscated. My brother-in-law Béla's car was left standing by the roadside. They watched helplessly as the SA (Storm Troopers, or Brown Shirts) carried out this harsh order.

Béla sat in his car with two pregnant women, four children, and my elderly father. As the battalion doctor, he had also been assigned to two other vehicles to assist young children and expectant mothers who were close to giving birth.

My sister Kata urged Béla, as a doctor, to appeal to the German health authorities for help. But Béla, deeply disillusioned by the Germans' attitude—despite their being our allies—saw only betrayal and refused. Kata then took the supporting documents herself and approached the commanding Gauleiter (a Nazi district governor). She explained the seriousness of the situation and, in tears, pleaded for their group to be released. It seems her weeping moved the man, and after some hesitation, he granted permission for the three cars to continue on their way.

Thus, we met in Eggenfelden as planned—but the Passau roadblock had stripped us of our last remaining possessions. All authorised persons were limited to forty-pound packages on the battalion trucks, but those vehicles never arrived. We later tried to locate them, but it was hopeless. We were left with almost no spare clothing. I had no civilian clothes, and after the war, I struggled even to obtain a coat or shoes.



World War II refugees

In Eggenfelden, we did not yet know that the packages were lost. We were simply grateful to be reunited. Our accommodation was in a mass shelter—five or six to a room, with straw bags for beds—but

even this was a great improvement for my family. On the road, for example, Ica, who was seven months pregnant, had spent one night sleeping on a restaurant table for a few hours. In another town, she was crammed into a cinema hall with hundreds of refugees, where even a straw mattress was considered a luxury.

Then Ica and I met Miklós (Nicholas) Egyed, a medical lieutenant, on the main street of Eggenfelden. We both knew him from Szeged, as Nicholas had courted Ica's good friend for many years. We also knew that his family had long been followers of Ferenc Szálasi, leader of the fascist Arrow Cross Party. Nicholas was a staunch right-winger and, as a composer, had promoted "A Soldier's Song" by András Somosvári at the "Wish List" concerts—an anthem popular in the Hungarian army.

To our great surprise, Nicholas now spoke of the senselessness of war. He criticised the Germans and said he had many Jewish friends in Budapest's music circles. He was trying to return home as soon as possible. The image of rats fleeing a sinking ship came to mind. Nicholas did return to Hungary, but he could not adapt to the new regime. In 1956, he emigrated to the United States.

On April 12, together with Ervin Hollósy, I set off to arrange the placement of the battalion in Marklkofen. We arrived in the evening at the small village, but the trains in the region were unreliable, and we were unable to find accommodation even for ourselves that first night. There were a couple of guesthouses in the village, but they all claimed to be full of refugees. So, we tried to make ourselves comfortable in the waiting room of a small railway station, lying on the ground with our military capes for cover.

At around two o'clock in the morning, the station watchman peeked in and excitedly told us that his radio had just announced the sudden death of President Roosevelt. The railway porter and my friend Ervin both saw a glimmer of hope in this news. Many believed that, with the looming communist victory, Roosevelt's death might open the door to a peace that would preserve the independence of

European nations. But by then, I was emotionally drained and could not share their optimism. I thought of my studies of Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West) and felt, in my heart, that we were witnessing the final days of civilisation.

As dawn broke, we turned from philosophy to pragmatism. The mayor received us politely and expressed his regret that the village, overwhelmed by refugees from Silesia, was full. Though he sympathised with us, he said he could not help. He held the Wehrmacht's order for the placement of our troops, but his only response was that he would contact them to request a revision.

Despair overcame me. I raised my voice as if commanding a squadron back home. In the "Prussian" style I had learned well in Berlin, I said firmly and arrogantly, in fluent German: "This order is the command of the Führer, who accepted us as guests of the German Empire. If this command is not met, you are violating the General Command."

That was a turning point. The mayor became as meek as a lamb, and we began preparing the necessary accommodations. Though the village itself had no space, Marklkofen administratively included several scattered farmsteads a few kilometres away—places like Johannes Schwimmbach and Ulrich Schwimmbach. These small farming settlements could still squeeze in a few refugees.

The Török and Csabai families were assigned to the country house of the Kammermeier family in Johannes Schwimmbach. The host had a two-storey house with bedrooms on the upper floor, already full with the family, three or four



The building at top where the family was accommodated has since been converted to a barn.

Silesian refugees, and four labourers. The ground floor housed the laundry, kitchen, and family living room. This living room became our quarters. There was a couch, a dining table with chairs. When the host farmer learned of the number of new guests, he laid out straw bags, and we positioned ourselves on the floor, side by side

The troops were housed in the attic of one of the barns at Ulrich Schwimmbach. This accommodation was far from adequate, but it provided a roof over everyone's head. Under the circumstances, we could not expect more.

We notified the Eggenfelden command, and the battalion arrived the next day. Both the bus carrying family members and the troops reached us—but the parcels were gone. We began to realise that they had either failed to cross the blockade or had been involved in an accident. Accusations arose that the drivers had “taken off” with the valuables, but no one could ever prove it.

Ica said that when they arrived in Marklkofen, the children were very restless and the women were desperate to rest. She decided to look for accommodation. By chance, the line of cars stopped in front of a large and beautiful Roman Catholic parish. Ica rang the bell. The hostess appeared. Ica explained their desperate need and asked for shelter, but the woman refused. She said the pastor was not at home and she could not let anyone into the house. The parish house was spacious, and it was clear that the premises had not been allocated to refugees. Ica was deeply disappointed by the cold reception.

(She also told us that when they knocked on the door of a synagogue, they were warmly welcomed and given a bed for the night.)

By then, my friend Hollósy and I had reported to the commander, and we were able to bring good news to the family members: we could immediately begin moving into our new accommodation.

The remaining battalion placements were such that the groups were physically separated. A two-kilometre distance divided them, so in a military sense, we were no longer a cohesive unit. The

troops—approximately 80 to 100 people, including non-commissioned officers and unmarried officers—were stationed in the Ulrich Schwimmbach area. But the control and care of the families had become an insurmountable task.

From that point on, the families became almost entirely reliant on the German food supply to organise their daily lives. The German authorities provided us with food tickets. In the first months of our relocation, German banks exchanged our currency (pengő) into German marks. There was a shortage of labour, and those willing to help the farmers could earn extra food. This was even more valuable than the food tickets, which allowed only the purchase of basic necessities—supplementary rations were essential.

The Török and Csabai families could consider themselves fortunate to have been allocated to Johannes Schwimmbach, which was well administered and life resembled peacetime. The farmer had 8–10 cows and a healthy pig stock. With the help of conscripted labourers, they regularly completed the day's work across 30–40 acres of farmland. The host ate with the co-workers. The hardworking German farmer said the Lord's Prayer aloud after everyone had gathered around the table, waiting for a large pot of stew. The labourers and the host family shared a very good relationship; there was no sign of the horror stories often told about forced labour. The Ukrainian peasants lived on this German farm as if at home—or perhaps even better. One of the female workers told Ica, quite honestly, that it was in Germany that she wore shoes for the first time in her life.

In this practical relationship of land management and animal care, ethnic differences were completely blurred.

Our hosts were frugal and strictly monitored that we received only what we could purchase with our ration tickets. Occasionally, the housewife would offer a small quantity of fat or eggs, moved by the women's struggle to provide something nourishing for the children.

Meanwhile, the military situation neared its conclusion. Based on radio reports and map readings, it became clear that the advancing American divisions would encircle our little farm group within days.

The radio continued to preach the necessity of resistance and tried to rally the public. But no one believed anymore.

On 20 April, we listened to Propaganda Minister Goebbels's radio speech commemorating Hitler's birthday. In this broadcast, he was no longer optimistic. Almost prophetically, he spoke of suffering soon coming to an end, of the German people rebuilding their country, and of cities announcing the nation's revival. Finally, he declared his loyalty to the Führer.

The speech stirred the people. How could a leader, in the midst of downfall and destruction, speak so confidently of the future?

On 30 April, we heard on German radio that Hitler was dead. The broadcast played funeral hymns and no longer featured the marching tunes of previous days. The German and Hungarian people gathered in the kitchen and listened in shock to the grim announcement. Hitler had been held in high esteem by the German population, who accepted the collapse of the regime with discipline and solemnity.

The next day, it became clear that U.S. forces were very close. Béla, my brother-in-law, and I walked to a ridge near the farm, from where we could see north across the valley. From there, we spotted the small town of Dingolfing. On the elevated terrain south of the town, we saw German units—about a hundred soldiers—taking up positions. They set up machine guns, and when American tanks reached the city gates, they opened fire. The American advance halted. They called in artillery and, within an hour, returned fire. The German unit then abandoned its position and retreated in single file through the hills. Soon, they had left the area around our farm. One or two hours later, the American armoured vehicles resumed their advance. We watched from the hilltop as they moved south. We were now under American occupation.

This news was received with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it confirmed the loss of our struggle; on the other, we hoped that the forces of Western civilisation would treat us humanely.

Suddenly, the next day, snow fell. The beautiful green fields were once again blanketed in white. On that day, General Patton's infantry marched across the land. Bandi (Andrew) Zongor, the commander of one of our small groups, presented himself with a white flag to the invading forces and informed the U.S. commander of our presence, staff numbers, and schedules. This marked the end of my role in the battalion, as English language skills were now more necessary than German. Fortunately, Sándor (Alexander) Liptay, who had served as an ensign, had graduated from the Sárospatak English Teaching High School. He was able to communicate effectively in English and from then on served as assistant officer. With a heavy heart, I watched the scene unfold from the farmer's kitchen window.

The young American commander of the occupying forces received our communication politely. He decided that, until further orders, the officers could keep their weapons and that we should remain together. His battalion moved on, and there was no immediate change to our daily life. The Military Government established itself in the valley villages of Frontenhausen and Marklkofen and, with the help of the remaining local authorities, tried to maintain order.

There were, however, lapses in control. We heard that an American Indian sergeant had raped a young German girl who worked nearby. Our family, too, experienced the darker side of military occupation.

One afternoon, the roar of a powerful engine signalled the arrival of three soldiers who pulled into our hosts' courtyard on motorised vehicles. They jumped down in machine-gun formation. The commander remained outside, but four or five non-commissioned officers entered our room, which held my father, four children, two pregnant women, my brother-in-law, and me. They pointed a machine gun at us and, in broken German, demanded our valuables.

Under threat, we surrendered our watches and fountain pens. The soldiers then left as abruptly as they had arrived, engines roaring. The entire scene was deeply disturbing. What troubled me most was that the officer clearly knew what his men were doing and chose to remain outside, watching.

This event occurred after the formal ceasefire and unconditional surrender. It was not an act of war—it was armed robbery.

The truce—or more accurately, the capitulation—was announced by the Great German Radio. The message stated that the country had been completely overrun and that Germans must now continue their struggle underground. The announcer declared that, in such grave times, role models were needed more than fighting men.

Despite these harrowing experiences, the demands of daily life forced us to focus on survival.

The German farmer and his family tried to adapt to the new reality. The pictures of Hitler were, of course, removed from the walls. The host himself had been a party member and the district head farmer, but not out of political conviction. Small farmers in Germany generally kept to their land and avoided politics. The Military Government's first public proclamation called for the surrender of all firearms. The host sadly parted with his hunting rifle.

The news service now vividly reported the crimes of the Nazi regime. It was then that we first heard of the extermination of Jews in the Eastern European camps. Our hosts were appalled. As devout Catholics, they could not fathom that such atrocities had occurred during the war without the public's knowledge.

The mood among the conscripted labourers in the district also changed. Before the armistice, they had been friendly toward us. Some of our soldiers even helped them distil brandy. I tasted the result of one such effort—immediately spitting it out, as it was undrinkable. The farm workers also visited the military headquarters in Marklkofen, where a Russian officer was stationed,

and they held raucous parties. Perhaps fuelled by alcohol and victory propaganda, they committed various crimes and terrorised the local German population.

This news prompted us to take defensive measures. We removed the wheels from Béla's car and hid them in our rooms. The car stood in a corner of the barn, resting on bricks where the wheels had been.

Our commander remained in contact with the Marklkofen military headquarters, and we received an open order authorising us to travel around the area in farm wagons. We were tasked with compiling a list of Hungarian troops and civilians scattered across remote areas—small villages and hamlets. We soon realised that, in our immediate surroundings alone, more than five hundred civilians were billeted on farms, often living in very primitive conditions.

Medical help was urgently needed. My brother-in-law, Béla, travelled daily by horse-drawn wagon to provide treatment wherever possible. Unfortunately, our supply of medication was dwindling, and the growing health concerns only deepened the gravity of our situation.

On one occasion, while Béla Csabai was doing his medical rounds, a group of Ukrainians broke into our house—five or six of them. They demanded that we immediately hand over the keys and tyres of our vehicle. I stood up to them. The car keys were hidden in our room, but I told them that the keys were with the owner, a medical doctor currently on his rounds, and that I did not know where the wheels were. They then ordered me to come with them to the car in the barn. I went, but as a precaution, I took my service revolver, cocked it, and slipped it into the pocket of my riding breeches.

In the barn, the Ukrainians inspected the car, searching around to see if the wheels were nearby. Then their leader drew a revolver, looked at me, and shouted that if I didn't hand over the keys and reveal the location of the wheels, he would shoot. I don't know why I didn't back down. I retorted, without thinking, that only the owner

knew where the keys and wheels were, and if he wanted to shoot, then shoot.

Perhaps I sensed they were bluffing. No shots were fired. After a brief, heated exchange in a language I couldn't understand, the hooligans jumped on their bikes and headed toward Marklkofen.

We were, of course, agitated and shocked. We discussed the incident and were still shaken when, perhaps half an hour later, we heard gunshots and saw two or three American jeeps enter the farmyard, accompanied by American troops and the Ukrainians. The Americans looked around, trying to get oriented. I noticed they had a Russian officer with them, who I later learned was assigned as the Russian government's military liaison.

I was brought before them, and my interrogation began. By that time, Ensign Sándor (Alex) Liptay had been summoned from Ulrich Schwimmbach to act as my interpreter before the Americans.

Naturally, I explained that the car did not belong to me but to the group's assigned doctor, who was away. I told them that the armed Ukrainians had threatened to take the car, which I had refused. I saw one of the Ukrainians speak to the Russian officer, who then whispered something to the American interrogator. The officer asked me whether I had a gun. I replied in the affirmative. My friend Alex Liptay then clarified that our corps had been permitted to retain their weapons under an agreement with the U.S. authorities. The officer asked where the gun was. I reached into my pocket and handed it to him.

The Russian officer noted that the safety lock was off and asked why. I replied that I had been under threat and had to prepare for possible violence.

There was a brief discussion between the American and Russian officers. Finally, we were told that our command should immediately contact the military government in Marklkofen to determine the time and place for the collection of our weapons. They departed without returning my gun, which was to be expected.

We were relieved—they might have taken me with them, as martial law was in effect regarding the possession of arms. It was true that our corps had been told we could keep our weapons, but it would have been difficult to locate the American officer who had made that decision in the final days of the war.

The American officer who interviewed me demonstrated that, even in a free society, he was a proud soldier. Yet, in these harsh conditions, we felt ashamed and particularly vulnerable. The Central European discipline ingrained in us was very foreign to the Wild West-style of conduct, which operated on a kind of natural law—and yet, we found it oddly sympathetic.

Within a few days, the transfer of weapons took place, and our troop numbers were recorded by the military government. The general situation began to improve. My brother-in-law was granted travel permission so he could more easily visit his Hungarian patients. The food ration system resumed. It seemed our fate was slowly improving.

We knew that the German army had been gathered into POW camps and, after disarmament, would eventually be issued decommissioning cards.

If the military police—many of whom behaved in a Wild West manner and provoked the locals—saw a younger man, they would immediately demand to see his discharge papers. If he couldn't produce them, they arrested him. We knew that we too would soon be transported for formal disarmament. News arrived that the remaining Hungarian units had been handed over to the Russians. We feared this might happen to us as well. We trembled at the thought of having to leave our families again. Information about the situation in Hungary was sketchy, but what we heard was that bloody revenge had begun against anyone who had resisted the Bolshevik forces.

So, it was no surprise when we were informed that we soldiers would be shipped off in trucks to a prisoner of war camp. There was

an understanding that my brother-in-law Béla Csabai, the doctor; Ensign Sándor Liptay, the English interpreter; and the pastor would be exempted so they could remain to help organise the lives of the families. For me, this decision was a relief. Ica was eight months pregnant, and Béla, who was also an obstetrician, would ensure that she would not be left alone to suffer during her difficult hours.

The parting was very painful. We did not know what would happen to us. Would we be forcibly deported to Siberia? We had to face the possibility that we might never see each other again.

In an American prisoner of war camp.

We had to be ready for transport on 30 May. We packed a backpack with essential clothing and personal belongings, and threw a blanket over our shoulders, prepared for a longer stay away. The war had ended three weeks earlier, and we felt we were not being sent to a prisoner of war camp, but rather for the implementation of disarmament procedures.

The American trucks arrived, and we were squeezed aboard—thirty to forty men per vehicle. The journey was short. Our convoy stopped suddenly at the Marklkofen sports ground, only three or four kilometres from our Schwimmbach home, and we were ordered to disembark. An American sergeant began issuing commands. First, he ordered the troops to sit in a tight group, then instructed the officers to line up separately in two lines.

Soldiers brought shovels, and the troops were forced to dig pits. The shape of the pits led us to believe they were intended as our graves. While our soldiers worked, the Americans laughed among themselves and pointed at us. Suddenly, a sergeant stepped in front of our group of officers and ordered us to run on the spot. The scene was deeply humiliating, and we felt once again how low the world had sunk.

During the on-the-spot running, I could not help myself and muttered under my breath, like a radio announcer on the Voice of America: ***“Now this is the Voice of America. America is one of the members of the United Nations.”***

So, we endured that humiliation as well. The grave digging ended, and we were left to wait. Our spirits were at rock bottom; we no longer hoped for humane treatment. What happened was a form of revenge against the vanquished—*Vae Victis* (“*woe to the vanquished*”); a slogan, it seems, that will forever accompany humanity.

Once again, we were loaded onto trucks—or more accurately, kicked onto overcrowded trucks. Anyone who managed to breathe a little more freely was considered fortunate.

The journey was not long—perhaps thirty miles into the Isar River Valley. Again, we were ordered off the trucks, and machine gun units herded us toward the riverbank. There was a wide grassy floodplain, spacious enough to hold a large crowd. As far as the eye could see, thousands of German and Hungarian soldiers were crowded together. There were no buildings or barracks. The prisoners stood, sat, or lay in impossible conditions. Then it began to rain. Until then, May had brought pleasant weather, but now the Medárd (Kammermayer) daily rains arrived, worsening our situation.

Our troops were fortunate: soon after our arrival, tents were distributed. Nearby was one of Rommel's army storage depots, and we managed to receive thirty two-person tents. There was no comfort—four men squeezed under each tarpaulin—but at least we were spared the soaking rain that afflicted thousands of other soldiers who received no such godsend.

The next morning, we were given something to eat. Among the prisoners, the so-called "C Ration" was distributed. American soldiers on the front received three such portions per day, but we were grateful to receive even one. Later, we learned that each portion contained around 500 calories—just enough to stave off starvation.

We also struggled to obtain drinking water. The most humiliating aspect was attending to our daily necessities. We were assigned a section of the field—pits and mounds, whatever worked. Soon, the field was filled with human waste, and the meadow reeked. Anyone lucky enough to have a scrap of paper in their pocket could preserve a small measure of cleanliness.

In the morning, the sun emerged briefly. We began to explore our surroundings. In addition to the wide variety of Hungarian units, the majority of prisoners were German soldiers.

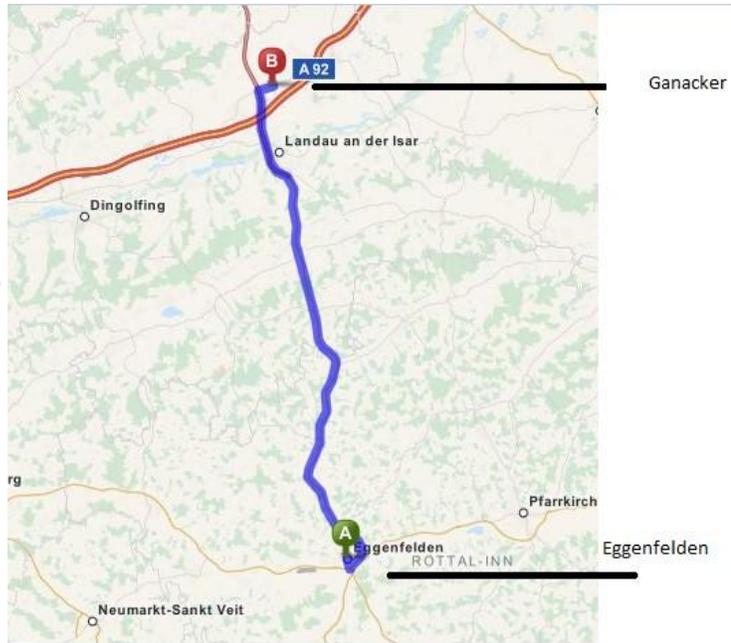
A young German officer approached and asked if anyone spoke German. I was sent to him. He introduced himself formally, as if we were meeting in an officers' mess. I do not remember his name, but after introducing himself, he said: "I was a lieutenant in the German armed forces." That sentence stayed with me—it expressed our complete collapse.

He recounted that, in Hungary, he had been quartered in an Esterházy Palace, where he befriended a count's daughter. He asked whether we had any contact with Hungary and if we could advise him on how to reach people there. We could not offer any encouraging information, so we said goodbye. His courteous behaviour in that hellish environment only underscored the dramatic change in our destiny.

In hindsight, I believe the American military leadership did everything possible to make the "decommissioning" process swift. But with such large numbers, coordination was difficult, and organisational capacity was limited. The Americans tried to alleviate the conditions, and as a result, we were fortunate that on the second day we were loaded onto trucks and driven near the village of Ganacker.

There, conditions improved. We were crammed into a school building—about twenty to thirty people per room, lying side by side on the floor—but at least we were protected from the rain and wind.

We received news that Hungarian troops in this region had been handed over to the Russians, so we lived in a very bitter mood. The food remained minimal. With the so-called C rations, there was a little chocolate, a biscuit, and a small bag of coffee powder—but no hot water. We were starving. Some of us had brought a little bread and salami, which allowed us to survive for a day or two.



On 4 June, we were on the road again. Once more, we were crammed into trucks and came to understand what the expression “let’s go” truly meant. We raced along the open road. At the bends, the trucks rarely slowed, and we clung to each other, trying not to fall out. At Regensburg, we crossed the Danube. We learned we were in Regensburg from a German bystander when congested traffic brought our convoy to a halt.

The convoy had grown from two or three vehicles into a larger group heading north. This filled us with concern, as the Czech border was now close. Once again, we feared our journey would end in a Russian prisoner of war camp. Around noon, we stopped and were directed to another camp.

Later, we discovered we had arrived in Hohenfels, near an old German training camp close to the town of Parsberg. The Germans had used this section as a prisoner of war camp during the latter part of the war, and we now replaced the previous British and American POWs.

Although the war had ended three weeks earlier, the Americans again made a crude display of our defeat by driving us into the camp between two rows of machine guns pointed at us.

The camp was surrounded by barbed wire, but the buildings offered the basic amenities needed



Regensburg to Hohenfels

for daily life. The huts were large, aircraft-hangar-sized structures, lined up side by side and separated by wide roads. The barracks contained elevated wooden bunk beds. The latrines were well-constructed, and there was a military-style kitchen with a working water supply.

We breathed a sigh of relief and almost cheerfully began settling in. The battalion remained together, and the soldiers willingly did everything they could to make our situation bearable.

First, we cleaned the barracks, which housed approximately 120 people. I chose one of the top bunks; near me was Colonel Saad, one of the motorised officers who had taken command of the remaining division. Captain Bandi (Andy) Zongor chose a bed nearby.

Then we explored our surroundings. Our small corps was only a fraction of the camp's population—there were 40,000 people in total. The German SS soldiers and we Hungarians made up roughly half each. Captain István (Stephen) Tapody represented the Hungarians before the Americans. High wire fences ensured we could not escape. Guard towers were manned by American soldiers carrying machine guns; most of the guards were Black.

The camp kitchen functioned. Of course, there were many kitchens throughout the camp. Once a day, we received hot soup. Each person was given one-third of a slice of bread daily, and 120

hungry men shared a two-kilo block of cheese. Distribution was handled by a reserve officer who had been a maths teacher in civilian life. It was shocking to witness the subdivision of the cheese, watched intently by the barrack's residents sprawled on their beds. After all, each person received only a single bite.

Sometimes I was assigned to the kitchen. My task was to ensure that all delivered materials actually made it into the soup and that the loaves were fairly divided and distributed among the troops. The soup contained very little nutrition. If you found something solid in your billycan, you chewed it with relish. When cooking, the chef often had to add water to the boiling soup—this was done by immersing a garden hose directly into the pot. We rarely received C rations. When we did, I began collecting the chocolate pieces, thinking of my little children, about whom I knew nothing.

We tried, with help from the German population, to notify our relatives of our well-being. There was no Field Post Office, as the Geneva Convention did not apply. It was later revealed that, for convenience, the Americans did not consider us prisoners but branded us as “demobilised hostile forces” (**enemy combatants**), to whom the Geneva Conventions did not apply. Eventually, a few of our soldiers were allowed to work on nearby German farms, which enabled us to establish contact with our families.

Later, we learned that Sándor (Alexander) Liptay, my brother-in-law Béla, and our pastor had done everything they could to locate us and improve our situation. They bought potatoes, collected fat and other foodstuffs. Sanyi (Alex) Liptay secured a peasant cart, and they began a 150-kilometre journey. It took a couple of days to reach us. The U.S. headquarters finally allowed the family members to deliver their gifts.

We were overjoyed to receive the food supplies, but our greatest joy was hearing news of our families from Alex. Even today, I vividly remember standing before Alex as he cheerfully shouted from the cart: “Congratulations, Béla, you have a baby boy! His name is

András (Andrew)! Both Ica and the boy are well!” This news reached me about ten days after Andrew’s birth—around 7 July 1945.

Our food situation improved because Colonel Saad assigned his troops to work in the American kitchen. Each night, loyal soldiers gathered leftovers from U.S. soldiers’ plates in tin cans. Lieutenant Colonel Saad distributed these among his closest friends.

Despite this supplement, our weight dropped rapidly. We received no more than 500 calories a day. I weighed 85 kilos when taken prisoner and only 65 kilos when released in early October. Later, when doctors advised us not to overeat and to lose weight, I always replied that it didn’t apply to me—I had already endured what I called “*The Diet of the American Health Studios.*”

The poor diet was the reason sixty to seventy people were transported daily from the camp to the hospital. It also contributed to the tragic shootings of many soldiers. American guards shouted warnings that were not understood, and we often heard machine gun fire.

For some, the limits on smoking were a serious problem. C rations contained perhaps five cigarettes. Those who didn’t smoke had “currency” and could trade for many things at the camp market. I usually exchanged my cigarette quota for warm clothing. Expecting to remain through winter, I eventually had several pairs of gloves and a pullover.

One painful memory related to smoking still lingers. As I mentioned, the guard towers were manned by Black soldiers. When they saw prisoners searching the grounds for discarded cigarette butts, they were amused. They would playfully cut up un-smoked cigarettes and toss them to the prisoners, laughing as we scrambled to retrieve them. That officers were involved in this humiliating scene made me feel deeply ashamed—but the addictive nature of nicotine was overpowering.

Weeks passed, and we gradually felt the need to occupy ourselves. Lt. Col. Saad was a bridge player and soon recruited me for regular games.

We had cards but no table. Ingeniously, we dug holes into which we could dangle our legs, and the grassy meadow served as our tabletop. We played bridge six to seven hours a day. Later, I never again had the chance to play for such long stretches—life's demands left no room for such "excesses."

style kitchen with a working water supply.

We breathed a sigh of relief in these and almost cheerfully tackled the settling in. The battalion remained together and the soldiers willingly tried to do everything possible to make our situation bearable.

I found other regular pursuits. The unit was joined by a young, recently conscripted 20 to 22-year-old boy, Corporal Gyurka (George) Donszky, who shared my view that we should gain some proficiency in the English language. I also remembered that Lajos (Louis) Kossuth, the leader of the 1848 revolution, had begun learning English during his captivity, and later spoke it fluently. We wondered whether this could be possible for us—but we got to work. One of the officers had a Yolland English–Hungarian dictionary, which he lent us, so we now had a "textbook."

The camp, before our arrival, had been an American prisoner-of-war camp, and behind the barracks was a rubbish dump where we found English detective novels that some of the prisoners had been reading. I began reading one. Each page took hours to decipher, but gradually it became easier. During my captivity, I worked through two of these books. Gyurka and I often walked up and down the "street" in front of the barracks, asking each other the meaning of words we considered useful. We learned up to forty or fifty words a day. So, I acquired the basics of the English language, which proved a great help once I was free again. I must point out, to my great

astonishment, that I later discovered I spoke with a French accent—so my English was quite difficult to understand.

Two or three times a week, I taught German in the camp. These lessons were organised by the leadership for the benefit of the troops—mainly to keep them occupied. It was natural that, after the initial shock and confusion, idleness had a negative effect on everyone, and an increasing air of unrest spread through the camp. This needed to be addressed by both the German and Hungarian camp leadership.

In our unit was a soldier whose name I no longer recall, but his friends called him “Gypsy.” He committed many infractions and was reprimanded by Captain Pataky. The soldier sought revenge and denounced Captain Pataky to the Americans, accusing him of being a Nazi war criminal. Captain Pataky was summoned by U.S. headquarters for questioning. He had been Hungary’s ice-skating champion, nicknamed Dingo, and was a well-decorated front-line soldier who proudly wore the Iron Cross. Despite all cautionary advice, he went to the Americans wearing his military decorations. Through an interpreter, he explained that he had chastised the soldier for repeated offences. He emphasised that he was a commissioned officer, never involved in politics, and had always fulfilled his duties. The American captain listened attentively and seemed to understand the significance of Dingo’s decorations. He sent a message to the “Gypsy” that if he ever made another false accusation, he would “slap the sh*t out of him.” When Captain Pataky recounted the story, Gyurka Donszky noted the colourful expression, enriching our English vocabulary.

Returning to my work in German language education, I recall that after the 1956 revolution, when I visited a friend in Australia who had occasionally worked for a Hungarian refugee, he reminded me that I had been his teacher at Hohenfels. For many years, since becoming my client, he often recalled the months we spent together.

Captain Pataky spent his time devising a Great War Game. We fought elaborate battles throughout the waking hours on sand tables with homemade figurines carved from wood.

Each of us relived battles in different forms. Lieutenant Újlaki had taken part in the retreat from Transylvania and had suffered serious air pressure injuries in Arad. He was now in the Reserves, having not fully recovered. He often woke us at night, loudly leading his troops again and again. It was eerie to hear, but the 120 Hungarian soldiers quietly endured this nightly scene.

There were difficulties with shaving. Our foaming soaps and creams were running low, and many of us decided to grow beards. I grew a goatee, which in those days was called a Balbo, after the famous Italian general. Our troops had a barber who cared weekly for the shape of our beards and kept the rest of our facial hair in order. Growing a beard made sense, but I didn't like the look and developed a nervous habit of chewing my moustache.

I was on good terms with a reserve lieutenant who was a professor in civilian life. I enjoyed talking with him because he was an educated liberal arts man. Lieutenant Oravetz and I had many discussions about how we might rejoin Hungarian life once our captivity ended. We were slow to receive updates on the political situation. Occasionally, the Americans distributed the Stars and Stripes soldiers' newspaper, and through it we realised that the Russian occupation would be prolonged. We had hoped that after the peace treaty, they would withdraw—but over time, it became increasingly likely that Hungary's social order would have to adapt to the Russian system. In jest, one of us declared, "In the East rose the red sun of truth." It meant that, if we wanted to reintegrate into our homeland, we would eventually have to work within the new Communist system. None of us could imagine cooperating with an atheist state that denied our history. Oravetz was the first to raise the idea of emigrating overseas, but at the time I could not accept that we might leave our ancient land. Another factor was that

emigration—with my elderly father and three small children—seemed virtually impossible. I dismissed the thought.

In mid-August, I read for the first time in the U.S. Army newspaper that the Americans had dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities.

Shocked, I remembered Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West). I had fallen under his influence in 1938 while in Berlin. I had been sceptical, struggling to imagine how our civilisation could be destroyed by some fearsome barbarian force, as had happened to ancient civilisations. The atomic bomb fundamentally changed my view.

Daily life as a prisoner of war did not change because of this news. The passing months became increasingly unbearable. Our freedom had been taken away, and as a former criminal tribunal judge, I vowed that if I ever sat in judgment again, my verdicts would be moderate—because I had experienced firsthand the effects of prolonged confinement, even when punishment was warranted.

Later, we learned that, to aid our release, those in Johannes Schwimmbach had applied to the military government to allow us to return to our families. The main reason was that trains repatriating Hungarian refugees to Hungary were about to begin, and reuniting families would speed up the process.

This special request became stuck somewhere in the system. Nevertheless, Colonel Vághó, the regimental commander of the motorised division—and our old Nazi acquaintance from Szeged—was successful. It was typical of the tangled situation that, in the district where Colonel Vághó lived, no action was ever taken by the Americans, so he was able to live freely with his family. The good-natured Nazi had somehow become acquainted with an American major at a dinner with friends. While enjoying some wine, he remarked that it was absurd that brother troops were imprisoned at Hohenfels while their families lived nearby without sponsors, and yet trains would soon be heading home. The U.S. major, in a good

mood, almost instantly reached for the phone and called the camp headquarters at Hohenfels, requesting that action be taken as soon as possible to transport us back to Johannes Schwimmbach.

On 2 October, the camp headquarters ordered that our relief battalion be on standby, as on 4 October we would be transported back to Johannes Schwimmbach. They required a list of our names and ranks.

It was with great joy and happiness that we prepared for the journey. The other groups were envious, but deep down they were glad that the release process had begun.

There was a fly in the ointment when we learned that Deák, an officer's assistant, had been denied departure. He was mistaken for Colonel Deák, who was listed as a war criminal for offences committed in Transylvania. Despite our efforts to clarify that the only connection was the shared surname, the Americans would not listen. Our Deák, the old NCO, had served as head of the battalion officers' canteen for the past twenty years, and his front-line service dated back to the First World War. With tears in his eyes, he bid us farewell. Later, we learned that after another six months at Hohenfels, he was finally released and returned to Hungary in the spring of 1946.

The main road leading back to Hohenfels was far more pleasant than it had been four months earlier. By this time, the U.S. soldiers were noticeably more relaxed, and we had a reasonably comfortable journey via Regensburg.

The little town of Dingolfing was the centre of our district, and the trucks stopped there briefly. To my surprise, I saw my father in the street—he was buying provisions. He recognised me, and we exchanged a few words before the convoy moved on. It was a great thrill to have this unexpected reunion, but I was shocked to see how much my father had aged in just a few months. It was clear that the loss of the war had deeply distressed him and affected him

psychologically. We, the younger generation, were able to restart our lives—but he could not do the same.

After a few more kilometres, we passed through Frontenhausen, where my son Andrew had been born on 27 June. We turned toward Johannes Schwimmbach, and there I embraced Ica and the children, and we kissed each other. I was glad to see that my sister Kata and her children were all well. For the first time, I saw my infant son Andrew and Kata's baby Béci, who had been born in late September. Ica and I were asked to be Béci's godparents.

My sons were happy, but when they went for a walk with their grandfather, they remarked: "The ugly Americans destroyed the roads and glued a beard to our father!" Ica promptly ordered me to shave off the beard—and so we resolved the children's complaint.

Johannes Schwimmbach 1945-1946

Our arrival also meant that our relief battalion was disbanded. Families began to live independent lives. The German authorities had allocated food tickets and organised the repatriation trains. Those who had no relatives in Bavaria, or had families waiting at home, applied to return. Soon they were on their way, leaving just ten to fifteen families scattered across the surrounding farmlands.

I took over the community management tasks from Alexander Liptay, who was returning home. When he handed over the backlog of pending cases, it turned out he was still collecting food vouchers for groups that had already left. I declared that I did not consider this correct and said it would be fraud on our part to continue. Alex Liptay simply smiled and said it was only temporary, and he saw nothing wrong in misleading the foreign authorities. It dawned on me that the first characteristic of emigration was that the diaspora felt no connection with the host community and saw its sole responsibility as the financial interests of its own group. For someone raised in the spirit of Hungarian law, I returned the extra tickets.

After arriving home, we slowly became acquainted with the events of the past four months. I found out that my brother-in-law Béla's car was gone. The U.S. authorities had approved the car for his medical practice, but one day, on the main street of Dingolfing, a U.S. CIC officer, Lt. Green, simply confiscated the car without issuing a receipt. We later learned that the car had been handed over by the U.S. authorities to a nearby Catholic parish priest whose own car had been requisitioned by the German military during the occupation. The priest had requested its return, but the Americans could not oblige—so they gave him Béla's Opel. We recorded the name and address of the parish priest in the hope that one day we might ask for its return.

Thus, when the time of birth approached, the family faced serious problems—how would they transport Ica to the hospital in Frontenhausen, where a reservation had been made for her? The battalion did have a passenger car stored in a barn, but its reliability was uncertain.

On the night of 26 June, contractions began. Béla had no choice but to prepare the old sedan to take Ica to the hospital. The car started, but after one kilometre, at the top of a rise, the engine stalled and Béla was unable to restart it. Ica offered to help push the car, but Béla vehemently refused. Eventually, the engine started again, and fortunately, they reached the hospital in Frontenhausen.

This small rural hospital was run by local nuns. It had only six or seven rooms, but it was clean and welcoming. Ica felt very comfortable—after all, she finally had a bed after sleeping on straw for the past four to five months.

They did not have to wait long for little András (Andrew), who arrived in good health at dawn on 27 June. In the hospital's small chapel, Ica gave thanks to God for their survival. The boy was baptised there, and my sister Kata and brother-in-law Béla were his godparents.

Twenty-three years later, during a European journey, Ica and I visited that small hospital and prayed there again, thanking the Lord for His help.

(The hospital has since been demolished, and a park now stands where it once was.)

At the end of September, my sister Kata gave birth to her third child in the same hospital. He was named Béla, and Ica and I were registered as his godparents.

(At that time, the Kammermayer family had two daughters, and the patriarch feared there would be no son to carry on the farm. He asked if Béla—known as Béci—could be made available for adoption. This was refused, despite the uncertain conditions we

Hungarians faced. A few years later, the farmer's family grew to include two sons.)

Captain Zongor of the relief battalion handed over the military archives, including birth records, to the senior officer leading the initial group home. The last paragraph of my record read: "On 6 October 1944, he reported for military service." Thus, although the Americans had "released" us from captivity, no one had officially released me from the Hungarian army. I later joked that I was still serving.

My civilian clothes, along with our precious personal items packed in 40-pound bags per person, had all been lost. A kind Hungarian woman living near the farm gave me a blue jacket coat she had been keeping for her husband, whose whereabouts were unknown. My father gave me a pair of shoes and a transitional coat. Later, from the csendőr (police) warehouse, I had a suit made. My officer's cloak was dyed and tailored into a winter coat. Due to the hilly countryside, I continued to wear my Bilgeri boots, and so, in this strange half-military, half-civilian garb, I survived in Germany in the years that followed.

The family faced similar challenges—ingenuity was required to dress the boys. Ica left her handbag with the battalion bootmaker, who fashioned a pair of children's shoes from it.

At the time, I knew that returning to Hungary would mean being torn from my family once again. As a soldier, a member of the Justice Ministry, and the private secretary to a minister in the Horthy regime, I would be summoned before a certifying board and required to give full cooperation in exchange for my freedom. I was not prepared for this. In that deplorable situation, I felt my duty was to my family—to take them home, and once there, to ensure Ica was near her own family so we could endure the difficult years ahead.

I wrote a letter to my mother, whom I hoped had survived the siege. With our planned travel to Miskolc, I hoped she would be able to accommodate us. I did not believe our Káplár Street apartment

had remained intact, as I knew fierce fighting had taken place in that part of Buda.

The battalion had an excellent, resourceful, and professional sergeant who undertook to forward my letter to my mother. He also promised to bring back a reply. He said he simply wanted to “look around” at home and would return to update us on the situation. And so it happened. No more than a few weeks passed before the brave soldier was again among us. He laughed and told me that my mother, for security reasons, had hidden her reply inside a loaf of bread she had baked, to ensure it wouldn’t be discovered if he were captured. He returned without complications. In those months, border control was lax, and a clever man could slip through unnoticed.

My mother’s letter was startling. She wrote:

“Dear children! When I got your letter, I became like a crazy person. Don’t you know what’s going on here? Any Hungarian of value is in prison.”

She urged us not to even think of returning home—at least not for the time being. We should wait a few years until the rampage of revenge subsided.

Under the influence of my mother’s letter, Ica and I went for a walk, and I shared with her my belief that she should prepare for the possibility of being separated from me if we returned to Hungary. I emphasised that I was willing to undertake the journey if she felt the situation here was untenable and, in the interest of the children and their upbringing, it was important to go home. But Ica could not—and would not—accept separation. Instead, we decided to try to make a life where we were.

This decision created a tense atmosphere between my brother-in-law Béla and me. Béla, six years older than I, felt he could not start a new life abroad. As a doctor, he had not committed any “political crimes,” and his vocation offered job security. It was likely he would

escape any purge and be able to resume his practice in Székesfehérvár.

We debated whether it made sense to wait where we were. Repatriation to Hungary, under the regulations, required compliance—and if we were returned under duress, our situation could be even worse. Moreover, the Bavarian farmers were growing weary of the Hungarian refugees. Our hosts explained that it would be impossible for both families to remain through the winter.

My father had lived through Hungary's first brush with communism and had been a soldier of the counter-revolution. He did not see his personal fate in Hungary as secure. It was also doubtful whether his position as a royal notary would survive under the new regime. At 65, he was reluctant to undertake a winter journey home in primitive conditions.

Eventually, we decided that Béla and my sister Kata should apply for train transport from the nearest station. We found temporary accommodation for the Csabai family. It was rudimentary, but needed only for a few weeks. Our hosts were relieved to have just six people remaining in the living room.

We agreed with Béla that they would write in the spring of 1946 to see if my father could join them in Hungary. Meanwhile, we decided that if the letter contained the sentence: "Béla, we await you as soon as possible," we should under no circumstances return home.

In early November, my sister Kata departed. Before leaving, Béla agreed that if conditions settled, I could attempt to recover the confiscated car. I took possession of the car papers and received a mandate from Béla to dispose of the car freely. Of course, I emphasised that if I succeeded, I would inform him immediately.

Following Kata's departure, everyday life became somewhat easier. The soldiers working around the farm constructed a makeshift double wooden bed, so we no longer had to sleep on straw mattresses. Even little András was given a stroller without

wheels by a friend of our hostess in Frontenhausen. This discarded stroller became Andrew's first cradle. Our hostess grew very fond of the boy and offered to adopt him. At the time, they had only two daughters and tried to sweeten the offer by promising that little "Andreas" would be heir to the family estate. Of course, we refused. My grandfather was also very fond of the child and often sang old Hungarian cradle songs to him.

Snow fell, and it became difficult to leave the farm. I once tried to walk to Marklkofen in a blizzard but only made it about six hundred metres before falling into a snow-covered ditch. I ultimately decided it was wiser to return—disgraced—to the farm.

I tried to help around the house. I even gave first aid to a refugee from East Germany—a young woman who had severed the tip of her finger with a chaff cutter. I helped carry kindling wood stored in the attic since summer. Occasionally, I found an egg or two and, I must admit, did not tell the landlord. Our family almost never had the luxury of scrambled eggs or egg soup.

I had to suppress my Hungarian-trained legal conscience because our family was almost certainly starving on our 700-calorie daily rations. Even in German concentration camps, the daily ration had been 1,200 calories. I thought of Tiborc, the soldier and peasant in Bánk Bán, and we learned the grief of Tiborc firsthand.

Ica had no precious jewels—what she did have was lost in the 40-pound pack. Ironically, she had a few pieces of costume jewellery she had bought in Budapest for 10–20 pengős. These "jewels" became a valuable start to bartering. The landlady may never have seen such fine little pieces and expressed interest in them. For one of the jewels, I received 70 kilos of flour. I stuffed it into my "inherited" German air force backpack and walked with it to the Marklkofen bakery. The "beautiful baker," as we jokingly called her, exchanged it for bread tickets.

The mark was a worthless banknote, but it could still buy a train ticket to Munich, where I visited the Siemens Schule (school). In this

long-established educational centre, Hungarian refugees were packed in tightly, and deals could still be made. With the bread tickets, I purchased light bulbs, thread, and other useful goods.

Back at Johannes Schwimmbach, I showed the housewife my valuable acquisitions, and she gave me butter and fat to improve our standard of living. The barter circle had come to an end.

In Munich, I contacted Gyurka (George) Donszky, my young friend from the prisoner-of-war camp in Hohenfels, with whom I had diligently studied English. He continued my training in business life.

By this time, Gyurka, with his English language skills, had found a job as a gofer in an all-American military hospital. This position allowed him to build relationships with the U.S. military. He soon became an intermediary between the German locals and the Americans. The black market involved Germans offering their remaining valuables—an engagement ring or some diamond jewellery—for sale. The Americans got a good deal because the price was calculated in cigarettes, cocoa, or chocolate, which they purchased at dirt-cheap prices from the military canteen. Sometimes dollar banknotes were used, and it was left to Gyurka to sell the dollars. This last-minute exchange of currency was transacted in a coffee shop filled with Jews who had fled from Poland and built a thriving business around these transactions. I went with Gyurka to this particular coffee house. He warned me not to take off my hat, as it would cause a stir, so I pretended to be one of those cheerfully trading currencies.

Mária (Mary), the girl who had come with us to help with the children, was also trying to contribute. During the first few months, she often went to the village and tried to buy food, telling the farmers—in broken German—the most touching stories of a starving family.

Then I contacted Kálnoki Sándor (Alexander) Bedő, a former colleague of mine at the Ministry of Justice. I learned that the remnants of the Ministry had been repatriated to the Kempten

Ostarbeiter (workers) camp. We exchanged letters, and Sándor visited us during our trip to Munich.

At this time, we began to seriously consider emigration. Captain Pataky's family encouraged us, believing that sooner or later the Western powers would open their gates to emigrants. They applied for Canada, as Dennis Pataky's in-laws had migrated there before World War I and had only returned to Hungary in the 1930s. The family proved resourceful and soon settled in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, a mountain town in Bavaria. Dennis Pataky, a former Hungarian figure skating champion, held demonstrations to entertain the American troops.

Meanwhile, we tried to maintain communication with Hungary.

Letters came slowly, at first only through the Red Cross. Eventually, the postal system resumed.

There was great joy when we received news that Ica's parents had survived the Russian occupation and were healthy. They had endured a difficult time, as their two-room apartment had to accommodate Russian officers, and later they had to share it with another family of three. There were daily frictions in the communal kitchen and bathroom. They became acquainted with the Soviet co-tenancy way of life. One of the billeted officers proved to be compassionate and, when deployed to Germany, volunteered to post their letter to us. We received it.

It turned out that Duci, my sister-in-law, had also fled to Austria with the repatriated National Bank, where she was an official. She bravely crossed the Austrian-German border to visit us. She considered staying to help, but ultimately, with her elderly parents in mind, decided to return to Hungary when the bank staff were repatriated. We said goodbye. However, the return journey was not without complications. This time, the border guards arrested her, and she spent a night in gaol—a memory she could never forget. In Spittal, she found work as a housekeeper with an American family

and spent her final months there in reasonable comfort before returning home.

We learned that Ica's much-loved godmother, had survived without major mishap. The three elderly ladies had lived together in Sashalom (Budapest). The village had fallen quickly, and no serious fighting had taken place there.

Unfortunately, there was also sad news. We learned that police advisor Kálmán Bánó, Ica's uncle, had died around Christmas. His son, Lieutenant Elemér Bánó, Ica's cousin, had fought in the battles around Újpest and suffered a serious gunshot wound to the knee. His life was saved only by a German hospital train that evacuated him to Germany before the encirclement of Budapest.

It was deeply painful to learn that my nephew, Kálmán Falcione—a lieutenant in the armoured forces, whose inauguration we had attended at the Ludovika Military Academy in 1942—had died in the fighting for Budapest. He had led a particularly heavy resistance and was cited for a gold medal for bravery.

His younger brother Márió's story was also remarkable. Márió became a lieutenant in 1944 and, after his inauguration, immediately reported for front-line service. He fought in battles in the highlands of Transylvania and was commended with a distinguished medal. He suffered a light wound, withdrew from the front, and was discharged. According to the news, he later became a medical student at the University of Szeged.

Szeged did not suffer much damage by the end of the war. My uncle and my aunt Eti (néni) were healthy. Uncle Kálmán knew some Russian, having lived in Russia for four years as a prisoner of war during World War I. As an interpreter, he quickly became involved in reorganising the city's life.

For a time, it seemed that my cousin Lóránt Falcione was able to restart his life. Although he had been a military captain, he was also a judge and, at that time, had not been harmed. He was demobilised and reopened his law office

My mother and husband also remained healthy. They had suffered during the siege, as their house had been hit and they spent many weeks in the basement, but somehow survived those difficult times.

Similarly, my cousin, Major Pápai László Faragó, lived through the siege. He worked at the Institute of Cartography but did not follow the institution when it was relocated. He donned civilian clothes. At that time, he wrote a few lines to my father. I did not appreciate his attitude, as he disagreed with my choice to support the political path I believed could build a better future for Hungary. Later, we reconciled, but his cold behaviour during that period left me feeling hurt. My father was also deeply disappointed by Laci's conduct. After Laci's father died, my father became his stepfather and helped him complete his graduation from the Ludovika Military Academy.

We also received letters from Kata. Their apartment had been severely damaged; they had lost everything, but they were able to restart their lives. In fact, Béla, as a doctor, soon earned a good income and, through bartering, gained access to essential goods. They believed our father should return home as soon as possible and hoped he could still practise as a state notary. However, regarding me, they used the prearranged sentence: "Béla, we await you as soon as possible."

We decided in the spring of 1946 that my dear father should return home. He applied for the next train. He was now braver, encouraged by Kata's optimism.

Our own situation, however, was less encouraging. During these months, the occupying forces saturated the news with war propaganda, describing crimes committed by the "fascists." The Nuremberg Trials revealed the story of the extermination of the Jewish people who had been placed in institutions.

The German population stood in disbelief at the charges. Our hostess, a devout Catholic, assured us that they had not known of such an extermination campaign. They were aware that the war had become senselessly brutal. The Germans had suffered carpet

bombings, and there must have been immense cruelty and suffering endured by the residents of the concentration camps.

News leaked out of Hungary that the Soviet occupying forces, along with the newly arrived “Muscovites,” exceeded even the charges presented at Nuremberg. At home, anyone who had served in public administration or fought in battle to fulfil their duty was considered a war criminal. My mother’s letter described the situation best: “Here, anyone who is worth something is in a Hungarian prison.” And in many cases, this led to the prison gallows.

My brother-in-law Béla, in his letter, again expressed hope that perhaps in a few years the mood of revenge would subside and reconciliation would return to the nation. Optimistically, I hoped we could remain abroad for three to four years. It was clear we could only stay a few more months at the farm. Munich faced a severe housing shortage; the city had been bombed to rubble, and you could still smell the stench of bodies. We could not attempt to go there with three small children.

My friend Kálnoki Sándor (Alexander) Bedő suggested we move to the Kempten-Lenzfried camp, where the remaining Hungarian Justice Department workers lived. We accepted his suggestion with gratitude.

It is understandable that we were deeply torn about my father’s departure. We feared we might never see each other again. The farewell was made more dramatic by the rough handling of the U.S. troops responsible for managing the trucks carrying the belongings of the elderly. They urged the passengers to load quickly. I helped with the loading and lifted a very heavy chest with all my strength. I felt something tear inside me. Indeed—I had suffered a hernia.

In late June, the German post office delivered a letter from Passau, sent by my father. In it, he described the story of his repatriation. I quote a few lines from the letter:

"Hospital Train - VI. 10 - My good children, this letter will be posted by an accompanying German train crew member after he returns. I

actually boarded the train at the very last minute, on the 8th at around 5 p.m. The next day I was packing. It was a "Luxury Train," as they were Pullman cars. However, each car had three tiers with up to 30 beds. A bed was assigned to two persons. I was lucky: a doctor couple and their five-month-old boy were assigned one and a half beds, but the child, being small, was placed in a pram, and I got the entire bed.

The food was irregular—sometimes we gobbled, sometimes we didn't get anything at all. But everyone had brought something to eat. I thankfully received the eggs you sent.

At 10 a.m. we started moving and entered the Russian zone at the Enns River. The train stood still all night, and news leaked out that we were heading to Kaposvár. The train moved slowly, and we spent the following night in one place again.

I made friends with the German who volunteered to post my letter, and I gave him my medicine kit for safekeeping.

More waiting. The train was unable to move because the cars were obviously overcrowded. It was clear there were an extra 50 passengers. The American officer laughed at this and ordered that they be fed as well. These events were quite comical.

I met a policeman from Szeged who had escorted a train from Swabia (Germans living in Hungary) and was now returning home. He said that Lord Lieutenant Gyurka (George) Pálffy and Kálmán Shvoy—a great supporter of the Smallholder Party—as well as Robert Pap and Pista Grüner were all well. [My Jewish lawyer friends.] So I could refer to them for future certification.

We crossed the Hungarian border on the 12th at around 10 o'clock at Ágfalva. We received a frigid reception with measured politeness. All weapons and valuables had to be handed in. They took stock of all officers, troops, and cadets. Those over 60 years of age, if they lived nearby, could disembark and received travel cards.

Another night passed. Then we moved on. At a small railway station, I spoke with a railway worker who said it was impossible to

make a living—wages were low and inflation was high. Last week, he had earned just 130 billion. The land was untended, and weeds were taking over. It was heartbreaking to see what had become of the Hungarian Kánaán.

I wanted to send a telegram from Kanzsár. It was impossible. A postage stamp cost 4 billion.

At Gyékényes, I spoke with a 30-year-old farm worker. I offered him a cigarette, for which he was grateful, saying he couldn't afford tobacco. I asked how things were under communism. With gritted teeth, he said: "Hell to those who eat them."

I hadn't seen many Russians until we arrived in Kaposvár. The station there was full of them.

For days, we have been waiting for our train to Budapest. I had to place my bags beside the tracks as the train headed back west. I handed the letter to the train guard. Soon I reopened the letter before their departure.

Now I can report that I passed the identity check and the luggage search. Apparently, I'm not on the blacklist. The remaining small medicine also survived.

My father wrote on the envelope ". 1 o'clock in the afternoon, I got the travel card."

This letter was sent by my father to Kempten-Lenzfried. About a week after his departure, we began our journey to our new accommodation. It was high time! The farmer and his family had grown increasingly anxious that we might remain a burden, and the atmosphere between us had become distinctly unfriendly. So much so that, when we set out on our six-kilometre walk to Marklkofen Station, they didn't offer the use of a horse-drawn carriage. I had to pull our travelling bags on a small wooden wagon. Ica and Mary, with the children, walked ahead of me.

Coming toward us on the road was one of the farmer's wagons. The old grandfather sat on the box. As he passed our little caravan,

he simply tipped his hat in a silent nod. That was how we said
goodbye to Johannes Schwimmbach.

Kempton–Lenzfried

On the northern slope of the Alps, near the Iller River Valley, lay a little town called Kempton in the Bavarian Allgäu. During my 1939 trip around Germany, I had spent a couple of hours there waiting to join the train to Munich. Seven years later, I arrived as a stateless refugee with Ica and our three little boys. Our total assets amounted to no more than two handheld packages, but we had Sándor Kálnoki Bedő—my former colleague and good friend—waiting for us. He helped us travel to the Lenzfried camp.

The camp was located on the southern bank of the Iller. A steep, winding road led to the village of Lenzfried. Just before reaching the village, in a small clearing, stood a camp known to the local residents as the Hungarian Lager. It had been established in 1942 by the Kempton authorities to house forced labourers working for the German war industry. The wooden barracks were still in good condition. The camp management allocated us two small rooms. Ica, ever sensitive to cleanliness, insisted that before we got into bed, the beds be dismantled—with the help of my friend Sándor—and treated with the miracle powder DDT to eradicate all traces of unwanted bugs.

Later, we set up a “fireplace,” a small imitation structure whose defining feature was that it could only accommodate matchstick-thin wood. In winter, the moisture content of the wood created problems. There was also a rudimentary electric heater, which allowed us to prepare porridge and similar meals.

Armed with food stamps, we typically rose at 6 a.m. and queued in front of the central Lenzfried dairy to receive our allotted share. Our general shopping was done at the Iller grocery store, a few kilometres from the camp. I often met fellow camp residents as we pulled our small wooden carts loaded with groceries.

Despite the difficulties, we felt almost happy to be free of our German host, who had grown weary of us. Now, we could be among

lawyer colleagues with whom we could exchange opinions. The women had companionship, and the children could play with new friends in the spacious grounds.

The camp “Commander” was the most senior ministerial officer, Jenő (Eugene) Agárdy. I knew him well from the ministry; he had been head of the criminal department. His son, the younger Eugene Agárdy, was a judicial officer. Ica knew the Agárdy daughter well, having worked with her at the Price-Government Committee. They often shared memories. László Tamásy, the Deputy Crown Prosecutor, and his wife also lived among us. We knew that during the interwar period, when Rákósi (the communist leader of 1919) was prosecuted, Tamásy had been the prosecutor—so it was understandable that he did not remain in Hungary. Subsequent events proved his caution justified.

One story about him sheds light on the atmosphere of those upside-down years. A resettlement train stopped somewhere in the open fields of Austria or Bavaria. Passengers waited for some time before learning that a bombed-out train a few kilometres ahead was blocking the way. Until it was cleared, they could not proceed. Tamásy and others walked ahead to investigate. There, he saw one of the overturned wagons filled with Red Cross shipments—cocoa, chocolate, and other goods. Locals were helping themselves to these supplies. Tamásy succumbed to temptation, picked up a small package, and began walking back to the train. Halfway there, he encountered a group of German soldiers who demanded to see what he was carrying. Tamásy later explained that his entire legal career flashed before his eyes. He feared he was involved in something that could cost him his life. Without hesitation, he admitted his wrongdoing. The soldiers, instead of arresting him, ran off to help themselves. Tamásy never recovered from the collapse of his life. After emigrating to the U.S., he eventually died in a mental hospital.

My good friend Alexander Kálnoki Bedő, his wife, and son also lived in the camp. Ica and Trudi understood each other well. We lived together as close friends and tried to help one another.

János (John) Baltay, a magistrate and member of the Presidency of the Budapest courthouse, also lived in the camp. During the evacuation of Budapest, he and his family had joined the Ministry of Justice in Szombathely. Ilonka quickly became close to Ica, and a warm friendship developed between them.

György (George) Demeter of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) was a judge and also ended up with us. He was a kind, good-humoured man, and he and his wife joined our circle of friends.

The camp administration was only nominally in the hands of Jenő Agárdy. He was over 65 and a broken man. The actual management responsibilities were handled by the very active Sándor Bedő and János Baltay. John was not physically agile, but his life experience and fluency in English and German made him the camp's grey eminence. I joined them, through my friendship with Sanyi (Alex), to help solve some of the camp's problems.

With John's help, I secured a job with the IRO organisation, where I was recognised as a reliable worker. This gave me some connections with the Americans, and we began to rebuild our lives.

I also remember a Czech judge among the camp's residents. He spoke excellent German and often represented others before the authorities. He lived a rather reclusive life and worked hard to establish himself in Germany. Later, he secured a bookkeeping job.

In the general upheaval, many others joined the Justice Department resettlement. Refugees included Puskás, an assistant office manager, and the Messzi family from Kiskunfélegyháza. Messzi, to our knowledge, had been a fire chief. There were also people from Földvár—a widow with three young cadets and their uncle, a motor mechanic, who quickly found work with an American military unit.

This mechanic was a kind-hearted man. Every night, he brought home leftover American food in large cauldrons and distributed it among the camp residents, especially the children. Sadly, this generosity nearly led to tragedy. It turned out he had tuberculosis, and the camp children became infected. We might have avoided the hilus gland inflammation, as Kempten lay 800 metres above sea level and the alpine air was so clear that many came here during peacetime to recover their health.

Fortunately, the Kempten IRO Hospital had appointed Professor Eugene Kramár, a paediatrician from Szeged, as its director. The self-sacrificing Kramár frequently visited and examined the camp's inhabitants. He quickly identified the source of the infection.

Food shortages were a constant concern. It was understandable that people turned to the black market. Even the most cautious and conservative individuals looked the other way when extra provisions were available. "Uncle" Messzi visited us once. We shared a common wall with his room. He admitted that they were going to butcher cattle in their room that night and asked us to overlook the noise. In return, they would give us a few kilos of meat.

And so it happened that the Baltay and Bedő families spent that night in our room. We usually gathered anyway for an evening of bridge. Coffee was sometimes on the table, sugar less often—but we had good fun talking and debating

That evening, we heard—through the wall—the death struggle of the cow and the sounds of the butchers at work. But by dawn, there was no trace of the night's operation; the barracks area was beaming.

The children played happily during the day, and soon the early autumn weather set in. We enrolled them in the Lenzfried kindergarten. Little Marika Puskás became the playmate of our two older boys, while Andrew waited each day for Pali Földvári, who usually arrived in an American jeep and took Andrew around the camp grounds.

Mária (Mary) helped Ica by sewing clothes and often supervising the children. Soon, however, we became separated, as she fell under the influence of other young girls who made their lives more exciting by befriending American soldiers. Eventually, I became fed up with the situation. Mária was placed in a separate room, and from then on, we lost contact with her. Perhaps a year later, she moved to Munich, and we have the feeling she eventually ended up in the USA.

Gradually, we became acquainted with the local Hungarians. In the heights of the Alps, hiding in one of the “eagle nests,” lived a retired defence minister and his family, along with two other staff officers and their families. It was not advisable for them to move about openly in the neighbourhood, so we all helped them solve their various problems.

Captain Darányi also visited us; he was a European weightlifting champion. We spent many pleasant hours together. He eventually decided to return to Hungary. I believe he was successful in relocating. “We’ll see,” he used to say before leaving—and through the years, we often remembered that phrase by saying, “Darányi said, ‘We’ll see.’”

Winter was approaching. We had to prepare for heating the wooden huts. The German authorities had granted us a certain amount of firewood for the camp, but it had to be cut and transported by us. Axes and saws were provided, and we were allocated a section of forest to harvest for our needs. We were busy for many weeks. Our little team hiked to the designated area and began a chore that many of us had never done before. At first, it was hard going, but we soon became accustomed to it. We especially enjoyed the spectacle of felling the beautiful pine trees. Then we took out the axes and removed the twigs. Finally, we cut the pine into metre-length logs and assembled them into piles of cubic metres. Toward evening, the ranger arrived and took his allocated share.

Our portion was delivered to the camp by truck and then divided among the families. We only needed a small axe and saw to prepare the fuel for our winter needs.

On the way home, we sang good Hungarian songs, as if returning from army exercises in the good old days. The work itself was fine once we got used to it. Unfortunately, our food supply was very poor, which made everything more difficult. At noon, for example, we usually ate bread with cheese dust as a spread.

Then the snow fell, and the camp looked quite beautiful under its white blanket. The heating was sufficient, but in the mornings, the water was frozen in the rooms, and the metal tubes holding the wooden furniture together were frosted. All this could be managed—if you were healthy. Sadly, this was when our Calvary began. Béla, our three-and-a-half-year-old son, became seriously ill just before Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, Professor Kramár visited us and diagnosed lung and kidney inflammation. He advised that the poor child be taken to hospital immediately. In this crisis, it was our only chance. The IRO (International Relief Organization) Hospital was well-equipped, and the meals provided were of high quality. With the help of antibiotics, Béla's condition soon improved. However, due to the risk of hilus gland (TB) infection, Professor Kramár did not want the child to return to the camp. Béla spent five months in a nursing home. The good nutrition and rest saved his life, and we can only thank the Lord that we survived this test as well.

I underwent a hernia operation in March 1947, also at the IRO Hospital. Professor Kramár made this possible, although it helped that I was an IRO employee. We Hungarians, as former enemies, were not entitled to the benefits granted to displaced persons. In theory, we were on equal footing with the Germans—except that the Germans, being at home, could do many things and support one another, while we Hungarian refugees found ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

As an IRO employee, I sometimes received certain bonuses. Once a week, I could take home two kilos of white bread, some cheese, and jam. Each week, I also received a pack of American cigarettes, which translated into a little butter on the black market.

We had a small Persian carpet and a silver tray. In our difficult situation, we felt it was no longer possible to keep them. We decided they could be best traded at an American-run Exchange Centre. There was one in Frankfurt. Typically, of the black market, a return ticket cost only a few pennies, so I went there to sell just these two items. I received four cartons of American cigarettes. It seemed like a good deal when compared to the equivalent in cocoa and butter. But clearly, it was a far better deal for the American soldiers, who acquired fine and precious ornaments for a pittance. Thus continued the looting of Europe...

With the cigarettes in my backpack, I headed home. As I approached Frankfurt Station for my train to Kempten, I was stopped by the U.S. Military Police. "What's in the backpack?" he asked in German. I replied in English that it was filled with American cigarettes. That was safe to say, as the Exchange Centre had issued a certificate confirming the goods were legally mine. The U.S. Military Police continued in German: "Why do you speak English?" This made me angry, and I replied in German, "Look, I'm Hungarian. Both German and English are foreign languages to me. But if you want to speak in German, I can do that too." He left me without a word or checking my backpack. I somehow climbed aboard the crowded train and returned safely to Kempten.

The chase after food prompted John Baltay, Sanyi Bedő, and me to take a trip to the French zone. It was rumoured that under French command, Hungarians fared better, as we had never been at war with France, and the authorities were said to be more sympathetic toward Hungarian refugees. It was also known that fruit was more plentiful on the shores of Lake Constance.

We explored the French zone, but the conditions did not seem significantly better than those we had already established, so we returned to Kempten. I could have settled there, as when I applied for a position with a French military organisation recruiting foreigners for policing, the French lieutenant was willing to offer me the rank of sergeant. But I declined.

We went to Munich once or twice. There, I learned that the restoration of law had commenced, and that illegal confiscation of property would be rectified if the victim could prove ownership. I saw an opportunity to recover my brother-in-law's car. I went to the appropriate German ministry and presented the car documents, along with the Power of Attorney transferring ownership to me, as well as the name and address of the current holder of the car. The data was checked, and they issued a decree requiring the parish priest of Tutzing to release the car to me.

I had not driven a car for the past five years and did not know its condition. So, I asked my friend Captain Bandi Zongor, with whom I had remained in contact, to assist. We both arrived at the Tutzing parish and, holding up the official order, requested that the priest release the car to us.

The priest looked at the papers with astonishment and phoned the local *Fahrbereitschaft* (chauffeur-driven carpool) agency's management. The manager drove out to the parish office, studied the order, and—though unable to assist the priest—acknowledged its validity. He advised the priest to deliver the car. With reluctance, the priest found the key and handed it to us, along with the German registration papers.

We kept the car at the camp. As an IRO employee, I obtained the required license. Occasionally, I received gasoline from the IRO.

My Estonian boss took care of our fuel needs. One time, we went on a major tour of Bavaria: Füssen, Oberammergau, and Garmisch-Partenkirchen were the main stops. We visited my friend Ákos Oláh, now a happily married man, in the town of Weilheim. We met his

wife, Traudi. They later returned our visit by coming to Kempten. With Ákos's help, I contacted my friend Péter Kemény.

During that lovely summer, we felt almost as if we were at a resort. But the thought of spending another winter in the camp made us shiver. I also decided that I would do everything I could to find a civilian house to live in. But I'll speak more about that later.

In the Service of the IRO

The international refugee organization, after the war, was known as UNRRA. When the United Nations entered the territory of the former German Empire, they prepared an organization to assist the needy—those who had suffered under the defeated nation’s system. There is no doubt that they had major financial assets at their disposal and often, carelessly, handed out chocolate, cocoa, and canned food. However, it soon became clear that Germany was full of refugees—not only those liberated from concentration camps, but also those displaced by the war.

Distribution was inadequate due to organizational problems, and it was understandable that UNRRA had to take charge of all stores and warehouses found in the conquered country. The German population was rationed to 1,200 calories a day, equivalent to the rations of the concentration camps. Meanwhile, in the refugee camps set up by UNRRA, refugees received 3,000 or more calories daily, all provided from German sources. As a result, the German population viewed UNRRA’s operations with strong hostility, and the initials UNRRA were mockingly translated by the Germans as: Uns Nehme Rasch Radical Alles (“We take everything rapidly”).

The Germans bemoaned that the intact cities were already overcrowded with refugees, yet they had to make room for the military government and UNRRA officials, who occupied the best buildings, villas, and family homes.

The refugee camps were placed in former barracks. As the invading forces quickly withdrew, city barracks became available. These organizations also took over German hospitals—so in Kempten, the largest hospital became a UNRRA hospital.

UNRRA had to reorganize itself due to the refugee situation described above. The inhabitants of the liberated concentration camps eventually left Germany, but the masses of war refugees

remained. It soon became clear that many of these refugees did not want to return to their occupied homelands, now under Soviet communist control.

The United Nations took initial steps to address this problem in Germany. First, they attempted to force involuntary refugees to return home. There were many victims of this policy in Kempton. At the time—clearly under Russian pressure on the U.S.—the occupying forces took steps to ensure the repatriation of Ukrainians living there. A group of Ukrainians locked themselves in an old church and sang Slavic religious songs, protesting against the coercion to return home. Some had drifted into Germany with retreating German and Hungarian units, unwilling to wait for Stalin's soldiers. Others were Ostarbeiter (guest workers) who had come to Germany under threat, coercion, or false promises.

Eventually, the U.S. Army Military Police broke down the church doors and, with machine guns, opened fire on the desperate refugees. The gunfire resulted in seven or eight deaths. Perhaps this incident helped the Western Allies begin to recognize and correctly assess the situation. The Pope spoke out against the barbarity, as did the widow of President Roosevelt. Gradually, the threats were eliminated, and refugee status had to be recognized, allowing for support and the possibility of emigration.

However, we Hungarians were still far from this privileged position. Hungary was regarded as a defeated state, and for many years we bore the designation of "former enemy." We could not expect support, and on paper, we were treated as equals to the Germans.

Our small Hungarian community in Kempton took part in helping the Russian-Ukrainian refugees. We had a good friend from Kiev, whom we called Yuri. He and his family had left Russia with the Kiev defence forces and wandered into Germany via Hungary. He was deeply concerned that, as a Soviet citizen, he might not be able to migrate to the USA. Hidden among our outgoing papers was a Trans-

Carpathian Governor's seal. Thanks to this fabricated document, confirming his Trans-Carpathian family lineage, Yuri and his family eventually became U.S. citizens.

The International Refugee Organization (IRO) needed staff. Its leaders were, of course, American, British, Canadian, and other Allied nationals. They spoke little German and felt inhibited, especially when dealing with local authorities. Initially, they sought employees among the refugees, but even among those from the Baltic States, few spoke German. The Poles and Russians were even less suited for administrative work. Thus, opportunities arose for Hungarians with English and German language skills to take on administrative roles.

My friend János (John) Baltay had worked in the Kempton district centre of the IRO since early 1946. With his help, I became the Office Supply Officer. This group was responsible for distributing food to the camps. Refugees from the three Baltic nations had camps—Schloss Kaserne and Franz Prinz Kaserne were the two major ones. However, many people lived in private homes, having arrived in relatively peaceful conditions during 1943–44, before the retreating fronts accelerated.

The organization's centre was located in the heart of Kempton, in a beautiful large private villa. The director was an Australian, Colonel Wattleworth. He handled cases liberally and appeared to sympathize with the Hungarians. This may have been because, as it turned out, he had a Hungarian girlfriend. Whenever there was a gathering, he always referred to "Marika," though her identity was never revealed.

The chief of the Supply Office was a Black American officer named High. We met him very rarely. His assistant was a young Estonian, and Mr. High dealt only with him in the office, where he never spent more than a few hours. Yet he proved to be very polite with people; he had a smooth manner, and the staff joked that Mr. High was the only gentleman among the officers. For us, our only connection with

him was the two packs of American cigarettes he left on our desks every Saturday afternoon. He had bought these dirt-cheap, but to us they meant a great deal, as our monthly salary was equivalent to about four packs of American cigarettes.

I began typing in English to various authorities. However, verbal conversation was still difficult, and I found the telephone especially hard to understand. I avoided using the phone for many years. Perhaps this was because, a few weeks after starting my new position, during the afternoon break, I was alone in the office when the phone rang. I had no choice but to answer. I understood that the caller wanted to speak to Mr. High. I said that Mr. High was not in the office. The caller said something I simply could not understand. I could only repeat that I didn't know where Mr. High was. At this, the caller became angry and hung up. I stood helplessly beside the device, but I didn't fret for long—because the director himself burst into the room. After calming down, he understood the situation. He didn't scold me, he just grumbled. We often chuckled over this little interlude. It was not easy to integrate into a foreign world with a foreign language.

Gradually, our colleagues noticed that we were university graduates, and our situation improved. Our Baltic colleagues saw us as united by destiny and felt a little ashamed that, while they enjoyed IRO care, we Hungarians were still regarded as enemies. It was particularly strange that, in front of us, they did not deny having fought in the German Waffen SS divisions against the Russians. The Americans turned a blind eye to this fact, stressing that the U.S. had never recognized the annexation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.

They tried to help us. At times, the IRO stores were opened when U.S. aid shipments arrived, and before the sorting and distribution of used clothing, we were allowed to choose garments for ourselves and our families. This clothing was a great help in refreshing the children's wardrobes. Sometimes the women also received a share.

On another occasion, we were given one or two U.S. military blankets. These were of excellent quality and could also be exchanged for food.

I also outfitted myself. I bought a second-hand pair of American military combat boots that lasted three years. I had two military shirts and learned that very little can go a long way.

Later, lunches were introduced for employees—some white bread and canned meat. John Baltay and I, thinking of our wives and children, could not in good conscience eat these special foods, so we arranged to take them home. We ate the black bread ourselves.

Work included visits to the hospital in the spa village of Bad Wörishofen to inspect the warehouse. The hospital housed mainly Jewish children rescued from Poland. Many suffered from hilus gland inflammation, so the hospital provided 4,000 calories daily. Supplies were abundant—some even unnecessary. For example, the amount of oatmeal stored in the warehouse was so great that it was difficult to find space for it. The store managers were a Latvian and a Jewish man. Usually, after I had completed my work, they offered me as much of the excess oatmeal as I could carry. They knew the Hungarian camp was struggling with German rations and almost forced me to take the goods. I knew it was irregular to accept them, but thinking of our little camp—especially the growing children—I dismissed my doubts and was grateful for their help. On such occasions, I had forty to fifty kilos of oatmeal in the trunk of my car.

Any legal doubts vanished when I saw the joy on the women's faces. These days became feast days in our camp. When I saw the Baltay boys, aged 10 to 14, gobbling like wolves, I thanked the Lord for allowing me to help.

After this, I was transferred to another division. This department handled housing and related issues. The work involved communication with German and U.S. authorities and could be considered, to some extent, legal work. My first boss was a Dutch gentleman named De Haas. I had the impression that his career had

been interrupted and that he found the IRO salary attractive. He followed political developments closely. Once, he returned from Augsburg with great enthusiasm, stating that we need not fear the dismantling of the IRO, because permanent occupation of Eastern Europe was expected, which would mean the arrival of additional refugees. De Haas clearly lobbied skillfully, because a few months later he was transferred to the Augsburg IRO centre, and we at Kempten became his subordinates.

My new boss was Miss Purcell, an English lady who had probably worked as a typist for the military government. Her IRO appointment allowed her to spend more time in Germany and undoubtedly brought financial empowerment. She was a benevolent, kind boss who quickly recognized my higher education and often asked my opinion when dealing with American or German authorities.

Once, we appeared together before an American government official at the Kempten camp. Miss Purcell explained the problem, and a young American officer offered his cooperation and seemed very polite. Unfortunately, I could not understand him—he spoke in an unfamiliar American dialect. When we left the headquarters, I apologized to Miss Purcell for not contributing to the discussion and confessed that I hadn't understood the officer. Miss Purcell laughed and replied, "You think I understood?" He had spoken with such a southern Texan accent that we could only guess what the decision had been. That was when I learned just how wide-ranging English accents could be.

Here is a brief glimpse into the unpredictable and often incomprehensible behaviour of the U.S. occupation police. Miss Purcell had official business in Augsburg but was having trouble with the car assigned to her. I offered my brother-in-law Béla's recovered Opel for the trip, needing only fuel. She welcomed the offer. The vehicle was filled with fuel, and after a couple of hours, we were in Augsburg searching for the IRO building. When we reached

the main road, I knew I had to turn left. I stopped, looked both ways, and cautiously tried to navigate in this unfamiliar city. At that moment, a military police jeep sped past. I entered the main road, but moments later, the American jeep turned around and, with sirens blaring, stopped us.

They claimed I had broken traffic rules by looking in the wrong direction before turning. They ordered us to follow the jeep. Miss Purcell tried to convince the young soldiers that nothing irregular had occurred, but they were adamant.

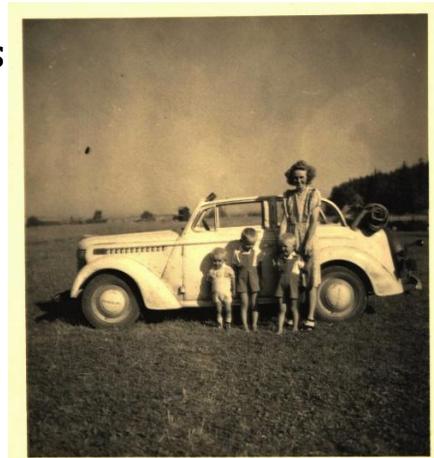
So, I drove to the military police headquarters, where they escorted me to the courtyard and led me to the so-called “charge room,” where a sergeant sat on a pedestal and, without much questioning, proclaimed that I was under arrest. The informers departed. I was waiting to be sent to a cell when Miss

Purcell stepped in and offered to pay bail for my release. The sergeant insisted they only accepted U.S. dollars. Miss Purcell did not give up. She phoned her contacts at the IRO centre and, about an hour later, returned waving the dollars. The sergeant was forced to accept the money, and I was released—but I received an order to appear before the German traffic police court in two weeks.

I wanted to avoid this, as I had no desire to return to Augsburg. So, while Miss Purcell conducted her business at the IRO centre, I went to the court and explained my situation to a judicial officer. The German officials simply shrugged, waved me on, and



Baltay and Torok families and others



**Dr. Bela Csabai's Opel car
used by the family**

complained about the impossible behaviour of the American military police. He assured me that no action would be taken in my case and let me go.

The inconveniences of the event were soon forgotten, and no one even mentioned my boss's involvement.

Miss Purcell was soon transferred to Augsburg, and I received a new superior in the person of Madame Levy. She was a very civilised, refined French-Jewish woman who had clearly been appointed because the IRO was facing increasing challenges with the Jewish refugees under its jurisdiction. Thousands of Polish Jews were living in the area. They had received first-rate care at the Wörishofen Nursing Home. In 1947, however, the re-organised German authorities laid claim to the return of confiscated institutions. The transfer of Jewish refugees from the sanatorium's double rooms to the public accommodation barracks caused considerable difficulty.

It was then that the gradual—but unauthorised—forced migration of Jews to British-controlled Palestine began. This movement was organised with the help of American-Zionist Jews. The British, mindful of their interests in the Arab world, opposed uncontrolled migration. But that was not the only problem. Many Polish Jews simply did not want to go to Palestine. Their main goal was to reach the United States—a destination the Americans, in turn, opposed.

It fell to Madame Levy to deliver the miserable task of informing the Jewish residents of Bad Wörishofen that they would have to leave the sanatorium and would soon be sent to Palestine.

I accompanied Madame Levy to Bad Wörishofen. In the pretty front garden of the sanatorium, my boss stood on the front of the IRO jeep to address the residents. The refugees had an inkling of what she was about to say, but she was unable to continue—her words were drowned out by the cries of the crowd. In fact, they began throwing stones in anger. They shouted curses, and Madame

Levy, recognising the danger, wisely ordered our retreat. The protests were in vain, however. A few weeks later, the U.S. military police carried out the order, clearing the sanatorium. Within a few months, the evacuated refugees of Wörishofen were on their way to Palestine.

With that, Madame Levy had completed her task in Kempten. Without a farewell, she disappeared. My new boss was a former Belgian officer, about my age. He had lost an arm in the war, but this did not hinder him—not even when driving. I developed a very good relationship with him. The cheerful Lieutenant L. Beautemps understood the problems of Europe and never made us Hungarians feel guilty for having been caught on the opposite side of the war. He valued the work I prepared for him and for the legal department. Aware of our difficult situation, he supported the steps that would eventually allow us to leave the camp behind.

It came to my attention that two Baltic families, who had been housed in a centrally located German civilian home on Salzstraße, had emigrated to America. The house, under IRO jurisdiction, was now vacant. My boss agreed that my family and that of my friend John Baltay could move into the building. The news thrilled us. Winter was approaching, and we would finally have more normal living conditions. The house had a stove, flushing toilets, and the luxury of tables and chairs.

Unfortunately, our new civilian life did not last long. We enjoyed our Pentecostal kingdom for only a few weeks. The German authorities had also been watching the property and intended to convert it into a medical clinic once it became vacant. They were shocked to discover that, after the Baltic residents emigrated, the building had not reverted to German management but had once again been used to house refugees. The mayor lodged a complaint with the military government. By this time, the Germans had gained more influence, and the military commander ordered the IRO director to evacuate the building.

For a time, the IRO director resisted, arguing that the two families were not receiving IRO aid and that the only alternative was to return them to the Hungarian camp—something he was reluctant to do, as we were good IRO employees. The military government suggested we be placed, at least temporarily, in an IRO camp. The debate continued for some time, but eventually the military government demanded evacuation within four hours.

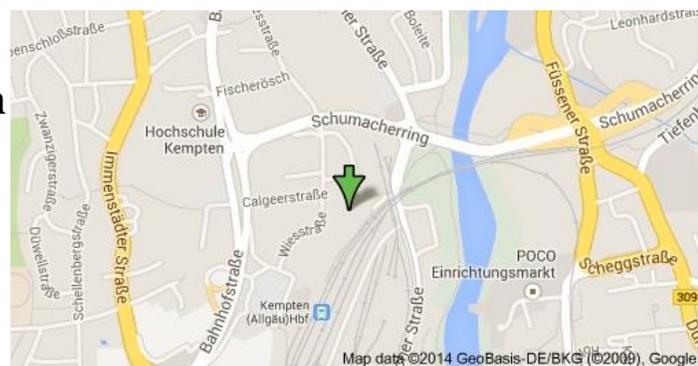
At two o'clock in the afternoon, the director gave me the order to relocate by 5 p.m. to the Prinz Franz barracks—the Latvian camp. He provided a motor car and insisted the relocation proceed immediately.

The women's astonishment was understandable. Ica was in the middle of making pancakes and could not comprehend why, without warning, we had to heap our meagre possessions into blankets and stuff them into the car, while our agitated children cried.

By 5 p.m., we were in one of the great halls of the Franz Prinz barracks, which had been designated as the new home for our two families. The barracks itself was a modern building, constructed in 1934, with central heating, electric lighting, English-style toilets, and a bathroom. The large room was divided in the middle with cupboards, and in desperation—yet seeking order—we began organising a new life.

We quickly adapted to the new conditions. We could not complain much: we had a roof over our heads, the central heating worked, and personal hygiene was possible. A strong friendship bound us to János (John) Baltay and his family.

Throughout the hardships, our fraternal feelings and solidarity



Location of Kempten Wies Strasse House

made life a little easier. Once again, we could laugh at the absurdities of our situation.

However, the IRO's management was now, like it or not, forced to deal with us. As we were considered enemies, we were not supposed to benefit from IRO support and were technically irregular residents of the Prinz Franz barracks. Thus, when one family set sail for the U.S., vacating another civilian house in Kempten, we were officially referred to it. The building was the villa of the local cheese factory owner, located on the outskirts of town. It was partly in ruins—one section had been hit during a bombing raid—and the factory owner, being a party member, did not want to risk reclaiming his property. He was content to hide nearby in a factory building.

Here, the two families were given rooms on the first floor, with a beautiful view of the Alps. We shared the kitchen with a Lithuanian family, and access to a bathroom felt like a luxury. The villa had a large garden, though in a state of disrepair, but the children played happily in it and the surrounding area.

A few weeks later, a room on the ground floor became vacant, and I was able to arrange for Sándor (Alexander) Kálnoki Bedő, our remaining friend from the camp, to move in.

Thus, Wiesstraße Villa Number 2 became our final abode in Germany.

The difficulties of housing exchanges did not adversely affect our status with the IRO. My friend John Baltay became the senior official of the Supply Office, while I served as the right-hand man to Lieutenant Beautemps. I conducted many discussions on his behalf with the German authorities. My boss was fluent only in French, and his spoken English did not exceed my own.

Beautemps was so pleased with my work that he unexpectedly proposed appointing me as an IRO-uniformed officer. This would have meant receiving my wages in U.S. dollars and gaining benefits

such as access to the American PX (a tax-free discount store for military personnel).

One condition of the appointment was that I would have to be examined in Augsburg to determine whether my past was politically acceptable. I had no fear of this, as I had never been a member of any political party and could easily prove my judicial status. However, there was a complication. At that time, the U.S. authorities had not yet permitted the emigration of Hungarian military officers, so it seemed wiser not to mention that I was a reserve officer.

Furthermore, the careless American military officers who dismissed us from the POW camp had not issued discharge papers. As a result, I still tried to avoid military police patrols, as they continued to ask younger men to present their disarmament credentials.

I approached the interrogation with mixed feelings. The interrogator was a Hungarian lady who had lived in Budapest during the war. Because of her origins, she had ended up in a German camp and had not returned after the liberation of Hungary.

Our conversation was friendly. I showed her my MÁV authority to purchase half-price train tickets, which clearly indicated that I was a magistrate. Knowing the Hungarian conditions well, she accepted without hesitation that I could not have been a member of any political party. When asked whether I had been a soldier, I told her I was a reservist in Budapest but had not been involved in the war. When she asked why I had not been called up, I said I had been exempted. This was not true, but it seemed easier than explaining the coincidence of fate that had kept me from being drafted.

Then she asked if I could prove my exemption. I felt caught. I replied that I had a hernia. "Is there something about this in writing?" she asked. I said "No," but offered with a smile, "If you like, I can show you the scar." She smiled and ended the interrogation.

Relieved, I returned to Kempten, but I promised myself that I would never again deny my military service. It was one of the main reasons I never applied to immigrate to the USA. (Until the end of

1949, the Americans were unwilling to allow the migration of officers.)

Ironically, my appointment as an IRO-uniformed officer never materialised. A few weeks later, Lieutenant Beautemps informed me that my application had been accepted in Augsburg and the appointment was expected. However, on 30 June 1948, the Währungsreform came into effect, and the IRO's budget was slashed, resulting in many layoffs. Unfortunately, my position became redundant, as most civilian buildings had been returned to the German authorities. I received my dismissal notice and was now unemployed.

However, in August 1949, I returned to the IRO. My friend John Baltay, who had been chief of the Supply Office at the time of the currency reform, was transferred to Augsburg in the summer of 1949. His position became vacant, and on his recommendation, I was rehired. The Supply Office was located at the Schloss Kaserne camp, where I was responsible for managing the supply needs of the Lithuanian camp until our immigration in early October.

The Political Situation 1945–1949

A sentimental Hungarian concert song from the Second World War began: *“In the land of Moscow, the post office works slowly.”* We could say the same for all the countries that came under Russian control in the zone stretching south from Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland) to Trieste, Italy. Soon, the term popularised by Churchill—the “Iron Curtain”—became widely known. Many still claim that Churchill was the first to define the Soviet Union’s political boundary. However, I had already encountered this term in a political sense as early as March 1944.

In the Reich, the German weekly newspaper published an article by the imperial propaganda minister, Goebbels, addressing the nations of Eastern Europe. By that time, many governments—including Hungary’s—had calculated that the Axis Powers would lose the war. In their increasingly anti-socialist thinking, they began to orient themselves toward the West, seeking a solution to a situation that was becoming ever more hopeless. In his article, Goebbels declared that those hoping for salvation from the West were deluding themselves. Almost prophetically, he wrote that an “iron curtain” (Eiserner Vorhang) would descend during the Russian occupation—like the iron safety curtain in theatres that falls to mark the end of a performance.

In the confusion at the end of the war, it was natural that news services ceased. But months later, censorship remained, and this control continued to delay postal traffic. Despite this, news still percolated through the Iron Curtain. Correspondents used cryptic language. In our letters, we used “Olga” to mean “Russia,” and the phrase “you are welcomed home as soon as possible” to mean “under no circumstances should you come home.”

There was also freer and more detailed news from enterprising individuals who had managed to break through the Iron Curtain,

which guarded the socialist states with watchtowers, mines, and dogs. These reliable people brought sad and often shocking reports.

We gradually learned more about our loved ones—those who had remained in Germany and those who had returned home. My brother-in-law Béla had moved back into their ransacked apartment and resumed his medical practice. My father's initial hopes were quickly dashed. He was unable to continue his notary practice in Kalocsa. Having joined the Association's pension fund only in 1939, and despite being seventy years old, he received no pension. He was registered in Szeged, where he had spent most of his life. His Jewish lawyer friends stood by him with integrity, confirming that he had always behaved honourably and, since his notary appointment at the start of the war, had not engaged in any political activity. His only option was to move to Székesfehérvár and live with Kata. He found occasional clerical work in a lumberyard for a few years, but this soon became impossible—partly due to his age, and partly because he had been branded a “reactionary” in his official records.

My in-laws suffered greatly during the fighting around Miskolc, but they continued to live in their three-bedroom apartment. For a time, they hosted billeted Russian officers, and later, co-tenants. It was humiliating and painful, and inevitably caused friction.

Duci, my sister-in-law, returned home and applied to the National Bank, where she had previously worked. Nothing could be held against her during the confirmation process, but she was repeatedly questioned about what she knew regarding the gold reserves held abroad. What could Duci possibly have known? Was it such a great sin that she had gone west, lost her job, and returned to her parents in Miskolc? She was unemployed for some time, but eventually found work at a local health insurance office.

My wife Ica's aunt, Ilu Mama, and her cousins in Sashalom lived through the fighting around Budapest without too much trouble. Ilu Mama faithfully sent us newspaper rolls from Budapest, always hiding a small piece of salami in the centre of the package to help us.

From her, we learned that her brother, Kálmán Bánó, a police advisor, had died of a heart attack in the final months of the war. His son, Elemér, a lieutenant in the Hussars, had fought in the defence of Budapest, where he suffered a serious knee injury. Fortunately, he was evacuated in time on a German hospital train and recovered. Of course, no military disability aid was available to him. He tried to support himself by cultivating mushrooms in a basement.

I received the saddest news from Szeged: my nephew, Lieutenant Kálmán Falcione of the armoured division, had been killed in action defending Budapest at Vérmező. He had been nominated for a gold medal for bravery. I knew him as an enthusiastic, good Hungarian youth who saw the military as his true vocation.

His brother, Mario Falcione, also proved to be a tough soldier. He fought as a lieutenant in the highlands and was likewise recommended for a high honour. After the war, he returned to Szeged. Continuing a military career was out of the question, so he enrolled at the University of Szeged Medical School.



Mario Falcione

His father, Kálmán Falcione, a lawyer, fortunately survived the hard times. Politically unexposed and fluent in Russian, he was able to resume his legal practice. In fact, his friends encouraged him to take advantage of the new democratic opportunities. He became a member of parliament under the Pfeiffer Freedom Party's programme. Sadly, his political career was short-lived. One morning, while reading the European edition of the New York Herald Tribune, I saw his name. The paper reported his arrest for conspiracy. He spent five years in Rákósi's prison.

They also persecuted my cousin, Captain Lóránt Falcione, a military judge who had tried to help his father. He, too, was imprisoned for several years.

Mario Falcione, having joined the Hungarian Veterans' intelligence service, learned that his arrest was imminent. The enterprising young man escaped by crawling through minefields across the border and soon joined us in Kempten. We gave him shelter until he could organise his life. He graduated from the Munich medical faculty, emigrated to the United States in the 1950s, and earned his living as an anaesthetist.

As a medical student, he was once assigned to a train transporting Jewish immigrants to Palestine. In a detailed letter, he described the experience. He noted the dedication and hard work involved in founding the State of Israel, and the contrast between the behaviour of Hungarian Jews and the enthusiastic, disciplined military spirit of the citizens of the new Jewish state. The newly awakened love of homeland had created selfless citizens.

In the first few months after the war, it seemed that Hungarians endured the chaos with gritted teeth, striving to rebuild the country. But Muscovite vengeance cast dark shadows over those early years. The West, too, betrayed the fundamental principles of Christian civilisation when it organised the war crimes trials. Instead of a spirit of Christian forgiveness, they revived the ancient pagan rite of the Roman Empire, encapsulated in the phrase *Vae Victis*—woe to the vanquished.

Christianity had failed to correct the conduct of the war. It tried to curb its degeneration, just as the Geneva Conventions sought to mitigate its worst excesses. But this was a struggle for survival. In the second phase of the Second World War, when the German-Russian conflict began and the Western powers launched their carpet bombing of cities, victory was pursued with fewer military casualties—but at the cost of opening the door to grave atrocities. It is understandable that the victors would seek to avenge these crimes. Yet only the defeated were brought to justice, and this was done in a morally questionable way.

The Nuremberg Trials defined a war criminal as one responsible for launching a war of aggression or for violating the rules of war. But in Hungary's case, the basic principles of the Nuremberg laws were exceeded. The Soviets could not claim that Hungary had planned an



Vörösmarty

offensive war. Hungary was a pawn on the chessboard of the great powers. Yes, degenerative excesses occurred in Hungary—such as the atrocities in Újvidék, where Hungarian troops attacked civilians, mostly Serbs and Jews. In such cases, judicial review was justified.

However, Muscovite vengeance branded as war criminals all those who had led Christian Hungary. Everyone was guilty—anyone who, in those decades, had supported a policy aimed at resisting the dismemberment of the nation and the “sacred” land grab of the Trianon Treaty. This was compounded by the communist political aim of eradicating the intellectual strength of the Hungarian middle class—a class capable of rebuilding a free democracy from the ruins of war.

This This is how people of differing political convictions—often in conflict with one another—such as Ferenc (Francis) Szálasi, László Bárdossy, Béla Imrédy, and Cardinal Mindszenty came before the ‘judiciary’. The Soviet henchmen demanded the extradition of Miklós Horthy from the Western powers, and had their request been granted, he would likely have ended his life on the gallows.

Ferenc Szálasi only came to power on 15 October 1944, when the Arrow Cross Party—very similar to Hitler’s NSDAP—seized control in Hungary. There is no doubt that the coalition government he led represented various national and Christian political parties in opposition to the Soviet Union. Hungarian Jews had been confined to

designated areas of the city and, in defiance of German pressure, were placed under protection. Excesses and atrocities against them were forbidden. The army fought in Szálasi's name with honour; individuals who committed crimes could have been tried. His death sentence must have been drafted before the "trial" even began. He faced Hungary's fate with courage, and the photographs preserved from the gallows show, in his smile, his contempt for his executioners.

László Bárdossy was accused of acting unconstitutionally for declaring in Parliament that Hungary was at war with the Soviet Union. The prosecution's case was clearly unfounded. Under Hungarian constitutional law, a constitutional act required the joint action of the Head of State, the government, and the National Assembly. In this case, the government announced to Parliament that a state of war existed, and the National Assembly took note. The Head of State had the right to use military force beyond the country's borders, even against the dissent of the Minister of Defence. The cross-border deployment of troops was announced by the government in Parliament.

The political responsibility was his and his government's, but the prosecution had no legal basis. The judgment against him had also been prepared in advance. He presented his case in a classically concise and dignified manner, but in vain. He had the final word when, facing the firing squad, he cried out: "My Lord God, save Hungary from these bandits!"

Béla Imrédy's case illustrates that these trials aimed not only to punish extreme politicians but also to destroy the leadership of Hungarian society. After all, Imrédy was more of a capitalist banker with a moderate political orientation. His expertise was even utilised by Rákósi, the Hungarian communist leader. The introduction of the forint—the new currency—was implemented under Imrédy's economic council. Yet, he too was executed by machine gun fire.

The gallows or firing squad became the fate of hundreds of Hungarians. But they were the fortunate ones compared to the thousands sentenced to life imprisonment or twenty-year terms.

I tried to follow the fate of my former superior, István (Anthony) Antal. I had observed him closely for months during the most critical times and can attest that he was a deeply respected, devout, and honourable Hungarian. He accepted the role of Attorney General under the Sztójay government with a sense of duty, regarding it as a burden he bore out of loyalty to the Head of State. Yet he was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

Cardinal Mindszenty's case shocked us. I was particularly taken aback when I learned that the Chief Judge was Vilmos (William) Olti (Obetkó), about whom I had already written a few



Cardinal Mindszenty at his sham trial by the Communist masters

lines. His words from the autumn of 1944 echoed in my ears: he had said that we could not leave Hungary because we had done nothing wrong, and as young people, we had a duty to stand firm for the country's reconstruction. How could William Olti—once a good Catholic and member of the University Emericánás Society—have gone so far as to lecture our spiritual leader?

My friend John Baltay was concerned that Péter Jankó—the “bloody” judge of the Rajk trials, who became president of the People's Court (NOT)—might meet the same fate. He believed that Jankó's discomfort stemmed partly from his wife's background, though that alone could not explain his change of heart. In the end, Péter Jankó took his own life.

Even the judges became victims. I heard that Tamás (Thomas) Simándy, a well-known “communist,” had become a member of the Justice Ministry and one of the Presidents of the People's Court. He

was unable to deliver the death sentences prescribed to him. He was criticised for his leniency toward so-called war criminals. Eventually, he resigned and withdrew. He had dreamed of Hungary's social regeneration but could not reconcile that vision with the cruelty and foreign interests dominating the system.

We followed the news closely, as our loved ones continued to send us coded messages—"We would welcome Béla home!"—which clearly meant that if I returned, a prison ordeal likely awaited me. But why? I asked myself what crime I had committed. I never denied that I viewed the Second World War as an attempt to dismantle the Versailles order, and I had hoped for collaboration with the Germans to revise the Trianon borders. I was not involved in politics, and as a legal professional, I was not a member of any political party. My work did not involve political matters. Perhaps my role as personal secretary to István Antal would be held against me. Yet the fact that I had also worked alongside Gábor Vladár, Minister in the Lakatos government, seemed to count for nothing.

I also wondered whether my criticism of Lajos Iván's Grey Book, expressed in the White Book I co-authored, might have been the issue.

My mother was in contact with my childhood friend Sityi Kaszó, whose mother was from the Békefy family and was therefore considered "persecuted." Sityi was practising law in Budapest. He undertook to check my cadre file. It turned out that none of the above was mentioned. Instead, the only reference was to an incident in the basement air-raid shelter of the Ministry, where I had defended István (Stephen) Antal from an attack. So, had no one been inclined to pursue trumped-up charges, I might have been able to find some modest position for myself back home.

This was the case, for example, with my friend Pisti (Stephen) Arató, who was arrested based on a departmental report. The papers stated that several fascist insignia had been found in his

apartment. Yet he later found work as a scientific researcher and earned his living as a translator.

News about Pista brought a sad smile to my face. I remember well that, during our scholarship year in Berlin, Pista diligently collected the monthly badges issued to those who supported the German Caritas (Winterhilfswerk – “Winter Relief of the German People”).

My friend János (John) Csiky, a ministerial secretary, had the misfortune of working in the drafting department during the 15 October 1944 elections. As a constitutional law expert, he formulated the text of the “National Leaders Act” and its legislative measures. As a result, he spent years in prison under the harshest conditions.

My friend, Lieutenant Béla Máder, was imprisoned because, on 15 October 1944, he was the duty officer at the Train Barracks. He was charged with failing to act against the coup d'état led by the Szálasi party. It was unlikely that a young officer could have influenced events in those chaotic and uncertain hours—especially when news did not reach us, let alone any commands.

It seemed to my anxious loved ones that their concern for my fate was not unfounded. It was later revealed that certain individuals in our department, favouring the Russians and the English, had prepared a list of “pro-Germans”—and I was on it.

Our apartment had been seized by the Government Commissioner for Abandoned Goods, and our parents were so afraid to mention our names or whereabouts that they allowed the loss of our beautifully furnished home. Later news confirmed that our neighbours had taken possession of our furniture, clothing, and other belongings. Ica was deeply hurt for a long time that the beautiful dowry furniture could not be saved, even for her sister Duci. Her parents had just paid the full amount for those items. The dowry had been a great sacrifice, as they were refugees after World War I and her father, a modestly paid teacher, had not been able to accumulate many possessions.

Although my name did not appear on the war criminals list, I was still summoned to a court hearing. It is true that the summons was undelivered—no one knew what had happened to me and my family in the final confusion of the war.

The summons came from a private lawsuit. Lajos (Louis) Iván, author of *The Grey Book*, launched a libel suit against the authors of *The White Book*. Based on news reports, I could only conclude that the two other co-authors, István (Stephen) Arató and Béla Csikós Nagy, partly claimed that the political commentary had come from my pen. They also asserted that the book had been written at the “request” of the Hungarian Embassy in Berlin. This was, of course, untrue—the embassy had no knowledge of the book’s creation, as I have already explained. Thus, they could only pass judgment against me, but the news was that my family and I had perished in an air raid.

István Arató was certainly intimidated after experiencing prison life and later refused to speak about the matter. Béla Csikós Nagy, however, had by then become a communist and was serving as private secretary to Zoltán Vass. He had enough influence for the case to fall from attention. The loyalist Louis Iván, in the early democratic years, became a class enemy. My information was that he was deported to Russia and perished there. It was unfortunate that he brought the case against me—perhaps it drew attention to him and contributed to his downfall. He had ample time between 1939 and 1944 to bring a slander claim against me, but at that time the Hungarian courts were independent and would have found his book guilty of falsehood and plagiarism.

My old Berlin friend, Vilmos (William) Szigethy, who published our reply, gave me a thorough briefing on the domestic Hungarian political situation. In the early years of the war, William had only been “politicised” to the extent that he served as the Hungarian announcer in the UFA newsreels. After 15 October 1944, the Hungarian embassy was reorganised, and William was appointed

cultural attaché. He was not a member of the Arrow Cross Party, but Mecsér wanted him because of his deep knowledge of German social and political life. By the end of the war, William appeared to be a significant political figure. The Americans brought him home on the same plane as members of the Szálasi government.

He languished in prison for months, and when no serious charges could be pressed, he was released. During his internment, he maintained contact with Jewish friends, with whom he had been on good terms even before the Berlin years. He believed their influence helped secure his release. He confined himself to his mother's apartment, but his suspicions were confirmed when his old Jewish friends visited him and offered to recommend him for membership in the Communist Party—thus ensuring that his artistic talent would propel him to prominence. He objected, saying he could not morally deny his past. They warned him that if he refused, he might be subject to re-examination. William asked for 24 hours to consider, and after they left, he immediately fled to the border, successfully reaching Munich, where he reunited with his wife. They lived in relatively good conditions, but he decided to leave Europe. He had connections in Argentina and emigrated there. What became of them later, I do not know—I lost track.

At our meeting in Munich, however, William gave a detailed account of the horrors of prison life. He spoke at length about the execution of Hungarian national leaders, which he had witnessed while incarcerated.

He brought a message from Béla Csikós Nagy. Béla knew that William would eventually escape to the West and come into contact with us. He tried to convince me that his political shift was not from the depths of his soul, but that he wanted to serve Hungary from the other side.

We did not believe Béla Csikós's message. I later learned that he had definitively distanced himself from his own family for the sake of his career. He followed the instructions of his superior, Zoltán

Vass. According to reports, his father—Joseph Csikós, a lawyer from Szeged—once visited him. Vass saw the elderly man in the hallway, summoned his secretary (Béla), and said: “If I see your reactionary father here again, you too can fly out of here.”

What was daily life like for Hungarian families and citizens in their homes? How did the majority of Hungarians live during those heavy days of gallows and firing squads?

My father had an evening walking companion in Székesfehérvár, Imre Telbisz. His family were scions of Szeged; I had known them well in peacetime. After the war, the wealthy Telbisz family was scattered. Imre found work as an accountant in a public company in Székesfehérvár. Later, he had the opportunity to immigrate to Canada to join his wife and family. From there, he wrote a long letter describing the postwar years. I quote a few lines

"Together with your father, we observed that the communist regime was destroying the country, enslaving the workers and stripping the middle peasants from their assets and they deliberately degraded the middle class so that, in the near future, all will be eliminated. No one has ruined our agriculture in the last thousand years like they are now determined to do. For years now we have been in need of importing wheat. We are importing from France their worst type. Fat we have from Denmark, but mixed with margarine and other chemical agents so it doesn't melt in the heat. The average worker's wages amount to 900-forint, fat was 40 forint and the bread was sold for 3 forints and the price of eggs ranged from 2.20-2.80 forints.

A dressing gown costs between 800-1100 forints and a winter coat from 2000 to 2500 forints. A litre of wine 2 forints, cold cuts 28 forints and a kilo of salami 70 forints. From this you can calculate that a worker in one month can afford 20 kilos of fat, 300 kilos of bread and an outfit or half a winter coat in a month. Most can only survive by stealing. That said, one of my nephews, who was a prisoner in Russia, said that everyone steals there except Lenin

because he is already dead. However, they did implement something from their program that was that everyone is equally poor. Of course, if a family had a father, mother and two or three children working, it was easier to live. If the woman is destroyed few people cared. The party officials and senior party people are paid disproportionately higher salaries and pay much cheaper prices from separate stores. This is the famous equality! "

So, it was understandable that we did not desire to return home. The four rivers and the Hungarian landscape lived in our memories, but we did not want to live under Russian occupation.

Once, on a Bavarian country road, I was with my friend Sándor (Alexander) Bedő, and at a barrier we saw a train pass carrying Hungarian refugees. These unsuspecting Hungarians had displayed their flags on the train. It broke our hearts, but hardened our resolve: while the system maintained its iron grip, there was no space for us at home.

There were optimistic people in exile. I was one of them, expecting that within a few years—after the reorganisation of Europe—we might be able to return. I tried to conceive of emigration as a two-year vacation, like the Jules Verne novel from my youth. Besides, the problems of everyday life overshadowed political considerations; it was simply about how we occupied these difficult times. After all, we Hungarians were always former enemies, seeking understanding from the occupying forces.

The new German leaders were not friendly toward us, seeing us as the last ally of the overthrown National Socialist regime. Yet the presence of Hungarians was necessary to preserve the scattered Hungarian assets held on German soil. In the dying months of the Second World War, Hungary became a battlefield. For seven months, the Hungarian army and its German allies carried out delaying operations by retreating. Each retreat involved withdrawing all goods that might be used by the advancing enemy. Some troop commanders destroyed or carried away assets that could hardly be

considered of strategic value. However, the advancing Bolshevik forces were feared and hated by the civilian population, and this led to the removal of goods without reason—simply because they happened to be in someone’s possession.

The government, seized by panic, ordered that everything—factories, industrial machinery, equipment—must be removed to prevent it falling into enemy hands. The civilian population also fled in large numbers. All kinds of transport—horses and carts, cars, buses, and boats—ended up in German territory. These valuables, as a result of the lost war, remained almost unattended. The Germans themselves had to face the burden of unconditional surrender. The Allies, however, refused to speak with Hungarian troops, government organisations, or displaced factory officials. Often, only a subordinate Allied officer would decide what fell under his jurisdiction and what should be done with various items of property.

Vitéz (Hungarian Order of Merit) Lt. Col. Béla Almay led the effort to save abandoned Hungarian property. With sound political judgement, he pointed out to the occupying powers that most of these assets had been taken by the Germans as Wehrmachtgut (war booty), but they rightfully belonged to Hungarians. He appealed to the invaders not to allow these assets to be absorbed into the German economy. He emphasised that only the Hungarians in the West could freely confirm the validity of these claims, and that it was our duty to ensure these assets were used for the benefit of the Magyars.

Indeed, the Hungarians who had drifted west instinctively recognised their responsibility. Without central leadership, but through improvisation, autonomous groups began detecting, registering, and collecting assets—doing everything they could to keep Hungarian property in Hungarian hands. Béla Almay later succeeded in winning over American government representatives,

who accepted his organisation as a negotiating partner with the new German authorities.

Both the German and U.S. authorities pressed for Béla Almay's informal organisation to acquire legal status. That was the point at which I became involved in the serious work of Hungarian guardianship of assets. I was elected to the Committee for Legal Affairs, and the organisation was asked to provide an opinion on the legal form it should assume and to prepare the first draft of the Rules of Procedure.

I prepared an extensive legal opinion; my suggestions were welcomed and accepted. Primarily, I recommended that the organisation operate in the public domain—as a public or private corporation in a commercial legal form. I wrote:

“While the NMV (Guardianship of Hungarian Property in Germany) would become a public body, certain political considerations must be addressed. The NMV is formed by free emigrants—Hungarians living in Germany—and, after the elimination of foreign occupation and the restoration of Hungarian sovereignty, sees itself as acting in the economic interests of the Hungarian state. Therefore, it must be more than a commercial enterprise. Its public law nature is evident in the fact that Hungarian bodies in exile established this operation through democratic electoral processes. On the other hand, the NMV can only achieve its objectives through sound industrial and commercial activity.”

Having reviewed in detail the various forms available to German private and commercial entities, I suggested that the NMV conduct its economic activities in the Offene Handelsgesellschaft (General Partnership) format. This form required no special formalities, but allowed the NMV to benefit from legal representation. If the NMV acquired more substantial goods from the U.S. Property Control, they could be transferred to a limited liability company.

I emphasised that we must not become involved with “stray” Hungarian possessions—meaning movable property without a

known owner. The NMV, acting as attorney, would represent the owners of such goods. My proposal was summarised:

(Details of the author's summary can be found in the original Hungarian version of his book.)

I also contributed in detail to the draft code of conduct.

It seemed that, in a short time, the NMV took shape. As German sovereignty recovered, U.S. powers and control systems declined rapidly. Agents from Hungary arrived, attempting to take stock and either return or sell the scattered Hungarian property. The NMV's function was strongly inhibited by the onset of overseas emigration among those who had served as property caretakers. Thus, although the NMV made it possible to repatriate or sell Hungarian assets, the organisation itself never received official recognition.

Hungarian communist officials treated the caretakers of Hungarian property with coldness and near hostility, despite their efforts to preserve these scattered assets. Among them were well-meaning individuals who genuinely represented the nation's interests when redirecting recovered property. However, there were also reports that some assets did not reach their rightful owners, but instead served to strengthen the communist regime. There were even accounts of Hungarian delegates selling cars as wrecks or scrap metal, with the proceeds transferred to Swiss bank accounts—forming the basis of their economic success abroad.

The Western powers eventually realised that the Soviet Union had no intention of honouring the Yalta Agreement and increasingly viewed the resurrected German state as their ally. The Americans investigated the structure and shortcomings of the Soviet military. Hungarian General Staff members living in West Germany were asked to provide evaluations based on their experience on the Eastern Front.

Gradually, our immigrants gained civil rights, and our scattered politicians in Germany began to organise themselves. A clash between the former allies no longer seemed unlikely—especially

after the Berlin Airlift revived hope that returning home might not remain just a dream.

Many members of the Hungarian National Assembly were living in Germany. The Bavarian town of Altötting hosted representatives of the 1939 Hungarian Parliament, and they gained U.S. recognition. Army officers, staff, junior officers, and troops—dressed in German civilian clothes—began forming an organisation to operate in exile. The World War II front-line fighters joined forces in the West, feeling it their duty to uphold the spirit of their military oath. Major General Zákó directed their work from Innsbruck.

The French occupying forces observed the fate of Hungarians with understanding. They quickly realised that it would influence the future of Europe. During World War II, Hungary had never been at war with France; they did not view us as “the enemy,” as did the British and American zones. This is how the Hungarian Veterans became the most powerful organisation in emigration.

The principles published in January 1949 are best illuminated by the following lines:

“The Hungarians could never remain neutral in any struggle between West and East. To protect our future and our existence, we had to join the battle—even if it was threatened by failure. The Royal Hungarian Army faced a disproportionate struggle, attempting the impossible while awaiting death. Heroic struggle adorned their performance. The nation had entrusted the military with the defence of its honour. The struggle would have been incomprehensible and pointless had it ended in humiliating surrender instead of a soldier’s death. The Royal Hungarian Army, facing the murderous Bolsheviks, did not surrender—even when ousted from their homeland. They fought until unarmed and entrusted their fate to the West, which they never considered an enemy of national independence. The dissolution of the chain of command did not break the unshakable sense of unity and determination in our warriors’ spirit. Our fraternal communities throughout the world continue to nurture the idea of belonging and of

returning to our homeland. Only our home and the Hungarian people are eternal.”

The meeting at Altötting did not result in the formation of a recognised representative body for the Hungarian emigration—the search took longer. Kálmán Bocsáry, a member of Parliament, contacted me in July 1948. We were still in Kempten and regarded ourselves as belonging to the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Justice, with politicians turning to us when they sought clarification on constitutional issues.

In fact, among the Justice Department’s constitutional law experts, I was the only one living in a free country. Jenő Agárdy and László Tamásy were criminal lawyers; Alexander Kálnoki Bedő specialised in family law; and John Baltay was a commercial lawyer. We discussed the problems together, and I was tasked with summarising our views for the politicians. Their aim was to build, on the foundations of Hungarian constitutional law, a government that could be recognised by the Western powers as representing the interests of a free Hungary.

Radical national groups saw the goal as a functioning State Council, while others viewed the sovereignty of the Parliament elected in 1939 as a means of achieving broader political consensus. Many questions were raised: When was legal continuity interrupted during the Second World War? How should we evaluate the post-15 October 1944 state of affairs? And how should we view the National Assembly convened in Debrecen? I made a submission on these issues. We learned from Kálmán Bocsáry that the politicians had discussed them, but did not always agree with our conclusions.

Eventually, as the former Allies did not clash and it became clear that America’s aim was not the liberation of Hungary and other Eastern European countries, but rather the containment of Soviet ambitions, the constitutional debate lost its practical relevance. Still, it may be of interest to future historians as a record of how

Hungarian emigrants thought when there was still hope that their country might be liberated in the foreseeable future.

I pondered the format of an interim national government in the following words:

(The author's detailed elaboration of constitutional nuances is available in the Hungarian version for those who wish to study them, but is omitted in this translation.)

Our study reviewed the development of political life in the occupied country from 1945 to 1948. We emphasised that the majority of Hungarian voters, even while trying to appease the occupying forces, chose—by parliamentary majority—parties furthest from the Soviet Union's vision of society. However, these parties could not prevail in Parliament and were absorbed into a charade of coalition government, ultimately leading to a one-party Communist system. In summary, we wrote:

"The tinsel law formed during the Russian occupation existed only by virtue of a foreign military power. It lacked constitutional continuity and merely overthrew thousands of years of revolutionary spirit embedded in our constitution and its strongest bastions of creative power. However, revolutionary facts cannot be a source of public law. It is not possible to use the law of power as the foundation of legitimacy"

We also expressed our opinion on leaders forced into exile:

"Béla Varga, the former President of the National Assembly, now in the U.S., stated in reference to the 1946 I tc 15 § paragraphs (2) and (3) concerning presidential powers: 'It is obvious that the thousand-year-old Hungarian Constitution and public legal principles cannot justify its legal validity.'"

The sharpest controversy concerned the question of when constitutional continuity was interrupted during the war. On this point, political forces could not agree. Perhaps it was already broken on 19 March 1944? In our view, that date marked a voluntary restraint of sovereignty.

However, it is indisputable that constitutional succession was cancelled on 15 October 1944, when revolutionary events forced the resignation of the Head of State, rendering his government unable to cooperate with the National Assembly.

Nevertheless, the National Assembly, using appropriate legislation, revived the cooperation between the Head of State, the Government, and Parliament. The new political policies did not seek to modify the constitution. After the formation of a coalition government, they merely expressed a desire to continue the conflict in alliance with Germany against the Soviet Union. The formation of the Debrecen Order of the State did not aim to restore legal continuity, but rather to transfer power to a Soviet-style state and its imposed social order.

In May 1946, Hungarian MPs who had reached free lands formed the Hungarian Freedom Movement, whose members sought to restore the legal continuity of a free democratic Hungary. In 1947, on St Stephen's Day in Altötting, those convened advocated:

- a/ branding the national socialist and communist terrors;
- b/ protesting against the unjust Paris Peace Agreement;
- c/ solemnly declaring that Hungary had faithfully belonged to the West for a thousand years; and
- d/ pledging to protect and represent the interests of the nation in collaboration with the Western democracies, and establish a body entrusted with ensuring constitutional continuity if the situation arose.

The Hungarian Freedom Movement then approached us in Kempten, as former Ministry of Justice lawyers. As a former lecturer in the department, I gave one final opinion on some emerging issues:

"If the Hungarian Freedom Movement aspires to the country's liberation and, in its work, the political forces and constitutional bodies aim to reestablish the aborted constitutional continuity in its

liberation of the country, then under Hungarian civil law it's on the right track.

Above all, it must be emphasized that the Hungarian constitutional sovereignty during World War II, on 15th October 1944, ceased to function and constitutional continuity was interrupted.

The outcome of World War II ensured that the Debrecen political organizers succeeded and their reign received international recognition.

However, from a civil law point of view, the established law and order cannot be considered constitutional and if the country is liberated, it must be returned to where the constitution was terminated.

Therefore, at the time – using the 1920 I t.c.9§ model- all acts, decisions, or other public acts of appointment since October 15, 1944 be declared of no effect.

This point of view did not alter the fact that this new system was recognized by some of the states and that it had now been in existence for a relatively long period of time. This situation only just justified that a significant portion of the state legislation shall, at least temporarily, be forced to use the constitutional order of the state and is to remain in place, as it developed after World War I; the national state order also authorized the Ministry to the so-called People's Republic to keep their provisions in force if necessary, but also allow establishment of new arrangements to replace them. "

This study dealt in detail with Hungarian constitutional principles and their summaries, especially emphasising the cooperation between the President, the National Assembly, and the Royal Government.

At this point, the question also arose as to whether it was appropriate or possible to invite the exiled Governor Miklós Horthy to take an active role. Most of us felt that his appearance would be a political obstacle, particularly on the international stage.

The operational problems of the Country Council were also raised. We wrote about them as follows:

(The author's detailed discussion on operational issues is available in the Hungarian version for those who wish to study them, but is omitted in this translation.)

We Leave Europe

I also belonged to the optimistic group who, at the end of the war, believed that a few years later—after the crackdown period—the occupation forces would return home and peace would ensue, accompanied by a spirit of forgiveness. I remembered from my childhood that those who had been involved in the Aster Revolution (the socialist uprising immediately after the First World War) were soon reintegrated into Hungary's political life.

The first years of exile in Germany only deepened our love for the homeland. We lost not only the landscape and our relatives, but normal social relations disappeared into the fog. Our mother tongue became useless outside the family circle and close friends. As a former magistrate, I was aware that, despite my knowledge of German law, I would not be able to continue my vocation. The possibility of retraining was very limited. I tried, at least, to represent my fellow countrymen before the German authorities.

I applied for a license under the German institution known as Rechtsberater (legal advisor). This license did not allow me to appear in court as a lawyer, but I could assist in preparing cases before trial—particularly since Hungarian legal matters often had to be reconciled with German court procedures.

The loss of the war and our statelessness led to many broken marriages, and I often had to advise spouses and children on their legal status. This work kept my interest in law alive, but in terms of earning a living, it was of little significance. My clients were penniless exiles who could barely feed themselves, let alone pay for legal services.

I was fortunate during the first three years, as my employment with the IRO provided not only regular work but access to small supplies essential for daily life. It also included medical care—free treatment and hospitalisation for the whole family. This made it possible to treat my son Béla's illness in a sanatorium for nearly six

months, as well as my own hernia operation. However, dental care was limited to free tooth extractions; in cases of inflammation, extraction was the only option.

Once I became unemployed, the aid available was minimal. After the German currency reform, the labour market stalled for more than half a year. New businesses emerged, but I lacked industrial vocational training, and few opportunities were available for magistrates. I placed an advertisement in the local newspaper, highlighting my English and German skills and my years of service with the IRO (International Relief Organization).

I found a job in the office of a transport company that had started with three or four trucks. I helped with the telephone. The work was not difficult, but I soon realised that my employer assumed I had good connections with the U.S. occupation authorities. When he discovered that I was merely a “former enemy” without friendly ties to the occupiers, he informed me that my services were no longer needed. Indeed, my office duties could be performed by a young, untrained girl. I applied for another job, but they were unable to help.

In our dire situation, I decided to sell my brother-in-law’s old Olympia car. It was already twelve years old; we could no longer afford servicing, and the ordeals of war had left their mark on it. A buyer came forward quickly—an East Prussian refugee who, with some capital from his wife, was trying to build a medical equipment distribution business and needed a car. We agreed swiftly, and he gave me 200 U.S. dollars for the title. At the time, this was a good transaction. The new German currency market was still uncertain; on the free market, one dollar fetched 20 German marks.

After the sale, we enjoyed a few months of relative ease. Each week, for 10 dollars, we received 200 marks. As unemployment benefits amounted to about 100 marks per month, we could breathe more easily.

However, the new German mark soon strengthened dramatically—a dollar was now worth only 4 marks. Naturally, the proceeds from the car sale no longer lasted.

This desperate situation gave birth to the decision to leave Europe as soon as possible.

Contributing to our decision was the discovery that our young son Andrew had a hilus (TB) infection. At that time, the only effective remedy was good nutrition—and the opportunity for that was fading. The children were suffering from various illnesses, and we were all in a very run-down condition. Ica was also very weak. She urgently needed a dental bridge, but we simply didn't have the money. I submitted a request for assistance to the Kempten town welfare office. In my application, I emphasised that without dental treatment for Ica, we could not emigrate. I received 100 marks, which allowed us to pay the dentist.

My friend Dénes (Dennis) Pataky was one of the first to convince me that it was possible to start a new life overseas. His brother-in-law had travelled to Canada, and they were planning to follow. Argentina was also on our minds. President Perón had shown sympathy for the Axis struggle during the war, especially as South America had long resisted Anglo-Saxon influence—particularly U.S. imperialism. At the end of the war, emigration requests from Germans and their allies were treated liberally. Those with at least some money could organise their departure and leave Europe with relative ease.

In ecclesiastical circles, despite the Church's firm opposition to the excesses of the National Socialist regime during the war, it now rushed to help the persecuted in a true Christian spirit.

My friend from Berlin, Vilmos (William) Szigethy, and his wife decided to start a new life overseas. When we said goodbye in Munich, he promised to stay in touch and help me with emigration. I have no idea what became of them. I don't know whether they ever reached Argentina.

When Kempten became part of the French zone, we explored other destinations. Morocco emerged as a possibility. Arab society seemed so alien to us that we doubted whether we could adapt, but our situation was so desperate that we considered it seriously.

The memory of these two emigration plans still lives in me. I tried diligently to refresh my knowledge of French. I often recalled my French teacher, Lajos (Louis) Bölcskey, who once warned me for not being diligent enough. I can still see his raised finger as he said, “Boy, boy, you’ll regret it.”

Later, I learned Spanish as well. Somehow, I picked it up quite easily, and I believe that if fate had sent us to a Spanish-speaking country, I would not have struggled with the language.

Then there was a romantic plan. A Canadian Hungarian living in Alberta proposed supporting a larger group of Hungarians for relocation. His company wanted to clear forest land to establish a farm. Most of the Hungarians seeking emigration were intellectuals, but he was willing to train those with the physical strength to engage in tree cutting and deforestation. The younger officers began organising themselves for this purpose, and, being optimistic, I also applied. I thought that my administrative, English, and legal skills would strengthen my application. Our wives were sceptical—they could not imagine us as forest workers. Perhaps they were right.

When I was re-employed by the IRO, it became easier to plan for emigration. The organisation for the mass exodus was underway, and we Hungarians could now apply.

I spent long hours talking with my friends about the need to relocate. The United States was the most promising destination, as the standard of living in North America at the time was the highest. A fair number of Hungarians had been living in the U.S. since before the First World War; they appeared happy and were willing to help new Hungarian immigrants. The U.S. Catholic and Protestant churches also organised themselves in support.

My circle of friends tried to build connections in this direction. We believed migration would be a temporary solution, as the Cold War was taking on a definite shape. The superpowers were expected to clash in the foreseeable future, and this would lead to an American victory—and a return home. The U.S. stood firm in its commitment to restoring freedom and attracted many.

I agreed with them, but according to U.S. emigration laws at the time, officers of the Hungarian Royal Army could not apply for entry into the United States.

As a reserve ensign who had not fought directly on the front, and whose documents confirmed his civilian occupation, I considered not disclosing my role as a reserve officer when applying. Yet I felt reluctant to begin a new life by denying a past of which I was proud. I was still hurting from the fact that, when I applied for my IRO position, I had withheld my military service from the interviewer—even though I took pride in it. I felt a bit like Peter, when he denied being a follower of the man from Nazareth.

Later, Hungarian officers were permitted to apply to America, but we were in a dire financial situation and could not afford to wait on uncertain future decisions.

While still employed by the IRO, I applied for Chile. As profession was one of the criteria, I indicated that I was a driver.

When discussing with our friends, which countries would be best from both economic and political perspectives, New Zealand and Australia were chosen. South Africa was rejected because we were aware of the white minority and how delicate the situation would be in a black-majority country. We thought it wise not to get involved in such a difficult environment.

In this respect, Australia seemed more acceptable. The White Australia policy, coupled with the low number of Indigenous people, suggested a certain common political outlook. We felt we could integrate more easily into this society. So, when I was able to apply with a family of several children, I submitted our request.

Our decision was met with mixed feelings among our friends. A Lithuanian colleague at the IRO simply could not understand how I, a civilised person, could choose Australia. His view was that Australia was a primitive country with many sheep. Another friend, who had read about the droughts that sometimes occur in Australia, pulled me aside—out of earshot of the women—and begged me not to go: “You’ll get on your knees begging for rain!”

I did not change my mind. I felt that the future of my family required us to leave Europe as soon as possible. As an IRO employee, I knew that Australia planned to accept large numbers of immigrants. The white immigrant population was to be increased, and as a former IRO official, I could expect to find work immediately. News we received from Baltic State refugees stressed the importance of waiting in an orderly fashion. This was far more encouraging than the reports we received from Hungarians arriving in Argentina and other South American countries. I also feared being absorbed into a major American city, with its bustle and soulless arrogance.

Baltay Ilonka could not change my mind. She kept saying, when I spoke favourably of Australia, that she could not imagine her husband John coming home smelling of snakes from a snake farm.

Upon returning to IRO employment, the burden of our financial problems was eased, allowing us to reconsider our situation again and again. We even imagined remaining in Europe, perhaps in Germany.

My eldest son was enrolled in the first class of elementary school, and we realised he would be a foreigner in the classroom. I rejected the idea of assimilation, as I did not want my children to receive a German education—especially given the hostile nature of post-war propaganda. We were deeply disillusioned with post-war Europe and longed to board a ship and leave these problems behind.

In September 1949, we received notice that Australia wished to discuss our immigration request. We were relieved and travelled

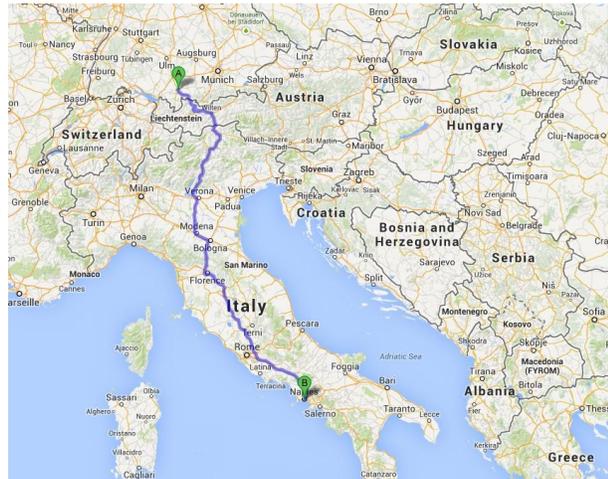
happily to Augsburg to introduce ourselves to the Australian authorities.

The Australian consul received us warmly. When he saw us passing through the foyer with our three little boys, he asked his secretary to give us priority. He spoke kindly with us, glanced at our papers, and told us that he accepted our request. We could expect to be called within a few weeks.

Interestingly, a few days after our Australian migration was confirmed, the Chilean authorities also notified us that they had accepted our application. But we had no intention of changing our minds. We began preparing for the long journey.

Accounting for our household items did not cause particular concern. Our furniture was given to friends. We sold a few winter clothes, as they seemed no longer necessary. Two large wooden crates were needed to pack our personal clothing and bedding.

It was harder to say goodbye to our friends. The Baltay, Bedő, and Török families felt that Wiesstraße 2 was a little Magyarország (Hungary), where we visited each other and discussed the latest news from home. We couldn't enjoy a full social life, but in the evenings, when the children were asleep, we usually gathered to play bridge and spent some pleasant hours together. My nephew Mario Falcione, our only relative in a foreign land, lived in the attic room, but he was already enrolled in medical school in Munich, and our paths diverged.



Trip from Augsburg to Naples

Finally, we received our call-up papers in Augsburg. We had to wait there until we were required to travel to Naples, where we again waited for the boat. It was time to say goodbye

Our small company met for the last time. The farewells were filled with encouragement, urging us to look forward to a better future. Sanyi (Alex) Bedő said that if our country were freed under U.S. leadership, they would not forget me—and Australia, after all, was not the end of the world. Gyurka (George) Demeter, a dear friend, wrote a poem in our honour. I will not quote the verse, but the final line still rings in my ears: “They will not have the Bavarians scolding them, for they have Sydney, their country’s new capital waiting for them.”

We had a couple of glasses of wine, and with tears in our eyes, we fell into each other’s arms, farewelling the difficult years behind us.

I made another visit to Munich. I saw my friends there and squeezed their hands once more. The Hungarian Bureau Chief, Gustav Hennyey, the Foreign Secretary, warmly shook my hand and wished us good luck. I also met again with Ervin Hollósy, a former commander of mine. He was optimistic about the future but could not understand why we had decided to emigrate. “Béla!” he cried, “you are leaving now, just when the days of returning home are approaching.” I was not so optimistic. I explained that I believed the process could take at least a decade, and for the sake of my family, it was important that those ten years pass in an orderly manner.

From Kempten, we travelled by train to Augsburg. At the station, of course, our friends were there. After one final handshake, the train slowly rolled out of Kempten station.

The Augsburg outbound camp was well organised. The settlement consisted of small, two-room apartments. We had a modest corner where we could live in relatively comfortable circumstances. Meals were served in a large hall. Of course, we had to clean our dishes and stand in line for food, but such difficulties were easily managed. On one occasion, Mario Falcione visited us. Andrew, my youngest son, asked, “Why are you always coming where we are?”—but this only made us laugh, and we said a warm goodbye.

Here we met Gyurka (George) Lévy, also from Kempton; they too were headed for Australia. Their camp was in a small village called Durach, mainly housing soldiers. Over the years, we met several times and visited each other. George Lévy, a dive bomber pilot, had received many awards and was legendary among his comrades. His wife, Margó, became a good friend of Ica's in Australia.

We spent just one week in Augsburg before being organised to head for Naples. The train was a good-quality passenger train. We were placed in a third-class carriage. It was not overcrowded, and those who wished to sleep stretched out on the benches.

Around 8 p.m., the passengers were checked once more by the American military government. They inspected our papers, and the train slowly pulled out of the station. We were relieved. As we joyfully farewelled the occupying military forces, the unpleasant memories of my internment in the U.S. POW camp were vividly revived.

We expected a quiet night. There were few of us in the carriage, and we put the children to sleep. Then I discovered why the carriage was so empty—the heating equipment was not working. Being the end of October, we felt the cold. We could cover the boys, but for us adults, there weren't enough blankets. We spent the night shivering. We crossed the Alpine summits during the night. That crossing of the Alps marked the first time in years that we felt freedom and security from the Bolshevik forces.

We arrived in Naples on a beautiful sunny morning. Trucks were waiting and took us to Bagnoli. This had once been a youth institution under fascist rule, and refugees awaiting their ships were now accommodated there. The rooms were vast, with marble floors and elaborate columns. The picture was spoiled by the multi-storey bunk beds. Authorities had already begun separating families—men were assigned to separate rooms, though women could stay with the children. During the day, of course, we could spend our free hours together.

Meals were fairly well organised. It was Mediterranean, nutritious food, but fatty dishes were often served cold, which led to many complaints. The hot water service didn't work, so after eating fatty foods, it was difficult to clean our mess kits.

Naples, at the end of October, had lovely sunny days, but the wind was cold, and the abrupt climate change caused influenza-like illnesses. While waiting at the port, we lived in fear of this disease, because if the pre-embarkation medical examination found someone with a fever, that person—and their family—would be removed from the list and forced to wait for the next ship. We had been warned about this in Kempton, so we brought medication with us.

I remember that my son Andrew was ill, and we administered his medication. My son Maxi had an inflamed tooth, but the doctor helped him.

We tried to explore Naples and enjoyed the fruit. Son Béla became ill after eating too many oranges.

We still had a couple of dollars, so we took a trip to Capri. The wonder of the Blue Grotto became our last image of Europe.



The Blue Grotto

Then the passenger list for the ship was announced. Our names were on it. The ship's name was Skaugum, a 12,500 gross ton vessel—originally German, now Norwegian—carrying 1,200 refugees bound for Australia on 2 November. We said goodbye to our new friend, Francis Ferenc, who, due to illness, had to wait a little longer in Bagnoli. On the evening of 1 November, we climbed onto one of the trucks and were taken to the port. Embarkation

went smoothly. The sailors were amused by our three little boys in their straw hats, climbing the gangway like three little “garden gnomes,” as my friend Alex Bedó affectionately called them.

The ship sailed in the early hours of the morning. By the time we reached the deck after breakfast, we saw the shores of Sicily disappearing.

This was Skaugum’s second voyage to Australia under the refugee program. In later documents, it was referred to as Skaugum II. The relatively small ship carried 1,200 passengers, so it is understandable that accommodation was quite Spartan. Families were split up— Ica stayed with our youngest, Andrew, who was only four, while the older boys, six-year-old Béla and seven-year-old Maxi, were with me.

The big boys were proud to be separated from the children and women. We had bunk beds and were crowded together, but the sheets were clean and white, and we had washing facilities.

The The meals were hearty in portion, and we often couldn’t finish them. There was no butter, but margarine was provided as a substitute, and orange marmalade was available at breakfast. My wife Ica liked neither, but none of us complained. The trip was genuinely interesting. While we sailed through the Mediterranean, no one fell ill.

We stopped once in the Red Sea before heading into the Indian Ocean, and there our ship was swarmed by Arabian merchants. Many Ukrainians and Poles bought colourful Arabian scarves and carpets. We had no money for such



Suez Canal and entering the Red Sea

things, and besides, we found most of the items tasteless and unappealing.

During these shopping scenes, we noticed the difference between the Hungarians and other nationalities on board. The others had been well looked after as refugees and were in a position to benefit from the black market for years. We, however, were considered enemies—pariahs of that society. Yet this situation began to change during the voyage. The Hungarians, with their modest English skills, were able to assist as ship police, in hospital care, and other duties. I became an English teacher, offering elementary courses to all who applied. For this, I received two dollars per day, which we could spend in the canteen.

Then we sailed into the Indian Ocean and encountered seasickness. A massive monsoon whipped up the waves, raising and lowering the ship without pause for nearly three weeks. Many passengers lay weakened in their cabins, while others went out onto the decks to revive themselves—or feed the fish. Our family endured those weeks without major inconvenience.

As we approached the Australian continent, the great waves subsided. When crossing the equator, we enjoyed the tradition of the sailors' amusing antics, dressed as sea creatures in the swimming pool. We also took a dip once or twice. In the evenings, music played from the loudspeakers, and walking around the deck, we felt as though we were on a luxury cruise.

Off Melbourne, as we turned into the Tasman Sea, the weather changed. The hot summer air gave way to cold, wind, and storm. We could only stay outside for a few minutes. Then it quieted again.



On the Deck of the Skaugum

Australia could now be heard on the radio, and we listened to the news with interest. In general, they broadcast local stories, and although we understood the grammar of what was said, we didn't grasp the meaning. We realised how far we had come from our country and Europe—and what a strange new world we were entering.

During the voyage, officials from the Ministry of Immigration interrogated us and reviewed our papers again. We showed them our qualifications and previous experience, with job opportunities in mind. It encouraged me that everyone seemed destined to work in their profession. What we didn't appreciate was that, when one diploma or ornate certificate came into their hands, the officers laughed among themselves and stared at the items. Somehow, we felt that all these proceedings were considered unnecessary.

We spent one more night before reaching Sydney. Then we learned that we were headed for Newcastle and would disembark there. That was when we heard that Greta Camp was waiting for us.

On 29 November, the ship's engines stopped after dawn, and after our four-week journey, we gazed out from the deck and contemplated the continent for the first time.

We had arrived in Australia.

Australian Camp World

A nice summer day greeted us in Australia. In late November, there were no heatwaves; the temperature was pleasant under the sunshine, with blue skies, and we felt we had arrived in a peaceful world. We immediately noticed that the tops of the trees were not as bright green as in Europe. Though the colour appeared somewhat tired, it was still picturesque.

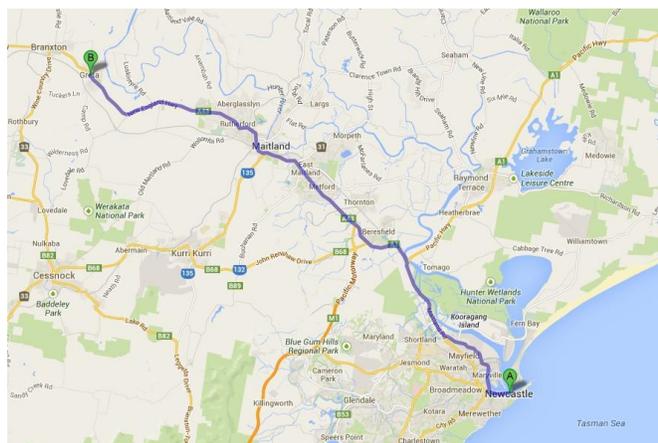
We first noticed the waterside workers. As they went about their business on the berthed ships, they waved to us in a friendly manner. My first impression was very positive. I observed that the workers were well dressed—their shirts were ironed, and their faces freshly shaved. I sensed the prosperity they lived in, that their work was valued, and their social position secure.

The next day, we boarded a train. The rural carriage was not modern; the cars shook at high speed and felt somewhat unstable. However, the seats were leather, and everyone had plenty of space.

We looked out the window with interest at the small, three- to four-bedroom freestanding houses. Leaving the Newcastle suburbs, we began to grasp the vastness of the continent—long miles of brushy, wooded areas sped past, and people were rarely seen.

Greta station was small and located in an almost uninhabited area. Here, the camp authorities had sent brand-new, modern buses, and we were transported for about fifteen minutes to the central area of the camp.

Camp officials looked after us. They welcomed us warmly and used marked cards to show us where our accommodation was located. For us, the



From Newcastle to Greta Migrant Camp

biggest surprise was the sympathy we received from brotherly Hungarian officials, who encouraged us and assured us that the camp's dining facilities were good. We began to see the world through rosier colours. Buses took us to our designated area, and district supervisors directed us to our rooms.

The camp consisted of wooden cabins. The rooms were built on stilts, and the roofs were made of corrugated iron. We had two small rooms, which meant the three little boys had a separate room. It's true there was no door between the rooms, which caused some inconvenience—if one cried, we had to go through the corridor to reach them. But the bed sheets were clean, and the equipment and furnishings were brand new. Ica was very satisfied with these surroundings and especially delighted to be on solid ground after the four-week voyage. (She was absolutely thrilled with the clean white sheets, the beds, and the certainty of the next meal.)

I was surprised when one of the Hungarian officials signalled to me that he had already counted me into the administration department. The camp was led by Brigadier Durant, with Mr. Schwitzer as deputy in charge of operations. Administrative tasks were overseen by Theo Probst, a Romanian immigrant who had only been in Australia a few months. Theo had been born in Temesvár (Timișoara) into a Hungarian-German family, with one sister still living in Hungary. He had recently signed an agreement with Colonel Brown to establish a new Holding Centre and had been assigned to help organise the new camp near Sydney, at Scheyville. Probst saw it as advantageous to complete his two-year contract near Sydney. As deputy, he needed to find a replacement. Browsing the Skaugum II contacts, he noticed I was a lawyer and selected me from the beginning to offer me the job.

In the following days, we met, and he introduced me to the Director and the Administrative Officer, along with all those involved in the selection process. Soon, the decision was made—on December 6, I became employed.

Meanwhile, I also had a sad task. I was sent to Gosford, a small seaside town not far from Sydney, to identify the body of a young Estonian man who had committed suicide on the last day of our journey. I travelled with a young man of German descent to Gosford; we had known the Estonian boy well. Undoubtedly, he was one of those who found it very difficult to endure the long journey away from his homeland. What the direct cause of his suicide was, I never discovered. We identified the body, which had been in the sea for a week. It was deeply saddening to be confronted with the decomposed remains.



Terrigal Beach



Gosford Area

We explored the town of Gosford, and it was encouraging. The beach, tennis courts, and the sight of bowling greens showed that this was a prosperous community, and we believed that perhaps we could manage to become part of this peaceful and beautiful place.

The next day, I started work. I familiarised myself with the camp's organisation, its aims, and the work required. This camp had been established as the host camp. The original idea was that immigrants would spend only a few weeks here. The camp had a labour office, and from there, workers were directed to their future places of employment. When family members could not accompany the breadwinners, they were transferred to the so-called Holding Centre, located near our camp and built of metal plates—nicknamed

Silver City. Our barracks were called Chocolate City, after the colour of the brownish wooden walls.

At the time, Australia accepted immigrants on the condition that they sign a two-year contract, committing to accept government-designated jobs. This condition was quite difficult for most, as it often meant families were separated—at least



Greta Camp

temporarily—and there was no guarantee that individuals would find work in their own profession.

It was rather shocking when the loudspeakers called for immigrants to prepare for departure: those whose surnames began with A to K were sent to Queensland for sugar cane cutting; those from L to O were assigned to military service; and those from R to W were directed to road and railway construction.

Now we understood why the ship's officers had laughed and smiled when immigrants presented their various degrees and qualifications—they already knew how the authorities would assign us upon arrival. However, this system could not be fully enforced. Within a few months, immigrants began building connections, and factories and plants started requesting specific workers. Within half a year, many hard-working immigrants left their assigned jobs—without permission—and took control of their own futures. The official system was not economical; those assigned to the army often spent their time weeding the gardens of officers' villas, which could hardly be called nation-building.

Among the Hungarians in Queensland, many managed to travel to Sydney to start new lives. Hungarian Jews found themselves in a particularly positive situation. In Australia's major cities, a fair number of Hungarians who had immigrated before 1939 were

already established. In 1949, they were in a position to help their brothers and sisters—and they did so eagerly. Through their connections, they helped relatives and friends find apartments and jobs. In several cases, news that they could travel on to Sydney or Melbourne reached them even before they arrived in Australia.

Greta was a reception camp, and the administration's main task was to pre-register all individual ship arrivals, locate them, and manage their cases after further clarification of their situation.

These tasks were handled by the so-called 'Record Section'. I became the head of this department, and we processed one ship of 800 to 1,200 people almost every month.

Because of my job, we were transferred to the administrative block. These homes were not different from others in the camp, but they were close to the office, and we lived in a separate barracks with a different mess hall. The family, therefore, enjoyed some advantages due to my position. The boys soon began attending school—a Catholic school led by nuns, which provided a religious environment where the children learned their first English words.

Later, I managed to find a job for Ica. At first, she worked as a waitress in the kitchen, and once her English improved, she moved to the payroll department.

The government had set a minimum level of remuneration for immigrants. A

breadwinner's salary could support a family, but saving or setting aside money was not possible. Any surplus income barely covered the cost of much-needed clothing. This was despite the fact that the government's deductions from my income—for accommodation and



Ica with the Kitchen staff

food—were calculated generously. Thus, the wife's income was essential if we hoped to save anything. There was a housing shortage, and it became clear that sooner or later, we would definitely need to buy a house.

In those first few months, of course, we also wrestled with the question of how much we could spend on Christmas gifts for the children. I was helped by a young, unmarried Hungarian man who loaned me £20. With this, we were able to give the little ones a truly "rich" Christmas. There was a soccer ball, toys, and chocolates. The camp also organised a Christmas celebration. Yes, we found the summer heat very strange for Christmas—it was a happy, carnival-like celebration. When the popular tune of "Jingle Bells" played and the children danced around the Christmas tree, the mothers' eyes filled with tears and sorrow, as we all remembered the snowy, mysterious atmosphere of the holy night of Christmas Eve.

Then, when the children were already in bed, we leaned against the barrack wall and spoke with a few of our colleagues about our fate. The young men had bought a bottle of fortified wine—these wines were fashionable at the time. Then we raised our voices in Hungarian songs and confirmed the old saying: Hungarians celebrate while crying.

It was hard to feel the Christmas spirit, because in the second half of December we were in the middle of the Australian summer. The sea winds, which can make the summer heat bearable in coastal areas, could not reach the interior of the continent. As the red sand was blown by the westerly winds, we began to wonder whether we had made a mistake in choosing this continent as our refuge.

Ica was very sweet and never blamed me, but when she stopped in front of the large map in the camp recreation hall, she said she was unwilling to settle anywhere north of Sydney. I had considered the possibility of finding employment in the legal field in Brisbane, Queensland's capital. I saw that the state was still in the early stages of its development.

However, I began my orientation in Sydney. I took a couple of days off work and travelled to the New South Wales capital.

The city felt almost like home to me. Walking down the main street, George Street, I recalled one of my childhood books with photographic images that portrayed this very street—*Travel Around the World* by Gáspár, a six-volume collection of travel writings that featured Sydney. Indeed, the picture had not changed much between 1905 and 1950. The American style of skyscrapers had not yet arrived in Sydney; the



Sydney 1950's

central rail network boasted only two stations, and Hordern's Department Store was the largest building, with five storeys.

I stayed overnight at a small private hotel. The conditions were primitive, but I appreciated the fact that the hotel only wanted to know whether I had the two pounds for the night and did not ask for an application form—making it clear to me that here was freedom without restrictions.

I enquired at the University of Sydney as well. I requested an audience with the professor of political science and presented a letter of recommendation from Theodore Unger Surányi, now an American professor. The professor was very polite, but I sensed that he would not engage with me. Later, I learned that, politically, Hungarians were classified as belonging to an enemy camp.

Back at the camp, we gained new friends. On one boat, Gyurka Lévay arrived. I now had the opportunity to help a fellow countryman. Gyurka and Margó were employed as block supervisors, which gave them a little time to collect surplus funds and get to know the area.

We began to establish a social life. I had the opportunity to take part in a bridge party and, as a regular, met J. Malcher, of Austrian descent but now an old Australian who had retired and come to work at the camp. His German language skills and, of course, his good English made him well-suited to teach English to immigrants. We stayed in touch and visited them several times at their coastal cottage.

Among our friends at the camp was Dani Holéczy, a young fighter pilot who reinvented himself in camp administration and became one of the block administrators.

In the so-called Hygiene Group, there were many Hungarians. They worked as trash collectors but did their jobs cheerfully. Aurél Dessewffy was one of the diligent workers. His wife was a Mikecz girl, daughter of a former Minister of Justice, so our relationship had a shared past. Also working there was Lt. Nicholas Meszey, whose wife became good friends with Ica. They remained close over the following decades.

While on the boat, we had met Bandi Csapó and his family, who later endured all the hardships of cane-cutting in Queensland before settling in Sydney. We maintained a lasting relationship. Bandi became a leading journalist in the émigré community, and many of my articles were published in his newspapers. He also helped publish my study of Pál Teleki (Prime Minister of Hungary twice, from 1920–21 and 1939–41). (The author's archives include this document in Hungarian.)

I remember the Romanian-Hungarian-born engineer from Transylvania named Meder, who became my successor at Greta when we left the camp.

The camp leader was Brigadier Durant. He was an interesting character—typical of the old colonial English representatives serving overseas. In the evenings, he walked with his wife, holding a riding whip to chase away persistent flies. He had a superior bearing and kept his distance from the migrants in the camp; it was felt that

he treated them with contempt. Typically, he displayed a sign at the entrance of the public toilet: "Only Australian staff." Even European employees working in his office were not permitted to use the lavatory. It was such a blatant act of discrimination that someone contacted the media, and a Sydney newspaper published a damning article about the sign. It was swiftly removed.

Autocratic and isolationist by nature, he sometimes behaved in an almost comical way. One resident of the camp, a Hungarian staff officer, realised that discarded beer bottles could be collected and returned for payment. He diligently amassed the bottles, stacking them under his barracks. Brigadier Durant noticed and asked who lived there. Without investigating why there was so much glass, the resident was dismissed from his job and promptly sent to Queensland. Durant was convinced the man was an alcoholic.

J. Schwitzer was my immediate superior. He considered his position temporary and entrusted all matters to me. He amused himself and his circle of friends at the local pub.

I was able to find a position for Gábor Földváry in the office, as he was of school-leaving age. His task was to transfer files between departments. On one occasion, he made a mistake, and Schwitzer berated him harshly, questioning his intelligence. I spoke up in Gábor's defence, saying that if Mr. Schwitzer were to perform similar tasks in a European country, surely, he would make such mistakes as well. This produced great laughter; Schwitzer retold my comment to everyone, but he understood what I meant, and Gábor continued to work under him.

He also laughed at me when he discovered I had never been in a pub. It seemed impossible to an Australian that, after work, someone would go straight home instead of to the pub.

Krause was the head of the labour office. He was a very industrious man who kept his distance from the other cheerful camp officials. The Scottish police chief was also somehow separate from

the rest. As it turned out, he had only recently arrived in Australia and had not yet found his feet.

Once, he expelled a farmer from the camp who was selling fruit. This was prohibited, as the camp management sought to protect residents from exploitation and did not want anyone charging unscrupulous prices. The farmer became very angry. For a while, he listened to the police chief's lecture, but eventually turned to us and asked, "What nationality is this man?" So, I began to learn that even within Britain, nothing was uniform; the Welsh, Scottish, and English elements often opposed each other—not to mention the Irish, who openly considered the English as enemies and spoke of the English crown in a derogatory manner.

Gradually, we began to learn about the extreme climate of the Australian continent. After intense heat, a strong southerly wind arrived, followed by a cyclone sweeping across the land. Rain poured for almost two weeks. Low-lying areas were flooded, as rivers broke their banks and inundated the plains. In this continent, the rivers are still largely unregulated, and the land suffers alternately from forest fires and floods.

Summer soon returned, and we occasionally ventured into the city of Newcastle. We explored the city with interest, and the children enjoyed the milk bars, where delicious ice cream, milkshakes, and other beverages were sold. I ventured to explore the waves crashing on the seashore. We immigrants had swimming costume problems. In Europe, it was now fashionable for women to wear bikinis and men to wear 'triangular' swimming trunks. On this continent, however, the spirit of the nineteenth century persisted, and the custom was for men to wear bathing suits that covered the chest. To avoid embarrassment, I rented a bathing suit when I went swimming.

Meanwhile, one ship after another arrived. The work was routinely carried out. On weekends, the Australian leaders usually

left the camp, taking trips to Newcastle or Sydney, and if a boat arrived, it was left to me.

Usually, nothing unusual happened—but due to an incident, I had to leave Greta Camp.

While checking the ship's roster, I realised that one of our employees, a Romanian clerk named Borun, was not at his post. It turned out that he had decided to take advantage of the situation and, instead of working, had joined his friends at the Greta pub. I took the necessary steps to ensure his return as soon as possible. A few hours later, he arrived but behaved arrogantly. When I threatened to report his conduct, he turned his back to me in a typically Balkan manner. That was too much for me. I told him that either he or I would have to leave our employment.

I reported the matter to Mr. Schwitzer, who referred it to Brigadier Durant. The way the case was handled again reflected the chief's dictatorial character. Borun was dismissed with immediate effect—but I was also dismissed, with two weeks' notice. Durant said that my statement—that either Borun or I would leave—was an act of usurping his authority, and under such circumstances, he was not prepared to continue employing me.

This was a challenging problem. In general, the camp directed everyone toward Queensland. However, we wanted to go to Sydney. Krause, whose responsibility was the labour force, was very understanding. He criticised Durant's arbitrary behaviour and assured me that if I could find employment elsewhere, such as in Newcastle, he would approve.

I travelled to Newcastle and tried to secure an apartment. It was not easy. A Hungarian friend introduced me to an Englishman who was planning to move to Sydney and claimed to have an apartment available for me. I inspected the apartment and found it suitable for a short stay. I paid him forty pounds as a deposit, thinking I had made a good deal. However, when I contacted the people living there, it turned out I had been badly cheated. He had no right to

dispose of the dwelling. I sought help from the police, but the man had disappeared from Newcastle. I returned to Greta, poorer and without housing.

My deflated mood was interrupted by a loudspeaker announcement in the camp advising that the employment office was looking for me. Krause told me, with great excitement, that Scheyville Camp was seeking me if I was available. Ervin Altorjay, a Hungarian clerk at the camp, had secured a job in Sydney, and Theo Probst, the chief clerk, wanted me to take over Ervin's position. Theo planned to leave the camp at Christmastime and move to Sydney. However, he had promised Brown, the director, that he would ensure his position was filled. This was indeed the best solution for my situation. Scheyville could only direct people to Sydney, which made our planned relocation easier.

Scheyville was approximately 35 to 40 kilometres from the centre of Sydney, making trips to the city more manageable.

I thanked Krause for his friendship and expressed that this was a favourable move for us. Justifiably, he asked me not to tell anyone about my appointment, as he did not want the news to leak to Durant, who might attempt to interfere. We kept quiet about our destination, and the official list only showed the date of departure.

Before our trip that afternoon, I returned to my workplace after hours and said goodbye to my colleagues. I also paid a visit to Durant to formally thank him for his goodwill during our time working together. I do not know whether he learned that I would continue my career in the Ministry of Immigration. He made no further comment regarding my future work, nor did he take steps to prevent the relocation.

After two to three hours of travelling, we arrived at Sydney's Central Station. Soon we found the service to Windsor. After a good half-hour, we arrived at the nearest station to the camp, where a car was waiting for us.

The camp lay on the slopes of a hilltop. The administrative buildings were made of brick—originally housing the Army Corps. The residential buildings were flat cement huts with tin roofs. We were given two rooms and settled in quickly. Officials had a separate dining area, and waiters served us. The field hospital was available at any time, though dental services were only accessible in the nearby town of Windsor.

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Scheyville Camp

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/fieldsfmemories/migrantaccom.shtml>

<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/scheyville-national-park/migrant-heritage-walk/walking>

My position was very easy. I was the billeting officer, so I did not have to manage the arrival of newcomers or the registration of departing residents.

The camp was a Holding Centre, which meant that the majority of residents were women and children, while the male breadwinners were in Sydney or working in nearby areas.

During the week, days passed quietly in Scheyville. The camp became busy only on weekends, when husbands arrived on their days off to be with their families.

The administrative staff, therefore, had a great advantage in that they remained with their families. The camp was compact—only a few hundred yards separated the administrative buildings, hospital, and school. A six-grade primary school operated under the leadership of qualified teachers. Older schoolchildren were placed as boarders in rural colleges.

The children quickly integrated with their new schoolmates, and my wife Ica accepted a position. As a department head, I was able to



secure her a job as a timekeeper in the payroll office. Her supervisor was Desi Rapaich, an ex-general, who was waiting with his wife for their daughter and son-in-law to establish themselves in Melbourne before joining them there.

Uncle Desi knew many of the old residents of Szeged. We spent many pleasant hours reminiscing and became friends. I soon discovered that the boss and the subordinate timekeeper spent a good deal of time gossiping, but I had to turn a blind eye.

Manager Colonel Brown was a kind and humble man. He had a farm nearby and had taken on this position so that his son could attend to the property.

At the camp, we met the valiant Lajos (Louis) Tolnay, formerly a Chief of Staff Captain. He worked with the military, but his wife and children still lived in the camp. Louis had been a childhood playmate of Ica's, and they could talk for hours about old Miskolc. His second wife was a very attractive German woman who had lost her first husband in the war; together, they had a son. Louis joked: "It's your child, my child, and our child." When it came time to send our children to English-speaking schools, he marvelled at the high level of literacy being taught.

He pointed out that many of the camp officers were non-professional captains and colonels, as during the war, local authorities had advertised for people to fill these ranks. Louis had chosen not to give up his military career and advanced through the reserve system, eventually retiring as a major. In civilian life, he became a warehouse manager while enjoying weekend soldiering. He dabbled in jungle warfare and skydiving.

The administrative officer, to whom I later became deputy as chief clerk, was a plump, peaceful man who nostalgically recalled his early years in the occupation of Japan. His main concern was his new vehicle. General Motors had just begun rolling out a new car called the Holden, which Australians proudly regarded as their own.

I renewed contact with Ervin Altorjay, whom I had known at Greta and whose position I took over in Scheyville. Ervin was an architect and had recently been appointed to the Ministry of Road Construction, designing and maintaining buildings. He hoped to use this role as a springboard to gain recognition for his qualifications.

Ica also befriended Ervin's wife, Lujzi. She was working at the same time with the Government Price Committee and had mutual friends. Their daughter, Bori (Barbara), became a playmate to our little boys.

We also became close with Joseph Kovacs and his wife, Eve. Eve worked in the kitchen, trying to "Hungarianise" the food. Joseph was the warehouse manager. He wasn't very busy and spent his free time flying and improving his English. As a former squadron leader, he was passionate about aviation. He made his living not as a bomber pilot, but as a crop-dusting pilot. At the time, it was common to treat farmland with chemicals, a dangerous job performed by low-flying aircraft. "Yusuf," as his old comrades called him on the front, was a prudent and peaceful man who always prioritised safety and had never been in an accident.

Gyurka (George) Csanády and his wife were also good friends. Gyurka had been a village clerk in Pest County and had no desire to wait for the Communists. He eventually made his way to Australia. He was a diligent worker who managed the camp's supplies. We remained in contact for many years. I later secured him a job in accounting at a Hungarian factory, where he performed well.

We also met István Börzsönyi. Pista was a senior employee at the Siemens factory. He had served in uniform for most of the war. Though he had no serious injuries, his nerves were fragile from front-line exposure. He and his wife had two children, Csaba and Susie, who were older than our sons. We became friends and began planning a joint venture with Pista: to purchase a house together once our two-year contracts expired.

Imre Kalándy was the camp police chief. His father, a retired general from the First World War, had volunteered at military headquarters in Budapest when the capital was surrounded. He helped organise and manage the city's defence. He survived the siege but, as a prisoner of war, did not survive captivity. The family never learned the details of his death. We liked both Imre and his wife, Boriska. Imre later became Confirmation sponsor to my son Béla. He had been a Panzer major, so we could talk for hours about mutual acquaintances. I was especially interested to hear that, when the armoured division's equipment was relocated to Germany, Kalándy had been assigned in the final months of the war to Bergen. I recalled that I had almost gone there myself, but due to circumstances, we never made it. I was particularly curious about what had happened to them during those months, as my fate might have mirrored his.

Imre said that the Bergen training camp could be compared to the Haymáskér camp. However, the Hungarian officers were housed by German civilian families in very good conditions. The promised equipment never arrived, and it was difficult to maintain discipline, as there was little to do.

In the final days of the war, there was a dramatic shift. The front was already near, and British troops were facing off against the Germans. The Hungarian troops could not be used against the British or Americans, as the Hungarian government opposed this. Near Bergen was a concentration camp called Belsen. Its perimeter was guarded by a few hundred SS troops. The German High Command ordered these SS troops to the front and asked the Hungarian commander to take over guarding the camp. However, the camp's internal staff and guards remained in place. There could be no evacuation of the camp, as had occurred on the Eastern Front, because the Reich had collapsed under the pressure of the two-front war.

The Hungarian commander accepted the order but, in agreement with the German parliamentary leadership, sent emissaries under a white flag to the British. They reported that within Belsen there was a concentration camp complex now under Hungarian protection and requested instructions. The British asked the Hungarian commander to ensure the camp's safety until Allied troops arrived.

According to Imre, the camp was in a dire state. Food supplies had already faltered due to the relentless bombardment of railway lines, and deliveries were unreliable. The emaciated inmates were extremely weak, especially following the evacuation of Polish camps and the arrival of those frail prisoners in the final weeks. The Hungarian doctors did all they could, but the daily death toll was between twenty and thirty.

Tragedy struck when the liberating British troops, with good intentions, threw cans of food into the camp. As the front advanced, more teams of compassionate soldiers tried to help the suffering. The Hungarian doctors recognised the danger and pleaded for the indiscriminate distribution to stop. Unfortunately, the commanders of the advancing units changed frequently, and amid the confusion, no effective measures were taken. The inmates, already in a critical state, could not digest the sudden intake of rich food, and the daily death toll rose to between two and three hundred. The deceased could not be buried with dignity. The British military leaders ordered bulldozers to dig mass graves, and the victims were buried together. The British filmed this dark chapter in history

It's another matter that these recordings, later shown at Nuremberg, served as proof of German atrocities; since then, we've seen them many times.

However, the Hungarians involved did not suffer. British headquarters thanked them for their cooperation and did not treat them as prisoners of war.

Imre Kalándy soon found employment with a British military operation and was able to prepare for migration to Australia. He had

a son who was then enrolled as a boarder at a Catholic college high school.

As the result of an interesting coincidence, I met another comrade from the armoured division—Gyuszi Toronyi, with whom I had served in 1938 at the Esztergom training camp.

One day, I was asked to appear before the district court at Windsor in the case of a Hungarian immigrant who had a dispute with another Hungarian. We arrived at the garden courtyard before the court, and I noticed Gyuszi, who was speaking with a group of people. We recognised each other immediately and embraced. It then transpired that he and his opponent had both requested an interpreter. The opponent did not like the look of our friendship, but I calmed them down and managed to smooth over their opposition.

Afterwards, Gyuszi told me his story. In the early years of the war, he had requested a transfer to the air force and served as an observer at the front. During the troubled final months of the war, he was assigned to Colonel Náday. They were commissioned by government circles to contact the advancing British Eighth Army in Italy. The Hungarian leadership hoped that, after Germany's defeat, the British would retain their sense of European political reality and not allow the Danube region to fall under Eastern control. According to Gyuszi, the British warmly welcomed the ambassador, but by then the American-Russian alliance had taken precedence, and the Eighth Army could not liberate Hungary. Instead, they met the Soviets at the Austrian-Hungarian border.

My friend Toronyi had extensive contact with the British during those months and learned their language, which later helped with his immigration to Australia. At first, he believed that his role in seeking a truce would benefit his migration prospects. He soon realised, however, that he was just one among tens of thousands of immigrants. Eventually, he returned to Hungary, completely disillusioned with Australia.

Indeed, the authorities did not offer much help to us. I endeavoured to return to the legal field as soon as possible. A friend wrote to the local representative on my behalf. I requested a legal assistant position to help me re-enter the profession. Months later, I received a reply from the office of the Justice Minister, stating that there was no suitable position for me within the Ministry of Justice or the courts. He suggested I consider working as an interpreter, which would allow me to participate occasionally in legal matters.

In the meantime, we celebrated our second Christmas in Australia. The children received a bicycle and were overjoyed.

I took over Theo Probst's position in the office when he moved to Sydney, where he had secured a job with an insurance company. He advised me that if I wished to renew my legal qualifications, I would need to do so through a local university. Legal studies could also be pursued through evening courses.

However, I decided to take a lighter, shorter course in accounting. I hoped this would help me secure an office position more quickly. I began my studies through the International Institute—I received my exams by post, submitted the completed tasks, and they were returned to me after correction.

Letters from home arrived regularly. Of course, we tried to paint our situation in optimistic colours, as our parents needed reassurance that we had begun a new life. We regarded our settlement in Australia as a temporary solution. In code, we referred to "opusoma," meaning that after the Russian withdrawal, we would fly home.

The Korean War and the rise of anti-Bolshevik sentiment gave us hope, which at the time did not seem unfounded. If MacArthur had prevailed in the American political arena, the great powers might have clashed again, and in the event of victory, we believed we could return home. But our hopes soon faded.

As we approached the end of our two-year government contract and prepared to leave the camp, we began to seriously explore our options and the possibility of purchasing our own home.

We liked the area north of Sydney best. It was wooded and hilly, and for us, it resembled Buda in relation to the Pest plain. In Sydney, the western suburbs were the more affordable districts. The eastern section was quite isolated in terms of transport, and only the areas close to the city would have suited us—but these were already occupied by Italians and Greeks. Hungarian Jews willingly moved to the eastern part of the city and, as in Budapest, were developing a new Lipótváros. We did not have the necessary funds.

We visited a few agencies, but once they realised how financially limited, as we were, they suggested we look around Parramatta. At that time, Parramatta was considered the capital of the western suburbs.

To purchase a flat cement house, one needed up to three thousand pounds. Buyers were required to have one thousand pounds in cash as a deposit. Banks and other financial institutions would then lend the remainder on a long-term basis. Additional funds were needed for transaction costs and essential furniture.

We estimated that by the end of 1951, we would have savings of five hundred pounds—clearly not enough to proceed with a purchase. We thought that if two families joined forces, they might be able to buy a house together.

After speaking with several candidates, we agreed to partner with the Börzsönyi family. They were in a similar financial position. Pista earned more while working for the railways, as he worked weekends. We had three small children, while they had two older children with additional expenses.

At this time, Hugo Ackerman sent me a letter. He was the Kempton businessman who had bought my brother-in-law's car. They also wanted to immigrate to Australia, and I undertook to support their cause. I asked them to provide a two-hundred-pound

loan for one year. The cheque was sent, and I took care of their affairs; the loan was indispensable for our house purchase.

Meanwhile, we received news from Germany that our friend Ákos Oláh was immigrating to Australia. Naturally, I did what I could to guide them upon arrival. Ákos had worked for many years with a U.S. corps based in Germany and spoke good English, so I felt confident offering him as my successor. Colonel Brown thanked me for “taking care” of him and arranged to welcome Ákos and his family. So it happened that old friends helped each other once again. Traudi and Ica understood each other well, and our three little children became good friends with Sanyi, Batyu, and Angelika.

Then we met András (Andrew) Dömjén, who had built a friendly relationship with the Oláh family. Dömjén was from Győr, so we refreshed our mutual acquaintances from old Bábolna. He had been wounded and treated in a German military hospital, where he met his future wife, Ferrara, an East German refugee. They had two children, Harold and Ilona, and thus the circle of our children’s companions expanded.

We found a suitable house in the suburb of Guildford, not far from Parramatta. We were eager to live in private accommodation and were full of optimism.

Our camp experiences ended with a dramatic final act—a forest fire that swept through the ridge of the Blue Mountains. The fire and cloud of smoke descended onto the plains of the camp, obscuring visibility. All able-bodied people were needed to fight the fire. We were packed into a truck and, within half an hour, were slapping at the flames with pieces of sackcloth in an attempt to halt the advancing blaze. It was an awesome spectacle of burning wood, and it seemed that, at least in our section, the guard was working effectively as the fire appeared to stop.

But suddenly it turned, and the wind strengthened. The buzzing, roaring, and crackling of the burning wood became an inferno. We did not see the danger, but the experienced foresters ordered us into

cars and drove us out of the woods. Within minutes of escaping the flames, it became clear that we had narrowly avoided death. Sooty, smoky, but in full health—we had escaped.

The list of losses included my friend Ákos Oláh's glasses, which he lost during our emergency evacuation.

A few days later, I handed over my position in the office to Ákos, said goodbye to Director Brown, Mr. Sawyer, and my other friends and acquaintances, and we began our personal lives on our own.

Guildford 1952–1956

Guildford, west of the city centre, was named after Guildford in England. (Our address was 24 Harold Street, Guildford.) At that time, it was still very close to the border of Greater Sydney, and Australians referred to it as the beginning of the bush. This was why the cost was relatively low. Electricity had been connected, but the sewerage system had not yet reached the area. We had to get used to that—once a week, in the early hours, the excrement was collected in portable buckets. The toilet was set up in the backyard.

However, the weather was never truly like a European winter, so we did not suffer because of the location. The light construction of the house was very unusual in our eyes compared to European structures. It had no basement; the wooden frame, resting on concrete columns, held the entire structure together. Cement sheets were used, and papier-mâché-like material formed the inner walls. There was no attic, and the ceiling sheets were unsuitable for walking. To pass under the roof, one had to use the beams for support to avoid falling into the rooms below. I endured this system for years, especially during periods of heavy rain. The roof often leaked, and water had to be collected in buckets placed carefully on the beams.

The bathroom and kitchen were modern, with hot-water service and electric heating. The plot was quite large—approximately two hundred metres long, with a canal at the rear boundary.

A temporary shed behind the house was very important for us, as it was the only way the two families could find accommodation relatively easily. Australians often built such temporary dwellings after purchasing land and moved into them. Then, when financially stronger, they built permanent homes. We bought the house from an English immigrant who had completed the construction and sold the entire property. We didn't think much about why they sold, but later I found out. The plot was low-lying, and we hadn't known that, during

heavy rains, water from nearby higher ground flowed directly into our channel.

To our great astonishment, one rainy morning we saw that almost the entire land was covered in water, and we helplessly contemplated the disaster.

I finally had the opportunity to use my legal training. I realised that water from public lands was collecting and pouring onto our property because the nearby road drainage had not been completed. The state road department was insured against such damage, so I contacted the appropriate authorities. The decision came relatively quickly. Insurance was approved, and bulldozers reshaped the site. The insurance company then stated it would no longer cover further damage, and the local council was forced to complete the highway drainage. It was my first legal victory in Australia.

A few years later, sanitation was introduced to our street. We did some gardening and planted many trees, so by the end of 1963, we proudly sold our cultivated property in Guildford.

For now, however, the most important task was to divide the house so that no one would complain. Of the three bedrooms, the Börzsönyi family took the largest; we were satisfied with a smaller one. The third bedroom was a single room, into which Susie, their 16-year-old daughter, moved. The living room was ours, and the dining room was allocated to the Börzsönyi family. The kitchen and bathroom were shared.

The temporary building, which we nicknamed the “little house,” was used for the four boys’ bedrooms and living room. Our three small sons shared the larger room, while Csaba, who was 12, had a separate room. A washstand was placed at the front of the building, and later we built a shower for the children.

Many doubted the wisdom of us sharing accommodation. They often asked how we said goodnight to each other in the evenings. In Hungary, we had feared the well-known common rentals, so we tried to organise our lifestyle to minimise friction. This worked mostly

because we managed to preserve the peace, and the two housewives liked each other so much that they mutually overlooked each other's faults. We remained good friends for many years after parting and often laughed about those early memories of emigration.

Household items—such as the washing machine, vacuum cleaner, and fridge—were purchased together on credit and, as agreed, were diligently repaid. Pista was a railway porter and worked many nights and weekends, so he was not home on weekends. We agreed that I would handle the financial matters. During the day, however, he was able to do jobs around the house.

Our first Christmas was spent together happily, as it marked a fresh start for both families.

From our point of view, the house was a good solution because a public primary school operated nearby, so the boys did not need to use public transport.

Later, we realised that the school was below standard and lacked moral education. We were shocked to discover that public schools did not teach faith or morality, and this was reflected in the students' behaviour. So, we tried to redirect the boys to a Catholic teaching institution.

Father Francis Forró had warned us of this well in advance, but we hadn't taken his advice the first time. Ferenc Forró had spent many years in Szeged, and we soon developed a good friendship. He became our Father Confessor. After the war, he had gone to China as a missionary, but in 1949 he was forced to leave due to the Communist takeover. His superiors sent him to Australia to support Hungarian immigrants. We first met in Scheyville when he visited the camp. He travelled the countryside on a little puffing motorcycle to visit the Hungarian diaspora.

He looked us up in Guildford and honoured us by performing a house blessing. The Börzsönyi family were Lutherans, but as good Christians, they joined us during the ceremony—just as we prayed when the Hungarian Lutheran priest blessed our shared home.

The first weeks were spent furnishing the house, and I, while enjoying my annual leave, realised I could not remain out of work for long due to our financial obligations. We had to buy furniture—only the most necessary and lowest-quality pieces. All the loans, including Ackerman’s two hundred pounds, had to be repaid.

After the first post-holiday weekend, I browsed the classified ads in the Sydney Morning Herald and noted three or four addresses near the main train station. On Monday morning, I travelled to the city and began my job search.

I tried the Nestlé Company, a large chocolate manufacturer, first. They greeted me politely but asked about my experience in accounting.

After my evasive answer, the result was negative. They wished me good luck and suggested I try a different direction.

The next address was the Department of Main Roads, the state road-building organisation. The Deputy Head of Staff received me.

After hearing my life story, to my surprise, he expressed willingness to employ me as a Second-Class Officer. Of course, this was the lowest rank, which was not surprising. He showed goodwill by asking where I lived. When he learned I had settled in Guildford, he said I would be directed to the Rosehill plant, as it was only 3–4 kilometres away. I felt this job would be a good start.

Gratefully, I accepted the appointment. Within a few days, the notice of employment was in my hands, and a week later, I reported to work.



Location of Guildford to Sydney City



At our home at Guildford

The plant could be reached after a 15-minute bus ride and another quarter-hour walk. This was very favourable by Australian standards, as daily commutes often took workers over an hour.

My boss received me warmly and introduced me to my colleagues. He assigned me a desk; there were four clerks in a relatively large room. He then placed thirty to forty pages of large statements in front of me to add up and cross-check the totals. There were no calculators then, so I had to practise mental arithmetic. I worked diligently until four in the afternoon. Slowly, I got into the rhythm and proved, page by page, that the totals were correct. But when I got home, my head rang with numbers, and I had a headache. That night, numbers flew through my dreams.

Gradually, I got to know my workplace. In fact, this department maintained the road network of Greater Sydney. Our responsibilities included upkeep of the yellow lines on the roads; a separate group handled the constant painting of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This office had to calculate, using statistical methods, the actual cost of road maintenance.

My colleagues soon began to appreciate my work. In fact, they gave me a friendly warning that I worked too fast—they wanted to ensure everyone stayed busy, and it was not in our interest to reduce the number of employees. During the two-quarter-hour tea breaks each day, we sat together in a designated room and had tea and coffee, discussing the fate of the world.

Ica also began her job search, as we both needed to work if we truly wanted to move forward. In the early fifties, Australia had lurched into postwar development. This process was accelerated by the Korean War, as the Australian Army played an important role in the conflict, creating many job vacancies for the female workforce. Ica's English skills had improved—she had already worked as a clerk in the camp—but she was still very anxious about working in a fully English-speaking environment.

Fortunately, the labour office directed her to the famous EMI gramophone factory, where the final gramophone records were stored. When orders came into the large warehouse, the goods and delivery notes were issued. Ica was responsible for writing the delivery notes, though sometimes she had to help with packaging. In principle, very heavy packs were not to be handled by the female workforce, but occasionally she had to assist. It was not an ideal job, but it seemed a good transitional role while she developed her English skills and prepared to apply for a clerical position.

We also thought she should take a comptometer course, where she would learn to use an adding machine. This would qualify her for a specifically clerical post. She attended evening classes twice a week in the city after her domestic and factory work, but this did not last—she disliked the mechanical nature of the work and gave up the plan after a few months.

The factory manager understood, but no one could change the fact that the stock was kept in a large concrete room which, in winter, had icy winds blowing through, freezing the workers' fingers. Behold—subtropical Australia had its own opposite phenomena!

Outside the camp, we had hoped to become part of Australian society, but we soon realised that the politicians had organised mass migration to increase the population in order to withstand perceived Asian threats from the north. The population of British descent, however, often saw us as intruding strangers. The government promoted the term “New Australian,” but in everyday conversation, it carried a negative tone. For example, at a suburban train station, a slightly drunk loudmouth mocked us for speaking a language other than English. One of our neighbours even called the police because the young boys had made a catapult and were practising in the backyard.

It would be wrong not to acknowledge that the population was generally polite and sympathetic towards immigrants, but it was difficult to endure such attacks.

The boys had some trouble integrating smoothly into their classes. As everywhere in the world, there were boys interested in fighting, and ours apparently provided an excuse for such battles. Laci (Maxi) was once teased and called a “hungry Hungarian.” The clash ended in a Hungarian victory, with the attacker suffering a nosebleed. When the teacher arrived and learned what had happened, he gave Maxi a nod and, in front of the defeated boy, said that if a similar attack occurred again, Maxi should have another go. It was the British spirit of fair play.

It should be noted that, at this time, public safety in Australia was exemplary. We didn’t have to lock doors or windows when leaving home, and we could travel safely in the evenings. Sydney was a large garden city. The traffic and drivers were considerate—if someone was walking on the roadside, they didn’t need to ask to be picked up. Cars stopped, and people were understanding and helpful.

Hungarian immigrants tried to find each other. Unfortunately, we were divided from the beginning; political differences separated people. When the Hungarian Veterans Club of former soldiers gathered as friends at a restaurant in Sydney, we were shocked to read an article that hostilely claimed “Fascist Hungarian officers were organising in Sydney.” Even sadder, the Hungarian journalist who wrote the article had not been harmed in Horthy’s Hungary; in fact, he had been a representative of a Hungarian daily newspaper in Rome, where he wrote many articles praising Mussolini. To his credit, he had the good sense to migrate to Sydney in 1939.

The Australian authorities acknowledged, at the time of our application, that we had fought alongside the Germans in World War II, and they raised no objections. Moreover, in the newly established Cold War climate, our anti-communist stance was not only understood but welcomed—it gave us encouragement.

Soon, the first Hungarian clubs were formed. They held celebrations and commemorations on all national holidays and festivities. During these years, gatherings were held at Paddington

Town Hall. Politicians from both the Liberal and Labor parties praised the diligent work of immigrants, as the immigration program was supported by both major parties—it was a bipartisan policy.

The Hungarian community tried to engage with the youth. In fact, the education of the second generation of Hungarians became one of the most important tasks of emigration. Much of this work was entrusted to the Scouting organisation. In the early years, it was very difficult, as families in Greater Sydney were scattered across distances of twenty to thirty kilometres, and financial resources were lacking. We were unable to send our sons, but thanks to two young, enthusiastic scouts, we were added to a list of families who were allowed to visit periodically. The children had the opportunity to use the Hungarian language and engage with Hungarian stories, songs, and games.

The churches were deeply involved with the community. As in nineteenth-century America, during large waves of immigration, it was religion that helped unite and preserve traditions. Regular summer camps were organised in Engadine, a rural outlying area. There, the enthusiastic teacher John Tóth worked to build, in the souls of exiled Hungarians at the end of the world, a little piece of the homeland.

These associations and religious organisations sought to overcome the fragmentation. Mostly they succeeded, although many opposing groups were still formed.

Those who had arrived in 1939 were, by this time, fully integrated into Australian life, and some were suspicious of the new immigrants. They felt that the horrors of World War II had created a gap between them and their country of origin that could not be bridged.

There were differences between those who had served in the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces and had left the country before experiencing the Russian occupation, and those who had tried to

live under the new order and, by 1949, realised that the democratic experiment would not succeed, meaning the communist takeover would be complete.

Social differences also contributed to immigration issues, so we could not speak of unity. Those from the merchant-industrialist class could integrate into the new society relatively quickly, as the authorities recognised their qualifications with ease. In contrast, former military officers, civil servants, and professionals were almost helpless in managing their future. Relearning their training in English required immense effort over many years—it meant studying in the evenings, sitting for exams, doing menial work, and being forced to vegetate.

The new aristocracy among immigrants consisted of plumbers, electricians, tailors, and shoe repairers. However, the so-called intelligentsia did not feel comfortable in their presence, as their school education had often been incomplete due to the inequities of the former Hungarian education system. But this group also disliked the ‘gentry’, often resulting in friction. Only religious organisations, with the cooperation of Catholic and Protestant church leaders, were able to overcome these obstacles and foster Christian unity.

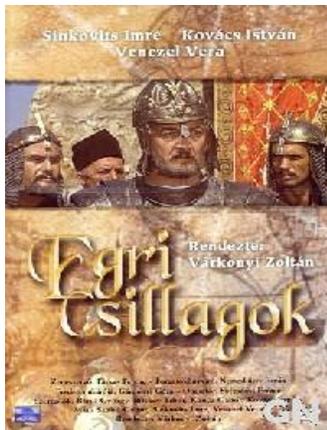
An old friend also became involved in community life. Peter Kemény, a Lutheran pastor, and I had enjoyed a close friendship since 1938. He followed my vision when he came to Australia as well. Peter settled in Perth, Western Australia, and as a result, we saw each other only rarely. With great energy, he threw himself into the life of a Hungarian Lutheran pastor, organising his congregation.

It wasn’t easy for pastors either—in their relations with migrants or with the Australian government. Understandably, the host government tried to assimilate us into Australian parishes. Those who accepted the outstretched hands were, in many cases, rewarded, as the support helped them gain financial stability more easily. But the vast majority of immigrants tried to remain together, feeling it was more fruitful to pray in their mother tongue. This

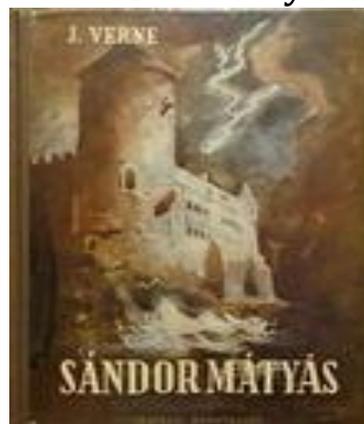
separation was frowned upon by church authorities, and pastors had to continue fighting to maintain their role. Roman Catholics were served by Francis Forró and János Fazekas, Jesuit priests who worked to ensure that services were held in a central location where Hungarians could hear sermons and mass in Hungarian.

There was no religious education in public schools, so I trained the boys for First Communion using a Hungarian catechism, and they took their exams with me. Then Father Ferenc Forró distributed the sacrament at the Lavender Bay church in North Sydney.

I also trained the boys in the Hungarian language, because they consciously experienced the English-speaking world, and their Hungarian vocabulary was limited. In the evenings, after dinner, I read to them in Hungarian. First, I read fairy tales, then Egri Csillagok, and Jules Verne's Sándor Mátyás (Matthias) were among the stories that helped in this task. On weekends, I taught them to read and write in Hungarian.



Egri Csillagok



Sándor Mátyás by Jules Verne

I was not only a teacher but a student as well; I

had a goal to obtain my accountancy qualifications. One third of the course was company, commercial, and taxation law. I learned commercial law relatively easily, as it bore many similarities to international trade law in Hungary.

was the very important

Harder to learn

taxation section. In the capitalist world, everyone was trying to balance economic issues and offer sound advice.

With daytime activities, household tasks, and teaching the children, much had to be done late in the evenings, so there was certainly little time to relax.

In addition, on weekends, the three boys wanted to explore Sydney, and during the long summer we sought out beaches for cooler temperatures. At that time, there were few competition pools in Greater Sydney. We visited one pool many times with the children, but it was usually so crowded that it offered little enjoyment—at least for us adults.

Watching the sea with its eternal waves was a truly amazing experience. I would gaze at the majestic rolling waves for hours. Soon I ventured into the breaking waves and came to love this beautiful sport. The boys enjoyed it most of all. Andrew would even swim in winter, wearing his protective wetsuit. Over the years, these little boys grew into athletic young men.

At this time, my friend Ervin Altorjay lived near Manly Beach. His employer, the Department of Main Roads, paid poorly but provided a small temporary building, where we often enjoyed their hospitality on weekends—and sometimes stayed overnight.

We renewed our acquaintance with Pali Palotás' family, whom we had met at Greta Camp. Irene, Pali's wife, was a civilian mathematics teacher in Szeged like Ica, so they shared many memories of Szeged. Pali had become a staff officer toward the end of the war. He chose not to follow the corps into German exile but continued in Debrecen with the newly formed communist army. In migration, this political decision led to conflict and social difficulties with military officers who held opposing views. Remembering how I myself was torn on 15 October 1944, searching for the right path in a difficult situation, I could not sit in judgment over them. When Pali saw that Hungarian democracy was not being built at home, and that Moscow was taking bloody control of the country, he defected with his entire family in 1949.

The Palotás family had five children. We, with our sons, understood each other well and spent many lovely hours together. We were sorry when, in the early sixties, they decided to move to the United States. Thus, our close relationship was broken.

We met Bandi Mészáros and his wife Edit, who befriended Ica. Edit also worked for a time at EMI. Bandi had served in the Ministry of Defence during the war and had worked in a counter-intelligence unit. Persecuted after the war, he could not bear the new system. In 1949, they fled west under quite adventurous circumstances and were also trying to build new lives here. We often visited each other. Bandi later became my son Andrew's Confirmation sponsor. They were very selective in choosing friends and regarded with suspicion anyone who, between 1945 and 1949, had obtained a job through the power of the Muscovites—and as a result, they had few friends.

I was forgiving toward them, but Bandi always stressed that if I had stayed home and lived through those times, I would certainly have shared his views.

In 1954, Queen Elizabeth—also of the Commonwealth of Australia—visited Sydney. We felt we so much to this country for giving refuge, and we applauded and lauded the young royal couple as they passed through one of Sydney's main streets.

At this, we again realised that Australia's English-speaking population was not homogeneous. The Irish certainly did not welcome the Queen of England, as they saw in her the oppressive, tyrannical English. One of my colleagues even spoke with pride that his son had not served in the Australian Army during the war, but had hidden as a deserter.

We Hungarians did not consider Australia to be our country, since almost all of us arrived believing we were merely waiting for conditions to change in Hungary so we could return home. But as



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KEMENY, PETER GEORGE

Reverend Peter George Kemeny was well known around Perth for his theatre reviews and criticisms. He was born in Hungary in 1914, where he obtained a Bachelor of Divinity and was ordained as Minister of the Lutheran Church. In 1950 he migrated to Australia, and undertook Teachers' College Training in Perth to become a Secondary Teacher with the Education Department. In the 1960s he obtained a Master of Arts in English, and went on to lecture at various educational institutions including the Adult Education Board of the University of Western Australia. He also published various articles. In 1977 he began producing theatre programmes on local radio. He died in 1989.

head

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the years passed and conditions remained unchanged, those hopes grew ever fainter. The call for 1949 arrivals to obtain Australian citizenship caused a major headache. In particular, it hurt the candidates that, during the solemn ceremony, they had to renounce their obligations to their Hungarian homeland. At that time, Australia had no desire to recognise dual citizenship.

I tried to convince my colleagues that under the old Hungarian law—which had not been changed by the new rulers—Hungarian citizenship could not be renounced. One could only lose citizenship through removal or dismissal by the Hungarian government itself. In my view, as the independent Hungarian government had been terminated on 4 April 1945, I was not prepared to recognise the Russian occupation power. So, I submitted our application to obtain Australian citizenship.

We also thought a great deal about where our future might lead us. Returning to a legal career seemed a very difficult path, with no guarantee of significant financial reward. Observing the Hungarian Jewish community, I quickly realised that many appeared to be prospering in the business world. Indeed, it seemed a clever path—after all, no particular qualification was required to open a business. Many people began by opening delicatessens, especially in areas with large immigrant populations, where they sold European foods and seemed to enjoy a flourishing standard of living.

I thought that we, too, could save enough money to open a business. We began making plans to terminate our joint ownership with the Börzsönyi family. I discussed the idea with Pisti, who thought they would keep the house in Guildford and buy us out. Ica was not keen on this plan. She felt that, with three little boys, it would be too difficult to manage such a business venture. But then the Börzsönyi family suddenly decided to open a delicatessen and sell their share of the Guildford property. Ica felt it would be better for us to undertake to buy them out.

We managed the legal complexities, which were mainly financial, and thus became the sole owners of the Guildford house. The boys moved into the main house, and we rented the smaller house to a German couple. This provided us with a regular monthly income to help cover the housing loan repayments.

Hungarian Revolution 1956

Finally, in 1956, our family was alone in a real house. It was the first time since the autumn of 1944, when we turned the key in the lock of our apartment on Káplár Street and said goodbye to civil existence. It is understandable that our joy knew no bounds. Wooden barracks, rented solutions, and primitive furniture from the past eight long years were now only memories—ones that would stay with us.

The furniture was still simple, but in a reasonably spacious house, we were able to have separate bedrooms, a dining room, and a lounge. The furniture was purchased from a large department store on the eighth floor, where the simplest and least expensive items were sold—but they were new and clean. The flat fibro-cement house structure was not noteworthy by European standards. When the colder winter weather arrived, accompanied by chilly southern winds, Ica said it felt like we were living in a tent. But we soon overcame this problem by introducing oil-fired heating. We could now enjoy three to four months of luxurious “central heating.”

Our tenants were satisfied with their accommodation. The Heinz family were East Prussian refugees; he had served during the war in the commercial shipping fleet and spoke often of his experiences. They were ordinary, hard-working people, and the couple began working so they could save to purchase their own home. They succeeded, and a few years later they moved into their own house.

I regretted not trying my luck with a business venture, but years later I realised Ica had been right. The Börzsönyi family failed in their business. They had bought a convenience store, but the opportunity to develop it was not there. The business did not bring in more income than they would have earned through regular employment.

My eyes were opened in other respects as well; we could not take our Jewish compatriots as examples. I discovered that they had not

come here without capital, and many received five hundred pounds from the Jewish centre to help start a business. Professional people also received support from the Jewish community. For example, a Jewish Hungarian lawyer could be employed as a clerk by a Jewish law firm and soon function as a lawyer with clients. While working there, he gained experience in Australian law within an English-speaking environment and was given time to pass the required exams. In the field of commercial law, there was not much difference between Hungarian and Australian systems.

University positions were also available to Hungarian Jews through their connections. Often they spoke only broken English, but with their expertise, they overcame these difficulties.

On the other hand, Christian Hungarians were without support. In fact, often because of the “former enemy” label, their options were quite limited.

Former army officers and public servants were employed almost exclusively as manual workers. The lucky ones found jobs with the post office or railways, where their talents were eventually recognised and they found opportunities for advancement.

It happened to me too. The road construction organisation where I worked as a clerk paid me as a novice. Once, I was invited to participate in an internal exam; it included an organisational component and an English language section. The test was not too difficult, as a high percentage of the English words were of Latin origin. It was not in vain that I had studied Latin for eight years in high school! A few weeks later, Fred, my boss, chuckled as he announced to the office that I had finished second among forty to fifty candidates. I just smiled and remembered my Latin teacher, Pista Bucsy.

I realised I could not stay there long, as promotion required accepting a rural posting. This would have meant Ica remaining alone with the children for extended periods, and she would not

have been able to keep her job. So I planned to change jobs once I had acquired my accountant's qualification.

I was progressing well in the accountancy course. In the subject of commercial law, I won first prize and was approaching the final exams in 1956.

We corresponded diligently with home—very carefully, of course, as we knew the authorities occasionally checked all foreign mail. Kata, my sister, agreed that my letters to my father would not be sent to Székesfehérvár. I did not want to jeopardise the medical career of my brother-in-law Béla by communicating directly. All my letters were sent to my mother in Budapest. She lived in complete retirement and had nothing to do with the alien world around her. She forwarded my mail to my father in Székesfehérvár. He regularly replied, using Kálmán Magyar and his Bodajk address as the sender. As my father had no pension and lived with my sister Kata, we began supporting him. I regularly sent IKKA vouchers to my mother's address.

My father-in-law's living conditions were relatively better. He even gave lessons for a while, and my sister-in-law Duci worked in a health insurance organisation, so they could support themselves. However, they did have some co-tenancy problems, which caused bitter moments.

No matter how hard we tried to build our new lives, we always thought of home as the ultimate destination. I tried to convince Ica, when making purchases, to choose items that could be used when travelling. I saw myself pulling a blanket over myself on a boat heading home. When buying a sewing machine, it had to be portable. Ica was pragmatic and did not share my vision, but she did not protest.

The evolution of the international situation offered little hope for the future. Sadly, it became clear that U.S. policy, despite Cold War rhetoric, was not aimed at liberating Eastern Europe but merely at halting the Russian advance.

A Hungarian migrant press emerged at this time. The divisions among migrants were reflected in the press. Those who had fled the Russian red storm front in 1944 still preserved the Miklós Horthy vision of Hungary in their hearts, with all its good and bad qualities. The Christian ideals of Hungary were also represented. This newspaper became the national paper of the immigrant community. Space was also found for conservative elements and adherents of national radicalism.

Often, opposing views appeared in its articles—especially on land reform and the political differences of the 1920s and 1930s. Yet these forces were united by the belief that the current political and social order should be rejected, and that the Carpathian Basin Hungarians should be united in a struggle for liberation.

The press was almost entirely without financial resources and survived only through the sacrifices of dedicated readers and volunteer journalists whose unpaid work made publication possible.

The Hungarian Catholic clergy in Sydney, especially Jesuit Father Francis Forró, worked to establish a Catholic newspaper that reflected Catholic sentiments. Its editor-in-chief was Casmir Nagy, who had lived and worked with former leading politicians in Hungary until 1949. He arrived with a referral letter from Hungarian Catholic relatives, and Father Forró entrusted him with the task of editing the paper.

Casmir Nagy fulfilled his role well and created a forum that included those who had lived in Hungary between 1945 and 1949. The connecting link was the Catholic worldview, which sought to bridge differences within the community. However, Casmir Nagy's political views on the Hungarian uprising and its collapse created serious issues for him. He later withdrew from immigrant life and returned home. But I will write more about that later.

During the first months of 1956, it was already being felt—and communicated to the Hungarian émigré community through the newspapers—that political winds of change were beginning to blow

in Europe. The U.S. reported that, after Stalin's death, the new Soviet leaders would revise their methods. American radio stations broadcast to the occupied territories and stressed that if the people wanted to shake off the yoke, they should "act now."

All this seemed to be supported by the fact that the Russians had resorted to measures that appeared to establish a more peaceful political system. However, the American press continued to emphasise that the U.S. would not intervene in the internal affairs of territories under Russian occupation. This was not liberation, but the limitation of the U.S. containment policy. We received news from home that people interpreted these syndicated articles as a signal that now was the time to remove the Russian yoke.

The Suez Crisis seemed a bad omen in our eyes. It was then that the British and French imperial alliances, in aid of a threatened State of Israel, sought to ensure that their European dominance of the Mediterranean Sea would be maintained—at least in the Middle East.

There were signs suggesting that, in the matter of dividing the world, there was agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, in Australia, preparations were underway for the Melbourne Olympic Games, and local newspaper articles focused almost exclusively on this event.



Opening ceremony

Our life carried on. Preparations for my final exams consumed all my free time. The boys managed to enrol at Parramatta Marist Brothers High School. I visited the teaching brothers several times and was delighted to find that, like our old Piarists (whose primary vocation was educating children and youth), they displayed a self-sacrificing spirit in their care for the students. I was also touched

when the principal asked whether I could afford the tuition fees and said that, if I had difficulties, they could reduce the cost.

On October 22, we visited my friend Ákos Oláh. By this time, they were no longer camp dwellers but had settled in Cooma, a small rural town on the Southern Alps ridge. It is one of Australia's most remarkable places—the headquarters of the Snowy Mountains Authority, which built massive tunnels and embankments to reverse the flow of water from east to west, ensuring water supply to the dry western regions. The large turbines produced electricity. My friend Ákos was a manager and treasurer of this vast organisation.



Snowy Mountains

Naturally, Ákos and I spoke about the situation in Hungary. Then we heard the news that university students in Szeged had left the Communist student organisation. I found this hard to believe. Next came reports of rallies before the statue of General Bem, and of students demanding that their twelve or fourteen-point petitions be granted. This seemed incomprehensible to us. We knew, given the global political situation, that Russia was trying to adopt more acceptable methods of occupation, but the scale of the Hungarian demands did not align with their intentions.



General Bem

Then came the news of gunfire—and it became clear that the Hungarian people were rising against Communist tyranny.

It is very hard to describe our feelings at that time. On one hand, we were swept up in the fever that gripped the nation, and in spirit we recited the famous Hungarian words: “Now is the time! Now or never!” But fear was stronger than our enthusiasm. We had seen

that the world's policymakers would not allow our freedom to be fulfilled; in 1953, they had suppressed the rebellious Germans, and Poland continued to groan under the Russian boot.

The newspapers, in typical tabloid style, exaggerated the events, reporting the deaths of twenty to thirty thousand people. We could only listen desperately to the news—with pride and fear for our homeland and our relatives. We slept little at night, listening until the radio stations ended their transmissions.

We followed the news of coalition talks and government negotiations. We had been detached from the country for twelve years and had no knowledge of its political developments; the names of the new ministers meant nothing to us. One name I did recognise was that of my friend István Bibó. Pista and I had worked together at the Justice Ministry; our offices had been adjacent, and we often discussed political matters. I had always thought he was an excellent lawyer and a good Hungarian. For him, perhaps the greatest disappointment was witnessing Soviet policy up close. Pista had based his studies on the Marxist-Leninist system and, while he identified the key principles of democracy and humanism, he saw only the revolutionary excesses of the Stalinist regime.

His deep disappointment with the system led him to withdraw his support, and when he saw the historic turning point, he courageously stood up for his convictions.

As a brave Hungarian, he remained after the collapse. He helped formulate Hungary's position and suffered the consequences when all was lost. He spent several years in prison after 1956.

The Melbourne Olympics had begun. Hundreds of thousands of Australians in the audience celebrated the Hungarian team. In almost every way, public opinion



Water polo final against Russia

overwhelmingly supported our country and cheered. After many years, we finally felt that “What anointed us over the centuries washed away the shame.” Since the October events, being Hungarian was



National Flag with hammer and sickle cut out

an honour in this land. The Australian public understood that, during the Russian-Hungarian water polo match, the Hungarians beat each Russian until blood flowed. In those days, sportsmanship was impossible to imagine—especially after November 4th, when the Hungarian dream of freedom collapsed once again in the fire of Russian tanks.

Hungarian refugees began to flood to the West. Australia stood ready to receive the emigrants. The associations made preparations in this direction, and we demonstrated in Sydney at Domain Park against the bloody subjugation of another country. Australian politicians almost unanimously supported the move we made.

Casmir Nagy’s paper was the first to express our disappointment that, in the final days, our country could not depend on the United States for help. During the Suez Crisis, there had been full Russian-American agreement, and both Great Britain and France were forced to acknowledge that they were no longer world powers; the world was now divided between Russian and American spheres of influence. Israel also felt that U.S. support was limited. Their leaders asked the question: would there be future U.S. aid if the Arab-Jewish conflict required intervention?

Casmir Nagy’s lead article declared that, while we hated the Russians, we despised the Americans. From that point on, his articles gradually took an anti-American tone. I was concerned about this, because even though U.S. behaviour in 1956 was disappointing, we could not afford the luxury of rejecting the only force capable of providing Hungary with financial and moral

support in the event of liberation. I believed that, through our efforts to assist emigration, we could continue to educate and maintain American interest in our cause.

I explained my views to Father Francis Forró, who, after all, had a say in the newspaper's affairs, as it benefited from church support. Father Forró agreed with me. I do not know whether he tried to influence Casmir Nagy, but the fact remains that a few years later, Casmir left Sydney. He moved to London, where he worked for the left-leaning BBC and continued cultivating his Hungarian contacts. I will write more about his activities in the 1960s and 1970s later in this biography.

We received the first letters after the Revolution. We were very relieved that our family had not made the ultimate blood sacrifice. The situation in Székesfehérvár was relatively calm.

Kata's daughter had been involved in the student protests and went into hiding for several weeks, as they did not know whether the authorities were searching for her. My father-in-law also lived safely through the events in Miskolc. His apartment sustained a couple of bullet holes, but no one was injured. However, my cousin Lóránt Falcione had been elected president of the workers' union. This did not go unnoticed. He was imprisoned again for many years.

I was most worried about my mother, whose apartment was on Museum Boulevard, close to the sites where the Revolution broke out. She remained relatively safe during the events, and although the apartment came under artillery fire, no serious damage occurred.

My mother's letter was the bravest. She wrote that, during the victorious days of the Revolution, many Communist officials began arranging their escape—not in pursuit of freedom in the West, but to avoid possible impeachment. She also wrote that the prisons had been opened, releasing both political prisoners and ordinary criminals. She warned us to consider carefully whom we were prepared to offer refuge to.

The refugees' arrival in Sydney stirred emotions. When the first plane landed, they were met by Hungarian emigration association groups dressed in traditional costume, singing the Hungarian National Anthem and waving the old national flag. The confusion arose when it became apparent that seventy to eighty percent of the arrivals were Jewish.

The 1945 and 1949 Hungarian immigrants were aware that, with the aid of Russian weapons, those who came to power after the First World War were the so-called Muscovites. A large majority were of Jewish origin, who, after World War I, had taken part in the failed Communist regime and emigrated to Moscow. Upon their return to Hungary after the Second World War, they had participated in the massacres and oppression carried out by the new Communist government—against which, in 1956, the people had risen.

The Sydney Hungarian Jewish community was confused. Until then, they had lived apart from the broader Hungarian immigrant population due to past injustices. But now, when the courageous Hungarian uprising had elevated Hungarians in the free world as heroes, they found



Stalin's head from a demolished statue

themselves unable to join the Hungarian masses—and this adversely affected their standing in the eyes of the Australian public.

The majority of the current Hungarian organisations belonged, politically speaking, to the right. Those on the left, along with members of the Jewish community, accused them of being anti-Semitic and attempted to create an organisation that would include both those who, after 1945, had cooperated with the communist

regime and elements of the Hungarian Jewish community living in Sydney. One such initiative had taken place in the early fifties. Dr. Palinay instigated the first Australian-Hungarian Society. One of its main aims was to promote the assimilation of immigrants. However, the society declared the pre-April 4th 1945 government guilty and recognised only the post-war communist democracy as legitimate. Their operation was largely nominal. The new immigrants were not particularly interested in politicising.

This idea was revived again, especially among Hungarian Jews who lacked representation, but also among others who wanted an association that was supported and acknowledged by the Australian authorities.

An assembly was convened by the founders in the centre of the city. Three to four hundred Hungarians gathered and listened to the speeches with interest. The organisers emphasised the need for collaboration among all Sydney Hungarians; this idea was met with great enthusiasm. When elections for representatives took place, a well-respected former gendarme captain (police officer) was proposed for a post. Some protested, arguing that certain members of the gendarmerie had been involved in the transportation of Jews to concentration camps in 1944. Suddenly, the quiet agreement was broken and heated debates erupted among the attendees.

I had not joined any political association since 1949 and had always tried to maintain my impartiality. But at that moment, I felt compelled to speak. I passionately protested against the idea of revenge—one group punishing another. I pointed out that, due to the suffering of Hungarian Jews, many people had endured years of bloodshed, including during the Hungarian Revolution. But here and now, we must stop building gallows after endless suffering; we must establish Hungarian unity. My speech was a candid success. Not only did I receive enthusiastic applause, but I was also offered caucus membership without any examination of my past or previous beliefs. I was invited to join the new association. I accepted and

worked to keep merger opportunities alive, striving to serve the concept of unity within the émigré community.

The focus of the debate was, of course, the Jewish question in Hungary. During these months, I explained my position many times. In the early 1970s, my book *Turkish Rule, German Domination, Russian Occupation – A Historical Study* was published. On pages 113–114, I wrote:

“After the theatre of Yalta’s so-called democracy, its reality soon emerged—without restriction—as Slavic-Asian Bolshevism was introduced. Executive power, under the shadow of Russian weapons, fell into the hands of the Muscovites. But who were the Muscovites?

They were composed almost entirely of first- and second-generation Polish-Russian migrant Jews who, after the first defeat of the communist reign of terror in Hungary, had emigrated to Moscow and awaited an opportunity to return. This group was joined by Jewish forced labourers who, after falling into Soviet hands, assumed roles as ‘Muscovite’ leaders. Between five hundred and one thousand of them, by law, took over the lower and middle management of the country. Most professionally qualified senior Hungarians were not considered reliable from the communist Russian point of view. Thus, control of the country came to be sixty to seventy percent Jewish.

National radical elements viewed the Jewish question through a biased lens and branded the Muscovite leadership as a dictatorship of “Judeo-Bolshevism.” In doing so, they committed the error of generalisation—just as the political left had done when it viewed Hungarian society, including its military, administrative, and judicial institutions, as entities to be dismantled in the new state, subjecting them to persecution, imprisonment, and relentless manhunts.

The great majority of Hungarian Jews did not participate in the terror of the Rákosi or Kun regimes, and the Hungarian

national leadership cannot be blamed for its inability to actively oppose the mass deportation of part of the Jewish population, which was ordered and executed by German security forces. The spiritual leaders of Hungarian Jewry were themselves disturbed by Bolshevik terror and warned that Jewish participation in such atrocities would harm innocent people. In fact, many in the Jewish population were disillusioned that the end of the war had not brought about a true free enterprise system—their traditional livelihood—as they were largely a community of traders, financiers, and professionals who could not find their place in a totalitarian economy.

There is no doubt that the Jewish community did not strongly oppose the Muscovite leadership, and in that sense, they bear a degree of moral responsibility for the resulting suffering—just as the leaders of the Horthy regime cannot be absolved for not more actively resisting German demands.

While the majority of Hungarians accepted the suffering imposed by history and built their intellectual bastions on the concept of resistance, many Jews accelerated the process of dispersion—the diaspora. The first wave began in 1949 and continued almost without interruption. In 1956, the national revolution opened the borders, and Jews comprised three-quarters of the emigrants.”

I debated the question of Hungarian unity with my Jewish friends. After some initial distrust, it appeared that they understood me. Their separation from the broader community lasted longer, even though their situation was not particularly difficult, as a large percentage of the refugees were Jewish and it was not appropriate to speak against the support they received.

Naturally, the Hungarian Christian community wholeheartedly supported the newcomers. This united action made it easier and faster for this wave of immigrants to integrate into Australian life—especially when compared to us 1949ers, who had been obliged to

enter the country under government employment contracts. The pranksters soon found ways to distinguish between these groups. The 1949 newcomers, who often began their stories with “but we...,” were dubbed the “But we” group. Those who had arrived in 1939, however, spoke of how poor they had been—so poor that they had to walk across the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. They became known as the “bridge people.”

By contrast, in 1956, our brothers and sisters received organised help. Dr Zoltán Bodolay, with the support of the Catholic Church, distributed English-language books to assist with learning the language.

I made efforts to build a bridge of cooperation with Hungarian right-wing organisations, but to no avail. The separation of the Jewish community persisted longer, and the Hungarian-Australian Association served primarily as a representative body for dealings with the authorities.

At the time, one advocate for Hungarian organisations was Dr István (Stephen) Lodoméry, who lived in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. I exchanged letters with him, explaining that I had tried to convince the organisations of the need for non-political cooperation—an association that would unite all Hungarians who had migrated to Australia, and in which the political right would also have a role.

According to Lodoméry, the existing Hungarian organisations were genuinely Christian, Hungarian, and right-leaning nationalists, but he believed there was room for other views. In his reply, he wrote that we were all proud of our Hungarian history—what could be called the Horthy period—and were not prepared to adopt the stance of the Australian-Hungarian Society, which excluded this phase of our past. He cited Hungarian history as an example: Lajos Kossuth, during his emigration, did not always act in patriotic unity, but everyone has the right to defend their past against constant attacks. For him, a non-political association was unthinkable. On the

other hand, he acknowledged that everyone had the right to express their own perspectives. Ladoméry also cited an example: when the Australian-Hungarian Society held a lecture, a boy performed in the uniform of the Communist Hungarian Youth.

I agreed with Ladoméry that the root of the problem was that the Australian-Hungarian Society's leadership was willing to accept some individuals from the right—even in leadership positions—but only on the condition that they publicly denounce the Horthy era. As the attempt at conciliation ended in failure, I decided to consider my brief involvement with the society complete.

The presidency of the Australian-Hungarian Society was given to György (George) Barcza, who had been our last ambassador in London. Indeed, he proved to be an ideal figure for uniting the organisation within the immigrant community.

I quote here the text of my letter of resignation. Perhaps, in the written summary, the reader will better understand my position:

“I hereby announce my resignation from my position in the Australian-Hungarian Association and relinquish my membership of the Association.

Nearly a year ago, I took part in helping to establish a representation for non-party-aligned Hungarians in the state of New South Wales.

Unfortunately, this past year has shown me that this noble goal cannot yet be achieved. The scars between the Hungarian right and left remain open, and the majority of people are not yet able to forget.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I would like to state that, in my humble judgment, both political camps have engaged in such negative behaviour that a mediator cannot reasonably expect success.

Consequently, I wish to preserve my independence from all parties. I feel I can only join the majority of Hungarians who

have distanced themselves from organisations they consider untimely.”

Despite the fact that I had always remained faithful to the Christian Hungarian spirit, I could not connect with the right-wing groups either.

I also stayed away from the Hungarian National Constitutional Protection Movement. The president of this body was Dr Eugene Szemák, with Ferenc Jakab serving as director. The movement was involved in the renewal of the National Council as the foundation for creating a Hungarian organisation.

Jenő (Eugene) Rejthő was the local representative of the movement. In response to his invitation to join, I told him that I still could not do so, and could only express my position at the time as follows:

"I fully agree with the movement's goals of restoring a national, Christian-minded Hungarian Constitution. Throughout this time, I have been an advocate of the aims of the Hungarian National Association, founded in 1944.

However, as a constitutional lawyer who, until 6 October 1944—when I joined military service—served as one of the constitutional experts at the Ministry of Justice, I must express that I cannot support the theory of the legal continuity of the State Council.

I believe that the sovereignty of the nation must be the final foundation upon which to rebuild our shattered country. But due to the passage of time, for those who held public office in 1944, this is no longer a viable path.

As a former magistrate, I have maintained my independence from party politics—both in Hungary and here in exile. That is why I withdrew from the Australian-Hungarian Association when it became clear that the organisation was not all-encompassing, but instead supported certain trade unions and left-leaning interests."

While I was working within the framework of the Australian-Hungarian Society, I had the opportunity to become better acquainted with some of its members. I had extensive discussions with Károly (Charles) Ravasz who, to my knowledge, had been active in the Independent Smallholders' Party after 1945. He understood my position and supported my efforts. Charles was better informed than I, and he soon realised that we could not expect significant improvements from America, as the world was ultimately balanced between the two superpowers. He therefore believed that emigration was meaningless and returned home.

In one of our friendly discussions, when I suggested the idea that perhaps we should consider a 'Ferenc Deák'-style reconciliation with the Russian Empire, he was firmly of the opinion that "there is no compromise with the Russians."

I also had an interesting encounter with a Hungarian writer who had aligned himself with Imre Nagy's so-called reform communists. This confirmed my suspicion that the 1956 uprising began because the nation was uninformed and had been largely misled by the West's intimation that the time had come to cast off the Soviet yoke. The reform movement in Moscow had suggested that the unpopular Rákosi should be replaced by Hungarians. Thus, the Communist Party attempted to orchestrate an artificial "March 15" scenario, from which a nationalist—but still Marxist—government would emerge.

The great mass of the tormented nation was not interested in such manoeuvres, but seized the opportunity to attempt to sweep away communist domination altogether.

The Soviet Union, however, did not tolerate the disintegration of its Eastern European power.

Business Life 1957-1967

When the Hungarian fight for freedom was crushed, we understood that we had to give up the hope of returning home. We came to realise that there would be an interval of at least ten to twenty years before there could be any serious change in Hungary's domestic affairs.

Meanwhile, the boys had become increasingly fluent in English, as they were now high school students. Returning home now seemed futile, and we did what we could to keep them Hungarian. School, after all, was the most powerful instrument of assimilation. In 1956, there had been hope that, if we could return to Hungary, we would find our place again in the sea of Hungarian life, and the boys would probably forget Australia. But for us parents, it would have been more difficult to preserve our English language skills.

So, when we received notice from the Minister for Immigration that our citizenship application had been approved and a date had been set for the citizenship oath, we did not protest in spirit. We accepted all the obligations that came with it. The ceremony was held at City Hall in Parramatta. There were twenty to thirty displaced persons like us who were inaugurated that day. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the press, the government, and leading figures of the city. The mayor welcomed the candidates, and then we solemnly took the oath of citizenship and received our certificates.

The mayor then turned to us again and asked whether anyone wished to speak on behalf of the new citizens. The hall fell into a deep silence, which was understandable—speaking in English without preparation was perhaps too daunting for most of the immigrants. During that uncomfortable pause, I suddenly felt that a few words should be spoken in response, so I volunteered.

In my speech, I expressed that we were all looking toward the future and wished to contribute to the process by which the various

nationalities in Australia would grow accustomed to one another, so that, in time, a unified Australian national identity could emerge. I then attempted to articulate that this Australian future must be white, Christian, and English-speaking.

At that time, the White Australia Policy was supported by both the government and the opposition, and the dominant role of the English language was accepted as natural. After all, in defeated Germany—despite prevailing anti-German sentiment—the unifying factor among all was the German language. Later, I came to understand that the English language enabled communication between many Hindu and Muslim ethnic groups as well. I could only support the Christian character of the country, having valued the support of the churches during the agony of the post-war period.

My speech was well received, and the City of Parramatta later sent me a beautiful album as a friendly gesture. One government official who had been present at the ceremony invited me to his office for a conversation.

That conversation was very revealing. For the first time, I saw that one of the underlying problems in Australia was the division between Catholic Irish, Protestant English, and Scottish communities. The official, a member of the Liberal Party, told me frankly that he was retiring because of the party's Protestant orientation.

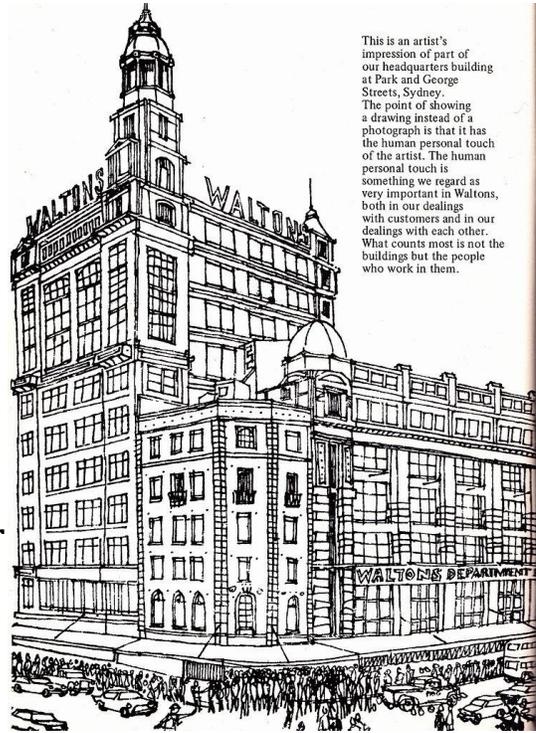
Prior to World War II, the vast majority of Catholics had supported the Labor Party, which had never been under Marxist influence. Then, with the rise of left-wing Marxist elements, Catholic-minded union leaders were pushed out. This led to the founding of the Democratic Labor Party, which sought to achieve social justice within the framework of free enterprise. I was very sympathetic to this party and, in later years, while it existed, gave them my first vote. Of course, within the context of the prevailing two-party system, this was regarded as a protest vote. My

preference ultimately went to the Liberals. Support for the now Labor/Marxist workers' party was repugnant to us

Our position improved substantially when, in 1956, we finally solved the problem of Ica's employment prospects. A good friend, Eva Meszey, who worked in the accounting department of the large department store Walton's, recommended Ica for a vacant position—for which she was fortunately hired.

Factory-style work was now replaced by office work. A number of suburban and rural branches sent their weekly reports to be verified and compared with local bank data. It was a simple bookkeeping job, but Ica soon became a respected member of the centre's accounts department due to her precise and reliable work. The job was in a preferred location, as the office was in the city centre and we could commute there relatively easily and quickly. After a ten-minute bus ride, the electric train continued to the final destination. The daily commute was no more than one hour each way, which—considering the distances across Greater Sydney—was very favourable.

I was also considering changing jobs because, in 1957, I had successfully completed my final exams and was now a qualified accountant. I began searching for a better-paid opportunity by "sorting" through the job advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald. I wrote one application after another—alas, to no avail. I was usually told that my qualifications were appropriate, but I lacked practical experience. That was true, but it did not convince me, as university and college graduates were often hired without



This is an artist's impression of part of our headquarters building at Park and George Streets, Sydney. The point of showing a drawing instead of a photograph is that it has the human personal touch of the artist. The human personal touch is something we regard as very important in Waltons, both in our dealings with customers and in our dealings with each other. What counts most is not the buildings but the people who work in them.

Walton's city store

experience. Rather, it seemed the business world was looking for manual workers among the immigrants and had little interest in those with academic backgrounds.

Finally, a large accountancy firm—Parsons Anderson and Company—invited me for an interview. Peter White, only a few years older than I, appeared impressed by my background and efforts in this country. At the end of our conversation, he said I would soon receive a letter of appointment. This did indeed happen, and after completing the required notice period, I began working at my new job. The road construction organisation received news of my departure with understanding, and my colleagues wished me luck in my new venture.

The new company had four partners and three to four qualified accountants. Some were young professionals, and there was also appropriate office staff, including secretaries and typists. The firm was mainly engaged in auditing businesses: reviewing clients' accounts and, if all was found to be in order, certifying their balance sheets and profit/loss statements. Some of Australia's largest companies were among our clients. Others came from the countryside and suburbs, including mills, stores, and factories. I had the opportunity to gain experience in all branches of accounting, and I carried out this work with pleasure.

Part of the work was almost automatic in nature: I had to compare records with bank accounts and transfer data to the general ledger. If one worked intelligently, it was possible to detect whether results, property values, or debt amounts had been falsified. When I had worked at the Justice Ministry, I was often frustrated that I lacked the skills to evaluate the economic and practical aspects of commercial life. My academic study of economics had focused only on the highest levels of theory—economic philosophy. Now, through my internship, I had been trained in the practical challenges of reading balance sheets and evaluating the nature of business profit and loss.

I also came to know the state's rural life, as I travelled to the countryside two or three times a year. On these occasions, a young colleague would accompany me. During the day, we examined clients' books at their businesses, and at night we stayed at the local hotel. In Bathurst, we audited a car dealership; in Parkes, a large department store; and in Orange, a mill. I also gained insight into the life of a sheep farmer in Brewarrina, which I found the most interesting. I visited the interior of the continent twice in early autumn, when temperatures reached around 45 degrees almost daily. It's true that the farmer's office had air conditioning and we were given ice-cold drinking water. But the hotel nights were nearly intolerable. We slept under mosquito nets with no covering and endured half-sleep through the night, as the temperature only dropped to around 35°C.

Here, I confronted the challenges of Indigenous Australia. The farmer was struggling with labour shortages, and when I asked why he didn't employ Aboriginal workers, he simply waved dismissively and said, "They work no more than one or two days until they have enough money to go to the pub." Indeed, this was what I saw in the town: Aboriginal people gathered near the hotel early in the morning, lying on the pavement, waiting for it to open.

I once saw a white kangaroo at the airport. They had just caught this rare albino specimen and were transporting it to the Sydney Zoo.

We also travelled to pleasant country areas. I loved Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, and Bellingen. Because these places were near the beach, I could enjoy a dip in the sea after work. In Bellingen, I spoke at the local Rotary Club about the Hungarian uprising—so, on occasion, I became a kind of Hungarian propagandist.

I began building up my private bookkeeping practice. My employer had no objection when I took on private clients, preparing their accounts and designing and completing income tax returns. All of this, of course, was done in the evenings and on weekends; I was

accustomed to such an intense work rate. The new arrivals in 1956 were not soldiers or civil servants, but mostly industrialists and traders who had left Hungary to escape the shackles of communism. In Australia, many Hungarians started businesses—some were ironworkers, tailors, mechanics, and car repairers. Through my clients' books, I gained a deeper understanding of the realities of economic life.

I soon realised that these people could not afford sophisticated accounting systems, nor could they master English easily. Their records were often kept in Hungarian, which others could not interpret. I learned how to decipher incomplete data and summarise it in a suitable form. Over the years, I built up a steady private practice.

Among my clients, I came to know a few interesting personalities. They demonstrated that Hungarians could be remarkably talented—often in surprisingly inventive ways of finding their niche in the business world. The fact that only a few migrants managed to rise above the average and prosper was largely due to limited English skills and the immediate pressure of living expenses, which made it difficult to accumulate capital.

Among Hungarian Jews—who were often in a more favourable position—even greater success was achieved. I had two Jewish clients who deliberately turned away from the rush to make money and were content to create a modest but secure lifestyle for their families. One of these clients remained in contact with me for over thirty years; we understood each other well.

Another Jewish Hungarian client once told me the story of how he and his family survived Auschwitz. I asked him to recount his escape. His narrative can be summarised as follows:

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“We lived in Subotica (Yugoslavia), and in 1941 we returned to Hungary. I believe it was in 1942 that I joined the army as a young married man and served in Szolnok (Hungary), among other places. In 1943, I left the army but was called up again just a few months later. I was still a soldier when the Germans occupied Hungary and began deporting the Jews.

I requested an audience with my squadron commander to ask for leave to return to my family. I was granted leave and went home. There, I learned that my family had been placed in the local ghetto, and I wanted to join them. I was warned that if I entered, I would not be allowed to leave. But my family—my wife and two small children—were of paramount importance to me, so I joined them.

Soon, we were sent to Auschwitz. The transport was extremely cruel; we were crammed into cattle cars and arrived at Auschwitz in poor condition. I was assigned to work in one area of the factory, and my wife was also sent to work. The children were placed in a camp kindergarten. The food was very poor, but somehow, we survived those difficult months.

In the winter of 1944–45, we were ordered to evacuate the camp due to the advance of Russian forces. That was when our ordeal truly began.

My wife and two children were fortunate—they were placed on the first trains. I marched westward with my comrades. We trudged forward very slowly through snow and frost. If anyone fell behind, they were simply left in the snow—or shot.

Eventually, we found space on a train and—almost unbelievably—I was reunited with my family. In Berlin, conditions were relatively better. We received new clothes, and the food was improved. We were then put on a train bound for

southern Germany. As it turned out, we arrived at an airport, and the captives were assigned to work in airport maintenance. However, on the very day of our arrival, the airport came under U.S. air attack. The damage was so severe that the Germans abandoned the site and sent us on.

During the air raid, a few kilometres from the airport, the train broke down—and that was how we were lucky enough to survive. A few days later, we found ourselves in Dachau. That period was not as cruel. The Germans clearly knew the war was lost. Though we were crammed together and physically weakened, we waited for the Americans in the hope of liberation.”

Around this time, I met a Hungarian lawyer who had worked as a lawyer and prosecutor in Budapest during the post-war years. He told me he had been forced into labour by the Russians. He condemned the Rákosi regime for its cruelty and, with great energy, strove to rebuild his life in Australia. He had a wealthy uncle from Temesvár (Timișoara) already living in Australia, who offered some assistance—though more in advice than in money.

Later, I lost contact with him and do not know what became of him. In the early sixties, I met a Jewish fellow soldier. We reminisced, and when I mentioned that I had known this lawyer, he simply said, “Stay away from that man! When he was a prosecutor, it was well known that he demanded certain ‘sacrifices’ from the wives of defendants.”

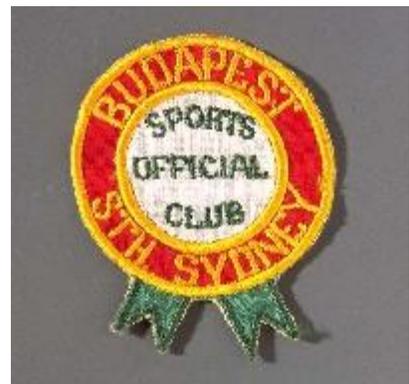
Beyond business and politics, our main concern was the boys’ progress. One after another, they sat for their final exams, and we hoped their results would enable them to attend university. We wanted them to go to university. Of course, this would only be possible if they graduated with honours, as that was the path to a scholarship. Unfortunately, we did not hold out much hope. They were hard-working, well-behaved boys, but they did not strive for academic distinction. Instead, they were focused on saving for their

first car. We had to acknowledge that they were only slightly above average in talent. I hoped, as an alternative, that they would have the willpower to succeed by enrolling in evening courses at university.

Maxi, my eldest son, finished high school and was soon employed. He was hired by one of the well-known chartered accountancy firms in Sydney and was introduced to the world of business. Naturally, he began studying at night and attended economics classes at Sydney University.

From his pay, he contributed to the household, which helped us gradually become more financially secure. This was in addition to my slightly higher salary compared to my previous job, and the income from my private practice. Soon we acquired a television—just as they were being introduced in Australia. We were also able to purchase a small Volkswagen car on monthly instalments, which made our weekend trips to the coast much more comfortable.

During these years, a Hungarian football team bearing the proud name of Budapest was formed. We became loyal supporters of this Hungarian effort. Through it, I saw an opportunity to preserve some of the Hungarian spirit within the next generation. I also supported the inaugural club because I thought that perhaps sport could be the area in which the Hungarian–Jewish division



Budapest club

might be bridged. Some members of the Hungarian Jewish community thought similarly and warmly welcomed me among their ranks. At that time, most of the players were Hungarian boys who had arrived in Sydney after the suppression of the revolution. My boys enthusiastically cheered for the Budapest team, and we also attended the guest appearance of the Hungarian Ferencváros team. The Hungarian atmosphere, along with the regular meetings with

fellow Hungarians after matches, strengthened our sentiments of belonging.

The Hungarian Jews were actively involved in strengthening and developing the Budapest soccer team in Sydney. In particular, I wish to mention the role of Sándor (Alexander) Pongrácz. He was a successful businessman who made sacrifices to ensure the team took root in Sydney.

However, after a few years of operation, I came into conflict with him—though it did not affect our personal relationship. He believed that it was not important for the team to be named Budapest. The Australian public was averse to national teams, national symbols, and foreign colours. Crowds often sent us home with the words: “This is Australia, do not use foreign colours and insignia.” The then predominantly Anglo-Celtic society demanded rapid assimilation of migrants. I will never forget that even at Greta Camp, on one occasion, at the wedding of a Hungarian Protestant couple where I acted as witness, I accompanied an Australian Protestant minister to the registrar’s office. As we passed some cheerful women and children speaking in their mother tongue, the minister remarked that it should be against the law for immigrants to use their native language immediately after arrival.

It was common practice for local newspapers, in Monday’s sports section headlines, to attack national teams—especially if, as sometimes happens in sport, an incident occurred.

Therefore, Pongrácz suggested that alongside Budapest we add the name of the district where the playing field was located. This is how the club became Budapest–St. George.

This might have been acceptable, but it soon became clear that the effort to cooperate was one-sided, as the district’s population kept their distance from the games.

At this time, there was enthusiastic support for the club among Hungarian immigrants. After matches, the hat was passed around by Board members to collect funds for the creation of a Hungarian club,

where slot machines and a restaurant would provide steady income to maintain the team.

All of this effort was not fruitless. The Budapest–St. George Sport Club became one of the most established Hungarian institutions in Sydney, and revenues enabled it to acquire its own playing field.

Winning over English-speaking crowds remained unsuccessful, so Alexander Pongrácz suggested further steps. He proposed omitting the name Budapest altogether, so the team would be known

only as St. George. Perhaps, he thought, it could soon adopt a nickname like “The Saints,” similar to the St. George Rugby League team.

I did not agree with this, and as the process continued, I left the management of the club. When the leadership eventually dropped the name Budapest—as I had feared—I stopped attending the games.

In hindsight, I thought perhaps Pongrácz had been right. After all, Hungarian Jewry, as a minority, had long maintained their culture and preserved social cohesion without provoking the majority. I remembered the old MTK Hungária, which, despite its name, was the Hungarian Jewish sports club in Budapest.

Soccer in Australia faced financial and cultural opposition. Sydney’s dominant sport was Rugby League. The press and media simply did not allow soccer to rise, even though the sport had originated in England. As a result, Pongrácz’s plan was unsuccessful. By the 1980s, when Australia abandoned its strict assimilation policies, the use of ethnic names was no longer banned. By then, major ethnic groups played under their own national names and colours—except for the Hungarian team, which relied on the efforts of only a few hundred people. Eventually, renewed pressure against



Later version of club’s name

ethnic names transformed the sport, and our team dropped out of the league.

The major concern of Hungarian emigrants during these years was to create a home with a decorated hall for national celebrations and dances, as well as restaurant facilities, to strengthen community ties with a socio-political background in mind.

The first attempt was in the Summer Hill city centre, where several cooperating associations bought a family house. They wanted to convert it to suit their goals, but they did not realise that the city council would not permit the establishment of a larger complex among the cottages in the area. The facilities were unsuitable for accommodating a larger audience. The house also had tenants, probably unmarried young people, and weekend merriment and drinking eventually caused problems.

Later, in the neighbouring suburb of Newtown, they bought a building that seemed more suitable. It was a large assembly hall where dances and performances could be organised. However, debate arose as to whether it was in a poor part of the city, and parking was very limited. It was eventually sold. I was involved in the purchase of a new building, but that occurred in the early seventies, and I will give details later.

Another “Hungarian home” was a meeting place for the Catholic community. On the second floor of an old George Street building was a “great room” that could hold 40 to 50 people. This was where the more enthusiastic members of the Hungarian Catholic community gathered for regular tea parties, elders’ meetings, youth dances, lectures, and similar events. The equipment was primitive, which kept the rent low, and the parish was able to maintain this meeting place for over a decade.

Hungarian university students also met there. Some had grown up in Australia and spoke to each other in English. Despite the efforts of Hungarian parents at home, they found it difficult to speak Hungarian and used only a “kitchen Hungarian.”

The 1956 arrivals, however, soon took leadership of the Hungarian refugee students. With their Hungarian secondary school qualifications, these young adults were more effective in association life. It was felt that, having spent years in German camps, we still lived in a pre-war image of Hungary, while the newcomers had accepted, to some extent, the new system. With good intentions, they suggested that the rules require management of the association to be conducted in Hungarian. This embittered those restricted to “kitchen Hungarian,” and they withdrew from club life. I then helped them organise a university football team, which played for several years in the green-and-white Ferencváros stripes.

The Sydney Hungarian emigration was not large compared to Italian, Greek, Polish, and Croatian immigrants, whose interests were more positively regarded by the Australian authorities, as the political objective was always to secure more votes. It is therefore understandable that we Hungarians also tried to create an organisation capable of representing us to the authorities with due weight. We were truly democratic, both politically and socially, in the wide variety of organisations and associations we established. To enable joint action, we formed the New South Wales Association of Hungarian Communities. Its English name was simple: The Hungarian Council. The associated clubs met every two to three months to deliberate and plan their work. The association’s task was also to organise national holiday celebrations. For financial reasons, these festivities had to include a dance, as the vast majority of members saw this as an opportunity for community gathering. Representatives of political parties and officials were invited.

The Labor Party had split, and the Democratic Labor Party was formed. From our perspective, the old English character of the Labor (Workers’) Party had drifted under communist influence, and we Hungarians rejected them. Consequently, representatives of the Labor Party gradually stopped attending these celebrations. The Liberal Party, meanwhile, began to celebrate the 1956 Hungarian

Revolution. One consequence of this was that some Hungarian leaders joined the Liberal Party. A few of those who joined had ties to Hungary before World War II and were soon accused by communist-influenced Labor groups of being fascists.

I tried to influence the leaders of the Alliance, urging them not to neglect the Labor Party. They should have recognised that, sooner or later, the Liberal Party's long reign would end, and with Labor in government, it would be detrimental if there were almost no connections. Unfortunately, nothing could be done in this regard, since the vast majority of Hungarians were so anti-Marxist that no prominent personality ventured to that side of politics.

In the sixties, the boys stepped out into the world. Béla completed his final high school examinations with good results, although I had expected more from him. He was more interested in playing golf. In the weeks prior to graduation, he practised golf more than his exam material. He decided to become a lawyer. Just as my father had done before, I was not happy with his decision, but I helped place him in the Central Land Registry Office. I thought that the practical experience gained there would help further his career.



Family picture at Burwood

András also sat for his final exams, but his results did not reach the level required for university admission. Three months later, after pulling himself together and working seriously, he took another matriculation exam, which brought success. He too declared that he would become a lawyer. At that point, I gave up the fight. I concluded that this must be hereditary. After all, my great-grandfather was a magistrate, my grandfather and father were lawyers, and I myself had pursued a legal career.

My friend János (John) Baltay, who had immigrated to America, experienced the same. When his eldest son John chose law as a career, his father vehemently protested. But when the official



careers officer also suggested law, he gave in.

83 Lucas Rd Burwood

I helped Andrew to join my old employer, the Department of Main Roads, and begin his career in the legal department.

Thus, our household now had all five members earning an income. The household finances improved, but we all had to travel considerable distances to reach our workplaces. My wife Ica was not fond of the idea that the boys had to use a car to get to work, and she suggested that we sell our house in Guildford and buy a better home situated closer to the central area

We looked at many houses until we found one in Burwood that seemed very consistent with our requirements. The electric railway station was only four to five minutes' walk away, and with a quarter-hour train ride we were in the city. My private practice clients could easily reach me, and it was easier for me to visit them. The house was brick with a slate roof, set on a nicely developed large plot with a well-maintained garden. There were three bedrooms down the hallway, so the radio or television at the back of the house did not disturb anyone who wanted to sleep or study.

This decision solved our problems, and we grew to love our new home. When Ica began to experience health issues in 1965, she left her job. From that time on, we lived a quiet family life, with a devoted housewife waiting lovingly for us all to return home from work.

Unfortunately, the news from home was not encouraging. The overall situation in Hungary had improved, but we had to face the

fact that our parents were aging, and it appeared increasingly likely that we would never see each other again. First, my beloved father-in-law, whom we understood very well, passed away, and soon after his wife—whom we loved dearly—followed him. A few years later, my mother's third partner in life, Károly (Charles) Móricz, also died. In 1964, my mother herself took leave of us, and the hoped-for reunion never occurred. It was very difficult to endure such adversity. We cannot rebel against life's rules, but it was painful to be absent from the funeral bed and denied the opportunity to say goodbye. Father Francis Forró said Mass for them all.

In those years, we unexpectedly discovered relatives in Austria. As it turned out, at the time of the defeat of the War of Independence in 1849, Ernő Kiss, the army general executed by the Austrians, had a son who fought as a captain. He was forced to flee and found refuge in Poland. His son later moved to Austria and assimilated into the German environment. Thus, the great-grandson of the martyr of Arad married an Austrian lady. He became a gynecologist and a respected university lecturer. His wife, descended from a pharmacist, was herself a druggist. Emil and Lizi had not previously engaged with their Hungarian ancestry, but the 1956 uprising strongly influenced them. In 1957, Emil began searching for relatives in Hungary. He met my mother, who was the last to still bear the name Kiss. They became warm friends with my sister. Emil Kiss contributed much to the family back home. Later, we also came to know Emil and kept in touch.

I acquired valuable experience in chartered accounting and auditing practice. My bosses evaluated my work positively and raised my salary annually. Even in this job, I felt the legal aspects gave me a sense of belonging. This rekindled my desire to function again as a lawyer, and I took my first steps in that direction. First, I had to prove my qualifications. This was not a problem, because under the rules of the University of Sydney, those able to demonstrate a foreign university degree were recognised as eligible

to enrol. I enrolled on the High Court Barrister's Admission Board nominees list. This organisation did not require candidates to attend evening courses; instead, we had to sit written examinations. The exams were not limited in number or order, and the examiners were usually prominent judges and barristers.

I began preparing in 1962 and acquired the necessary textbooks, but due to various problems with the housing exchange, I was unable to study. I resumed in 1964 and surprised my boss, Peter White, when I told him of my intention to attempt a legal qualification. Peter knew I was around fifty years old and expressed doubts, but wished me good luck. So I threw myself into study in the evenings, re-reading legislation many times and preparing for the exams. At that time, my English was quite reasonable and, to some extent, similar to the international jurisprudence I already knew, so my studies progressed at a good pace. Yet, in typical Australian fashion, despite recognising my European legal qualifications, they granted me exemption only in Roman law, and I still had to take exams in International law.

Such "night class" candidates usually took six to eight years to complete their studies. However, with great application, I finished my exams in two and a half years. By the end of 1966, I was permitted to use the title Barrister-at-Law.

Despite the demands of study, this period also marked the beginnings of a social life within the Hungarian emigration. It mostly consisted of Catholic parish work, and we regularly met friends at family evenings. We became close to the Pista Jani family. Pista had been a gendarme captain in Hungary. His wife, György, from Zalaegerszeg, was the daughter of the lawyer Magyari-Kossa, and she became good friends with Ica. György often boasted that Cardinal Mindszenty was her godfather. Pista was essentially an embittered man. It pained him that the new regime in Hungary treated the gendarmerie so cruelly and unjustly. They had always been loyal to the Hungarian state and excelled in protecting the

country at great cost; the best-organised body of old Hungary was the “cock feather” Guard.

In Australia, Pista worked faithfully at the post office until his retirement. In the sixties, they lived a beautiful family and community life with Pista’s elderly parents and their two children. Our sons spent happy youthful years with their son János (John) and daughter Rita. The Jani home was always open to Hungarian boys and girls, and they enjoyed many gatherings there, which helped them preserve their Hungarian roots.

A small Hungarian group was formed through these gatherings, and they maintained their relationships in later years. Tamás (Tom) Csekme, the son of a deceased squadron leader, became Béla’s best friend. Later, Rita married Laci Klekner, who had joined his parents in 1956 after being separated from them when they left Hungary in 1944.

Andrew’s best friend was Peter Göllner. Unfortunately, Peter, while riding a bicycle, was the victim of a car crash, and the boys could never forget him. John Jani also had a serious car accident and spent long weeks in hospital, where his friends visited him regularly. András (Andrew) too had an accident. He was not injured, but the incident was emotionally distressing. The increasing wealth and the use of cars certainly demanded sacrifices. Ica could not sleep at night until the boys were safely home.

An old friend of mine, who had connections in Szeged and had known my uncle Miklós Kiss, missed the old life in Hungary. He seriously suggested that we organise a Hungarian noblemen’s and old gentlemen’s casino (club) in Sydney. I tried to convince him that such social segregation, in this faraway country, was not a good idea. This caused some friction between us, but he continued to push for it in Hungarian circles and managed to convince others that they should establish a “casino” for men. So, we gathered once a month at a restaurant, drinking wine while discussing the latest events. The women did not oppose this get-away, feeling that the men needed

time on their own. Later, these evenings began with presentations. Our casino remained active for decades and eventually included dances and wine-tasting excursions.

Spiritual Father Francis Forró reminded us that, between the calmer civilian life and its amusements, Hungarian community life should not consist only of dance balls and gatherings. It was time to think about our inevitable old age. He therefore began to promote the plan for the creation of a Hungarian



1 Symonds Rd Dean Park NSW 2761
(The author and his wife spent the last years of their lives here)

nursing home. Almost all Sydney Hungarians agreed with Father Forró, and the growing collections showed that the building of St. Elisabeth of the Árpád Dynasty Home was imminent. In this work, the Catholic Church and the state also supported us, and eventually, under the patronage of St. Elisabeth, the Old Age Home for Hungarians in Blacktown became the pride of the Hungarian colony.

Concern was also raised about the need for a Hungarian cemetery. If we could not lay our heads down in our ancient land, at least we could rest among our fellow refugees. Father Forró arranged for a Catholic section of Rookwood Cemetery to provide space for a Hungarian burial ground. Among the first to be laid to rest there was George Barcza and his family; he had been consul to the Vatican and London. This is also where our sons' friend, Peter Göllner, was buried. We too purchased a plot for ourselves.



Heroes Cross

My friends and I proposed to Father Forró that we erect a large cross in the

cemetery to serve as a heroic Hungarian memorial. This proposal was accepted, and very soon we had a Heroes' Cross. Since then, each year on Heroes' Day, people gather around the cross to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of their brothers.

The leaders of the Sydney Hungarian colony liked to point out that we represented the national emigration. They were right in the sense that we kept alive the spirit of a Christian National Hungary. But this emigration was not held together by a political force such as Rákóczi or Kossuth. In both cases, those men had been leading figures of great political exiles, accompanied by a framework with which to work abroad. Our migration was politically motivated, but we individually built our lives overseas, while the leading figures responsible for the fate of the country ignored us. In fact, we were regarded as enemies who had left after a lost war. While it is true that the Western countries soon turned against their ally, the Soviet Union—our enemy—we therefore had an understanding with each other. This is how Hungarian migrants became propagandists for the nation's desire for freedom.

Hungarians scattered across the continents of America and Australia lived individual lives. They were connected by the Hungarian language and culture. Through their entertainment, they tried to stay together, but the future was ultimately the responsibility of each individual.

The Sydney Hungarian community had its leading figures, diligent workers, entrepreneurs, and parents who sacrificed much for the Hungarian upbringing of their children. As in any community, there were also misguided individuals, and Sydney's Hungarians did not lack criminals. There was the shocking fate of three young Hungarians who, after a failed blackmail attempt, committed murder and received life sentences. Sydney's Hungarian Jews also lamented when Baranyai Bradley committed a kidnapping that culminated in the murder of a child. Despite pleas from his suffering wife—who recounted their experiences of imprisonment and

deportation during the Second World War—his sentence was not subject to appeal. Bradley eventually died in prison.

Nevertheless, the Hungarian colony as a whole strengthened financially through diligent work. Hungarian national dance groups emerged, and associations grew in strength.

I joined the Hungarian Veterans' Community, in addition to the Catholic Church's action group, and I also entered the Hungarian Gendarmes' Fraternal Movement. Twice I was invited to deliver the keynote speech before the gathered gendarmes on Gendarmerie Day, the anniversary of the founding of the gendarmerie.

The text of one of these speeches I quote, because I feel it captures the psychology of the exiles on this commemoration day:

"We are looking back to a quarter of a century in the past. Many times, we feel that the fog in the Carpathian Mountains, the images of the Danube and Tisza, are blurred; imagination can no longer recall the swaying cornfields, no longer hear the horn, and passing peace spins its web around the Hungarian soul.

And then you turn on the television or the radio, and you hear the tune "There is just one little girl in the world" or rise to the Rákóczi March, which sets your blood boiling again—and you are home. You are collecting knapweed in the meadow, or the snow is crunching under your feet,



Hungarian folk dancers



Knapweed

and sobbing you ask: Will there be a spring? Will greenery burst from the dry branch? Is there still meaning in this struggle?

You can see the land you left. The wind screeches over Késmárk and the edge of the Hungarian plain, and you feel that you have been there—that your place should be with your companions who sleep in the sacred soil of eternal dreams. Heroic monuments do not preserve their memories, but the majesty of the mountains, the blossoming trees, and the verdant splendour of the fields forever proclaim that they did what was required by their homeland.

And we, whose lives destiny has spun out of control, nag our conscience. Did we have the right to live—to leave the country and its people in their most difficult times?

Then comes to mind the harrowing second hymn, in all its beauty. Its words, so rarely heard in our gatherings, are perhaps guilty in our conscience, but they are ineradicably in our blood: “Here you live and here you die!”

Self-tormented by remorse almost from the start of our immigration, Sándor Márai cried out with a loud voice: “We are dust and ashes.” Oh, how many times have we recalled the Hungarian president’s admonition: “Better to be an instant hero than a slave for life.” Now we know what this sentence means.

The accents have fallen from your names. You read Toldi to your child, and he replies simply: “OK.” The boss counted the accepted, and now I understand the wandering Jew.

Many were driven to madness by fate and were freed by death. There were those who could not bear it any longer, and forgetting their principles and beliefs, went home to drown in the Hungarian Sea.

And we, who with clenched teeth still stand waiting on faraway shores, who dream of the past and look back at our almost lost Hungarian souls, repeatedly ask: Is there still meaning in this struggle? Was there a point to this decision? Startled, we think

back to the moment when the trace of our boots' imprint was slowly covered by snow and the landscape disappeared into the winter fog.

We looked for excuses, and we found plenty. After all, we thought it would be only a short time away. We wanted to believe that we could once again stand in battle array and, in fire and blood, be reunited in the great liberation rhapsody of our country. Then we felt that we could be representative diplomats for our oppressed countrymen before the world at large.

We turned the yellowed pages of Hungarian history. Together with King Béla, we fled the Mongol hordes so we could again be settlers. We bowed and scraped at the Viennese Court, curtsied before the throne of the Holy Roman Emperor, scuffled in the court of the most noble Prince of Paris for daily survival, and found peace in Rodostó (Tekirdağ, Turkey) with our former enemy's grace, listening to the murmur of the sea. And then we followed Kossuth, believing his fiery voice would rejuvenate the nation when we heard the song: "We all have to go." We spoke with him before the Washington Senators on Capitol Hill, we advocated with him in London. But it did not end in Turin's humble hermit's home. Now the history of thousands of exiles is filled with struggle, organisation, speeches, writings, and explanations—and always the listeners, the same nonchalant Westerners, do not understand our grief, nor do they know whom to criticise or whom to hate.

This grim, blood-soaked Hungarian history fills us all with hope. A nation whose sons and daughters are willing to give their lives cannot die.

In this life, the exiled Hungarians are involved. To give your life is not only to expose your bosom to the machine gun or to step onto the gallows with a contemptuous smile under the Hungarian cross. You can also give your life by accepting slavery and fulfilling your duty in all circumstances.

At home, hundreds of thousands bow their heads, kicked by the servants of foreign rulers, yet they pray through muttered curses. Scattered across the world, perhaps we also fulfil our duty by the example of our lives—testifying to the Hungarian spirit by conscientiously and honestly working, while invalidating the slanders and filth that our enemies throw at us.

And we may not even be able to lift ourselves from the inferno of malaise except by teaching our children, as at home, to be the future young soldiers who may one day turn against the oppressor.

We must also face the fact that the second and third generations will fall into foreign Nirvana, and only one or two generations will retain their names on the crosses of world cemeteries. Yes, we must face this as well. We must know that our generation has been tested and nailed to the gates of time. We and our families belong to that countless, awful, long list of casualties.

This great self-sacrifice is the key to resurrection. This nation has never compromised with the Germans or the Russians, but has followed Rákóczi and Kossuth—men and women who accepted death, imprisonment, and exile.

And now I call Lajos Kossuth, beloved of the people, as a witness. A hundred years ago he said:

“My nation cannot die under the suffering it has endured. The Hungarian question has historical foundations; there is a legal basis, there are geographic, demographic, political, and arithmetic realities tied to the issue of Europe’s freedom—Europe’s balance of power with its related interests. This is included in the logic of world history. This cry can be curbed for a short time, but the question cannot be deleted from the account book of events. This question will demand an answer to Europe’s space-related issues as long as justice under the law is addressed, because the nation itself cannot abdicate it.”

This is what I and the whole Hungarian emigration believed. Whatever feuds, trials, and bitter lives without a real home—scattered at the ends of the earth—most of us, as patriots, accepted the grief and heavy burden of honest livelihood. We trod misery in many ways, strangers among strangers. Yet this thinking always and everywhere held us together—whether as friends or as enemies. We agreed that Hungarian emigration requires unwavering patriotic activity as a sacred duty.

We should be a living protest against the treatment of Hungary before God and the world.

We should speak on behalf of the condemned, silenced, shackled nation.

We should wave the flag, which nameless half-gods with strong arms and love of country carried with glory, and whose fall caused consternation among the peoples of the world.

We should strive to keep the Hungarian question—requiring a solution for moral world order—on the agenda of history, ruled by eternal truth and law.

We should, with unflagging encouragement through our actions, assist the process at home so that the nation does not lose heart in its suffering, and so that Hungary follows its natural aspirations and finds its connection to world events.

I cannot say that the Hungarian emigration's "home life" was completely free from dishonourable qualities, which can always be found in history everywhere and at all times. We are human, fallible beings. These miscreants of society were called by the name of the nation of exiles and gave the rest a bad name. But their actions left only a fleeting stain on the pages of history. By contrast, the history of Hungarian emigration in service of nationality can be judged as honest and dutiful.

We pray to the Lord that, in future years, history will write similarly about us—much-humbled sons and daughters.

This is what I wanted to tell you tonight, my csendőr (gendarme) comrades, on Gendarmerie Day—an occasion to once again celebrate our sacred homeland and the memories of our difficult journey. After all, perhaps you, more than any of us, who were most foully vilified, have stood your ground, your example of life still shining in this foreign land.

Lift up your heads. Look bravely into the face of fate. You were called to march across the unmarked graves of Verecke, Transylvania, the Hungarian Plain, and Transdanubia, and as defenders of Budapest. But the Hungarian spirit cannot be broken. The gendarme spirit still hovers over the Danube and the Tisza, and someday a new embodied Hungary will be the sign of what it means to be Hungarian—and will burn away the foreign rag.

I consolidate my legal practice 1967 -1972

In Australia, the legal profession is not uniform. There are two branches of the profession. The solicitor branch is directly involved with clients and mainly undertakes commercial matters. In principle, solicitors have the opportunity to represent clients before the courts, but they usually only appear in first-instance matters dealing with civil and criminal lawsuits. Their main area of work lies in property transfers, the settlement of property purchases, and lease matters.

In more important cases, the client's solicitor will turn to a barrister and request a legal opinion, after which the solicitor will institute a civil lawsuit or criminal case for trial. The rule is that a barrister may only accept briefings from a solicitor. This practice was crucial to me because I was not known in legal circles, making it unlikely that solicitors would seek my advice or opinion. Most of the barrister's work was in appearing before courts, requiring rhetorical ability and the talent to argue disputes. In Hungary, I would not have taken this role, but in Australia, I could only play a secondary role, as I had not learned English in earlier years and it was difficult to overcome my foreign pronunciation.

Lawyers usually begin as solicitors and, after five years, may choose to become barristers. When I studied for the barrister-candidacy exams, I did not face this problem. The solicitor-examination committee only accepted candidates who worked in a solicitor's office as clerks, but they were not paid well, and I could not afford such a position while trying to build a new life. I needed all the income I could earn.

When I received my barrister qualification, I was already 52 years old, so the five-year waiting period seemed very long. However, I felt that the die was cast. I thought I would keep my private bookkeeping practice and hoped that this income could be supplemented by working as a barrister to bridge those five years.

As all three of my sons were working, I did not need to support them.

Our First Trip Home

My father was still alive, and the family strongly urged me to return home after more than twenty years of absence. We decided to prepare for an overseas trip and include a family reunion in the program. That year, I had completed ten years with my employer, thereby earning a lump sum called long service leave, and for the last two years, I had not taken my annual leave. It appeared that the cost of the trip was manageable. I resigned on June 30th, 1967. The partners of my employer had anticipated this step, since, after I passed the barrister's qualification, they realised I would want to leave their organisation and commence work in the legal profession.

Those at home wanted to persuade me to return quietly. Even though I was politically right-minded, I was not a politician or military leader, so a visa would likely have been granted by the Hungarian authorities. But the new regime was so offensive to me that I did not want to see their rule closely. I rejected the idea of visiting Hungary. I compromised with Ica: she went ahead and spent four weeks in Hungary. She contacted the family and arranged for them to fly together to Dubrovnik for four weeks, where we could meet.

I started two weeks after Ica's departure, travelling via Hong Kong, Bangkok, Delhi, Istanbul, and Athens before reaching Dubrovnik. Hong Kong was a Chinese-English commercial centre; the business life was fascinating. Everything revolved around buying and selling, and traders constantly tried to convince me to spend money. They did not succeed, as my funds were scarce and I had to budget strictly. The rule of the selling game was that no deal could be forced if the buyer clearly rejected it, and this city left me with pleasant memories.

Bangkok's memories were much worse. Sellers there were quite aggressive, often uncomfortably physical. While waiting in the hotel

lobby for the bus, a staff member thought I was trying to leave without paying. It was an uncomfortable quarter of an hour. I produced my receipt to prove I had done nothing wrong. Luckily, the bus was late, so the incident caused no major damage.

India also left me with unpleasant memories. The Taj Mahal was beautiful, and New Delhi had many interesting monuments and historic buildings, but I was embittered by my stay. An Indian con man would not accept “no” and constantly tried to extort large sums for his alleged services. I was relieved when the plane rose into the air and left India behind.

I was primarily attracted to Istanbul for its connection to Hungarian history. The Yedikule was the palace of the Sultans during the Ottoman occupation, and it signified, in my memory, the great tragedy of our country. In the Treasury of the Sultan’s Palace, I was drawn to a couple of Hungarian-Turkish swords. The captured Hungarian swords bore the golden Holy Crown on their hilts.



Jedikule

I wanted to make a pilgrimage to Rodostó (Tekirdağ), since we exiles felt a special warmth toward the fate of Prince Francis II Rákóczi and his entourage. But this plan failed. I had only three days in Turkey, and the train journey would have taken two to three days. I attempted to rent a car, but operators only offered luxury vehicles, which were financially impossible.



The Pantheon, Greece

I greatly enjoyed Athens. The great storehouse of Greek antiquities, including the radiant beauty of the Parthenon,

impressed me deeply. More than once, I made a pilgrimage to this striking building. I swam in the Mediterranean and enjoyed the quiet, lukewarm, shark-free sea—so different from the Pacific surf of Australia.

Ica and I happily embraced in Dubrovnik. Interestingly, both of us decided that this would be the last journey we would take separately. “I’m not going to Hungary without you!” said Ica, and I also felt there was little joy in being a lone tourist without someone to share experiences with.

The trip to Hungary meant a great deal to Ica. She wept over the fields and forests, reconnecting with the Hungarian soil, but the alien regime in all its manifestations hurt her deeply. The officials’ roughness, the required reporting to the police, the currency problems—all embittered her stay. It was also sad because she could only visit her parents’ grave. She did, however, spend many hours with her sister Duci and her husband Laci. They understood each other perfectly, as if the twenty-year absence had never occurred. Unfortunately, they could not travel to Dubrovnik, so I did not have the chance to embrace them.

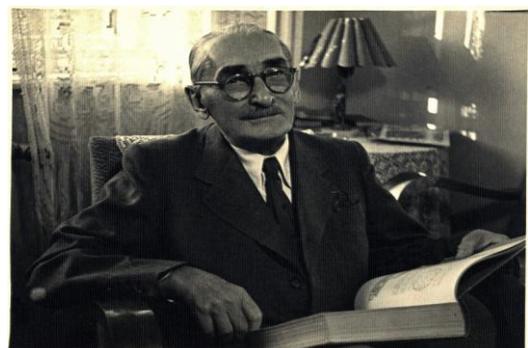
My sister Kata came with her husband Béla and their daughter Katinka, now a young woman, along with her husband and their young



Three Csabai children in



*Csabai children Beci (Béla)
Ildikó and Katinka in 1950's*



Dr. Bela Torok in an earlier

daughter Zsuzsi (Susie). Katinka had been eight years old when I last saw her, and I had to get to know her again. Kata and Béla were unchanged, and we immediately reconnected—it felt as if we had never been apart.

My most traumatic experience was my encounter with my father. When I was young, he was a rowing champion and an athletic man. Even in 1946, at our farewell, my memory was of an ageing man with only grey hair and a slightly bent back. But more than twenty years had passed, and now my father was skin and bone, very bent over, and had become an old man. It was hard to hold back the tears.

Our conversations were comforting. Though he was eighty-six, he was mentally fresh and inquiring about everything. Interestingly, it was not recent events that were blurred, but rather the memories of the past. I made a family film to preserve a memento of this last meeting. We spent two weeks together. The Yugoslav currency at that time was very cheap, so we could enjoy our time together without financial worries.

My father then pulled off the old seal ring from his finger—the ring of Ignatius Török, the martyr of Arad—and handed it to me. I have proudly worn it ever since, but I decided that, after my death, it should be placed in a Hungarian museum.

At this time, our relatives from Vienna, Emil Kiss and his wife Lizi, were also holidaying in Dubrovnik. They usually vacationed there and, with their help, I rented a villa where we stayed. We became very good friends and later visited them at their home in Vienna. Emil had a speedboat, and we enjoyed a couple of runs on it.

Then it was time to say goodbye. Parting from my father, in particular, was very sad, as we knew we would no longer see each other. The separation was more bearable because my father appeared reassured and returned home. We, who were younger, were still full of hope that we might meet again.

Ica and I began to tour the world. After Rome, Venice, and Milan, we arrived in Paris for a longer visit. There I participated in a World

Congress of Accounting. This participation brought me some tax benefits, which we calculated into our costs. We spent a couple of days in London and then, after Amsterdam, flew to West Berlin. I wanted to see this city, where for two years I had had many interesting experiences. Of course, I had to go to East Berlin, since I had lived at the Collegium Hungaricum. We entered the communist world at Friedrichstrasse Station. Ica was again filled with concern when we had to show our passports and the guards examined huge books listing hundreds of thousands of names to check for adverse records. Nothing was wrong, but it was very upsetting to see the guards' rude behaviour and the way they treated the German population.

At that time, East Berlin was still a city of ruins, while West Berlin was prosperous with new buildings. I showed Ica the old streets where I had spent much time wandering. My memories were revived.

We rented a Volkswagen in Cologne and followed the Rhine through Bavaria. We explored the medieval town of Rothenburg, whose buildings had remained untouched by the war. We spent a couple of hours in Nuremberg and then drove to Regensburg, locating the Hohenfels military exercise areas where, in 1945, I had been a prisoner of war for four months. But we could not enter the camp, as it was now a U.S. military base.

Then we drove to Frontenhausen, where our son Andrew was born. We visited our old German hosts in Johannes Schwimmbach, the Kammermeier family. We prayed at the small church in Frontenhausen, giving thanks to the Lord who had helped us through those difficult years.

We travelled through Austria to Vienna, where we enjoyed the hospitality of Emil Kiss at their beautiful villa alongside the Danube River. The small Volkswagen was finally returned to Hertz in Munich. We visited Geneva and walked along the shore of Lake

Geneva before boarding a plane to Nice, where we spent a lovely couple of days.

Madrid was the next stop. There we explored the museums and the wonders of the Royal Palace. We enjoyed the company of an old friend and her husband, who were living in Brazil, and after some coordination it was a great pleasure to spend a couple of days with them.

From there we flew to Lisbon. In Portugal, we were determined to visit Fatima so we could pray for our country. We rented a small car and travelled through the hilly, often deserted Portuguese countryside, meandering toward the shrine.

When we were thirty to forty kilometres from Fatima, we came across hundreds of pilgrims, many walking barefoot. The shrine itself had been magnificently developed since the miraculous apparitions. We walked the Calvary (Stations of the Cross) and found a station dedicated to our Primate, Cardinal Mindszenty. It had been set up by a Hungarian-American community to highlight his martyrdom.



Fatima Portugal

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We flew from Lisbon to New York, which was on our way home. One advantage of living in Australia is that if someone wishes to visit Europe, it becomes an around-the-world trip. However, such a journey is very expensive, and not many can afford it.

In New York, we visited János (John) Baltay. During our bitter exile in Germany, we had come to know each other well, and now we had the chance to renew our old friendship. He and his family kindly welcomed us into their Long Island home, and we talked ourselves hoarse.

From here it was one overnight flight to San Francisco, where we met our old friend Gyurka Demeter, who had become close to us

during the German struggles. Gyurka showed us the sights of Frisco and, after a touching farewell, we said goodbye to each other.

Now we really were on the way home. Our journey was broken by stopovers in the Hawaiian Islands and Fiji, where we spent two days. Fatigued but happy, we landed at Sydney Airport. Our boys warmly welcomed us. It was obvious that they had had enough of the responsibility of looking after our home and missed the loving care of their mother. Our golden spaniel, Digby, danced around us.

The budget was well spent. We had only \$30 left in our pockets when we arrived. It is true that I immediately returned to work—jobs were waiting. Before our trip, I had increased my tempo and finished some accounting work for which payment was still outstanding.

Just before I left, I had been requested by a company selling aluminium to organise their accounts, so on return I contacted them, as they had been awaiting me. Joe Whittaker and Max Gibb were the owners. Their business consisted of agents visiting potential customers, signing them under contract, and then delivering and erecting aluminium sheeting. The cheaper Sydney houses were covered by fibrous cement sheeting, and it became fashionable to cover the walls of these houses with aluminium sheeting, making them tidy and reducing maintenance problems. These sheets imitated wood panelling, had burnt-on colour paint, and protected the building. The “direct sales” method cut out the dealer and was therefore very profitable.

I had some trouble with the agents because they often tricked customers into agreeing to purchases. It was partly my task to control these agents and ensure that customers did not feel cheated. It was also important to build sufficient control over the use of cash, as the partners were inclined to spend more than was available.

Their company head office was in William Street, Sydney, consisting of four rooms. Typists and secretaries all helped with the accounting routine, and I assumed, with the two partners, a

leadership role. At first, we thought they would only need me for a few hours a week, but they asked me to run my accounting practice from their premises. So, from one beautiful room, I managed not only the financial leadership of the aluminium business but also operated my accounting practice and even employed my own assistant. The working hours were not rigid, so I could also visit my private clients.

Within a few months, our family strengthened financially because I earned a larger-than-anticipated bonus. Slowly, we began to think about improvements to our home. I took out a life insurance policy and increased the repayments on our house loan, and soon we were able to live without this burden. We decided to extend the house. We built an additional room that housed a washing machine, clothes dryer, and refrigerator. We also added a rear veranda, which became the favourite part of the house because, in our warm climate, the garden environment was ideal.

The transformation culminated with the completion of a 10 x 4 metre swimming pool, so we “oldies,” who no longer went to the beach, could enjoy swimming most days for five to six months of the year. The young people also enjoyed the pool with great pleasure; they often swam in it or sat on the edge with their friends, dangling their feet in the water.

My son Maxi was now a Chartered Accountant. I encouraged him to gain greater work experience by spending a year in the USA and England. The other two boys were still sitting exams—sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Progress was slow, but we did not worry about them.

I decided in early 1969 that, now financially stronger, I should take new steps in building my legal business. I rented a room in Forbes Chambers and spent an hour or two there in the mornings. My clients were provided by the centre’s clerk. If a barrister was unexpectedly unable to appear in court, he would require a deputy to attend. These substitutions introduced me to court proceedings.

Once or twice a week, I visited the office of a reputable barrister who agreed to introduce me, the novice, to the vagaries of practice. This consisted of studying a current issue with the barrister, who sometimes commissioned me to prepare a submission. My report was then discussed. I learned a great deal. Meanwhile, I did not neglect my accounting practice and continued to manage the administration of the aluminium distribution company. I was busy, but my efforts were financially rewarded.

During this time, we lived in a more relaxed atmosphere, and I had more time to join in the life of the Hungarian colony.

1970 marked the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon. Our community was determined to use this occasion to draw the attention of Australian politicians to this serious injustice, which had contributed to Hungary being drawn to the side of the revisionist powers in the Second World War. We invited hundreds of Australian politicians to a mass rally in one of Sydney's large lecture halls, and I had the honour of explaining in English this Hungarian tragedy. My speech was a great success. We also produced a booklet, which included my speech, with the cover bearing the Hungarian T-Trianon badge we had worn in our youth, in our buttonholes, proclaiming: "No, No, Never!"



Similar efforts were made by Hungarian emigrants all over the world. If there were ever to be a true European peace conference, and if any participating Western politicians were informed, this would be partly due to the Hungarian emigration.

In Sydney, on the occasion of St. Stephen's Millennium, I organised the Free University Lecture Series, commemorating the great king's foundation of our country. The speakers, including myself, were not historians, but we based our discussions on all available historical material and tried to outline the whole picture for the interested public.

So, the years went by, and it was now the third year since I had become a barrister. The idea of working as a solicitor was reinforced in me. The two barristers who had initially worked with me and introduced me to the profession (both later received high-ranking judicial appointments) suggested that I persevere as a barrister. However, I knew I was running out of time to break into this exclusive world, and I wondered how I could work as a solicitor while still maintaining my accounting practice and income.

I had a good relationship with a Hungarian Jewish solicitor who had qualified around the same time as I. He was in a better position than I was because he had been employed in a solicitor's office while studying and was able to open his own practice upon completing his course. He was satisfied with the clientele he had established and encouraged me to switch to a solicitor's practice. We also discussed the possibility of forming a partnership. This made good business sense, as it meant being available to both the Christian and Jewish communities.

The need to concentrate completely on the legal practice demanded dismantling my private accounting practice. An opportunity presented itself at this time. My son Maxi returned from his overseas study trip and was ready to take over my affairs.

Another good friend, Otmár Majsay, previously an army staff captain, was a public accountant. His rental lease had expired and he was looking for new premises. I suggested that he consider a vacancy in the building where the aluminium company had its offices. This is what happened. Soon after, I entered into a partnership with Otmár. At that time, we traded as Majsay-Török. My work was gradually handed over to my son. Otmár's son, Szabolcs, an accountancy student, worked with his father. There was also discussion that my solicitor friend, F. King (an anglicised name), should take an office on another floor of this large building.

The final negotiations stalled, and conflicts arose between the partners. I decided it would be wiser not to force the issue.

Both the aluminium company and Majsay's practice moved from the William Street offices, and the Török–Majsay combination ceased. My son became the chief accountant and bookkeeper of the aluminium company and took over my accounting practice.

This was the time to apply for a position as a solicitor. I was now only one and a half years away from being able to transfer from a barrister's office to a solicitor's practice. I advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald, and just a few hours after the advertisement appeared, I received a call from a solicitor's office. Lew Hubbard, a junior partner of a legal firm, was looking for help to work beside him. His vision was to receive assistance in the courts.

My barrister's practice counted for a lot with them, and therefore we quickly reached an agreement. The company, CR Potts and Co., was more concerned with trade issues, and it seemed to me this would be a beneficial relationship where I could practise my solicitor's assignments.

Lew left the company in less than a year. At that time, I began to be considered a full staff member and took over all of Lew's clients. Potts, the senior partner, particularly valued my contribution, as more and more of the Hungarian community came to our company—obviously because they could discuss their cases with me in Hungarian.

At this time, my son Béla returned from an overseas trip. He progressed ably in his legal studies, and our company employed him as a legal understudy.

The Hungarian colony made great efforts to create a Hungarian House, which would serve large national gatherings and become the main meeting place of the Hungarian community in Sydney.

My friend Ervin Altorjay was one of the most ardent advocates of this idea, with the help of another good friend, Dénes (Dennis) Osetzky. We pondered for months over what kind of premises would best suit our objectives, while donated monies were collected. The amount received from the sale of the Newtown house

was not enough to buy a larger property. In Punchbowl, we finally found a house that seemed suitable for our purposes. Dennis insisted that we should not rush into things until the building was inspected to ensure it was suitable for musical events. I was involved with the financial and legal issues. Unfortunately, I was forced to conclude that the Sydney colony could not raise enough capital to seriously consider taking possession of the Punchbowl premises.

Eventually, I changed my mind and accepted that it would be best to complete the purchase. I based this decision on the assumption that once the community saw the building was suitable, they would be willing to make greater efforts to raise the funds needed to start the Hungarian club.

Unfortunately, the Hungarian community's numbers were not large enough to provide sufficient working capital. The Hungarian House, therefore, could never fully fulfil its intended goals. Over time, more and more rooms were leased out to other tenants, and Hungarian community gatherings were often held at other rented venues.

Contributing to this was the fact that the second generation of emigrants had assimilated into Australian life, and the shabby Hungarian House was not appealing to them.

At this time, I wrote a small booklet called *Teleki Pál Tragedy*. Pál (Paul) Teleki (Prime Minister, 1939–1941) was my father's good friend; they spoke often, and my father revealed his thoughts and words to me. What particularly disturbed me was that more and more groups began to monopolise a way of describing the history surrounding him, which was obviously against his spirit.



**Teleki Pál Tragedy –
National Széchényi
Library**

My study attempted to demonstrate that his tragic suicide was not a political protest. It was probably due to serious family reasons—his wife lay gravely ill in hospital—and this was the final pressure on his fragile nervous system to give up the fight.

I pointed out that Hungary had not concluded an alliance against Yugoslavia, had not breached its contract, and had, embarrassingly, tried—while suffering much provocation—to make only minimal claims after the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Teleki was cautious and conservative. He protested against regarding the Yugoslav turnaround as a *casus belli* (“an act or event that provokes or is used to justify war”) and did not want to participate in the German action. He argued that Hungary would be regarded as defaulting if, out of cowardice, we failed to inform Hitler that the sovereign Hungarian state did not want to be part of the German reprisal campaign. Moral reasons kept us away from military acts until the Yugoslav government made a move against Hungary or the Yugoslav state collapsed. In this debate, these words were later used to interpret his farewell suicide letter, but they were against participation in the German campaign and in no way related to the steps taken by Pál Teleki and László Bárdossy.

I also addressed the fact that, on the eve of the German attack, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression agreement with the new anti-German Yugoslav government. This was the first major sign that the German–Russian confrontation lay ahead. It is not impossible that this news influenced Teleki’s spiritual world, as it meant that Hungary would sooner or later drift into war. Teleki always hoped that the country would not act against the imperial powers and that Hungary could solve its revisionist grievances independently through its “Transylvania” policy.

I saw Pál (Paul) Teleki’s tragedy in that his foreign policy was based on the proposition that, at the end of the war, Great Britain would follow the classical British policy of ensuring a balance of

power on the European continent, where no one would be allowed to dominate and become master of Europe.

From the end of World War II, England played an insignificant role in Europe. Military and political leadership increasingly came from two non-European powers: The United States and the Soviet Union. Their alliance resulted in the division and sharing of Europe.

My study was a great success. Several émigré newspapers discussed it, and even years later the Széchenyi Library requested a copy. The editor carefully noted that my work reflected new aspects not previously raised.

I was very surprised to receive a negative observation from a Jewish author. They sent me a study by Nathaniel Katzburg titled Introduction: Paul Teleki and the Jewish Question in Hungary. In this work, Teleki is portrayed as a prominent Hungarian anti-Semite. The study highlighted Teleki's English letter addressed to John A. Keyser, then a competent draftsman in Hungarian affairs at the English Foreign Office. This surprised me. Knowing this letter of Paul Teleki, I did not understand how he could be accused of anti-Semitism. In the letter, Teleki examined the Jewish problem in Hungary. His tone was moderate, and I believe he showed anticipative insights.

Between the two world wars, and in ordinary life, there had been a great debate as to whether Jews were a religion or a race. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Jews were a scattered nation. For centuries they had found refuge in liberal Eastern Europe, where racial conflicts did not occur. Polish and Russian Jews in the ghettos preserved their natural features and kept the faith of their ancestors. The problem became a European issue again when the dispersal of Jews from the east resulted in immigration toward the west. The tide of immigration into Hungary also assumed such proportions that it created a defensive reaction among the population. Similar frictions occurred elsewhere due to forced migration in the Far East, with Indian and Chinese migrants—

comparable to the arrival of Eastern European Jewry into Poland, Hungary, Austria, and Germany.

Yet assimilation, which had begun particularly in Western Europe and England, was almost complete. In Hungary, Hungarian Jewry conformed to the existing lifestyle, with many becoming prominent lawyers, journalists, and traders. Nonetheless, it was also a fact that Judaism, comprising approximately eight percent of the population, occupied sixty to seventy percent of the professional vocations, to the detriment of the Hungarian middle class. Pál Teleki supported the numerus clausus laws (methods used to limit the number of students who may study at a university, similar to affirmative action). Ultimately, he sought only to reduce Jewish participation to twenty percent. This was not excessive and certainly not based on racial discrimination. The nature of the Jewish people later gave rise to the Jewish state of Israel, created to preserve this ancient nation from disappearing through western assimilation.

My study also discussed correspondence between the British Foreign Office and the British Ambassador to Budapest, where Geoffrey Knox admitted that Teleki's resolution was correct. However, he typically wrote that Hungarian anti-Semitism was similar to that in Prussia, and that neither nation was clever enough to outperform the Jews. I wonder who, in fact, was promoting racial superiority.

At that time, our Catholic parish experienced a sad case that stalled its progress, even though the parish had been the force holding together the Hungarians in Sydney. I became involved in the case as a lawyer. A wayward pastor erred and had a relationship with a married woman in the parish. When the husband became aware of the rumours, he decided to uncover the truth. At that time in Australia, divorce was difficult to obtain; proof of serious wrongdoing was required. Proof of adultery was necessary to protect the rights of the innocent party. An entire industry had emerged with private detective agencies specialising in legally or

illegally entering private homes to catch sinners. Photographs were usually taken in compromising positions.

The husband hired such a company for confirmation. The resulting photographic evidence revealed the devastating reality. He showed the photographs to the errant priest, Father X (name withheld), who, in his confusion, asked that no steps be taken until he had discussed the matter with his superiors.

And this is what happened. The church ministers, concerned with the problem, investigated and decided that the pastor must leave Australia. They asked the husband, in collaboration with ecclesiastical authorities, to obtain a divorce quietly and swiftly, without causing further damage through media publicity.

Father X asked that I handle the matter. At that time, I was still practising law with CR Potts and Company. I undertook to conduct the case discreetly. Father X was very relieved when he learned that I would manage it. As he was leaving Australia, his last words to me expressed the hope that, with the cooperation of the ecclesiastical authorities, this unpleasant matter would be resolved quickly and unobtrusively.

It was not too difficult. The Catholic Church authorities designated a reputable Catholic law firm to represent the defendant, and the judge selected was informed of the delicate nature of the evidence. With full cooperation and approval of the aggrieved party, the court held that the divorce would be effective within seven days.

But the real crisis had only just begun. It was widely known that there was not total unity between Father X and the spiritual fathers of his monastic order. Father X was a secular priest, and many believed his vocation was partly shaped by the unfortunate post-war loss when, under the guidance of Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary, Catholicism was at the forefront of national resistance.

Father X was the child of a simple peasant family. He had worked from a very young age for Catholic Youth, but as a young soldier he had handled a weapon and finally returned home from the west.

Then he began his theological training. His vocation was dominated by Hungarian aspects compared to other spiritual trainees, and some thought this was overdone.

This led to friction among our pastors. There were members of the congregation who did not want to believe that the pastor in question had been so severely misguided. They thought perhaps Father X had faltered due to a conspiracy among fellow priests.

In the spirit of attorney-client privilege, I could not reveal the full story, but I tried to clarify the situation before the ecclesiastical authorities. On one occasion, I spent a long time in conversation with the bishop in charge of immigrants. Alas, to no avail. Father X became increasingly isolated. Finally, he sought solace in alcohol, and his health gradually worsened. When he ended his own life, the shock washed away previous conflicts. Nonetheless, this serious tragedy strongly indicated that the parish could no longer fulfil its role as effectively as it had during the previous two decades.

Meanwhile, the boys began to leave the family nest, as is natural. They started courting, and we hoped their eyes would rest on young Hungarian girls, so that perhaps the second generation would produce Hungarian marriages to help maintain our Hungarian connection.

The second generation, however, spoke only “kitchen Hungarian.” They used English in everyday life as a result of assimilation. Common origin alone does not guarantee maintaining ties to Hungary.

When our son Maxi began his overseas trip, we advised him to go to the U.S., England, and Hungary, in the hope that he might find himself a partner. Even my nephew, Dr. Mario Falcione, thought so too, because he had a young daughter, Debby. He wanted to bring them together, ignoring even the second-cousin relationship. The two youngsters regarded themselves as relatives, and nothing eventuated.

Maxi courted a young Irish girl at home. So great was the love between them that it was impossible to protest or erect barriers against their plans. The girl's parents were hardworking people who had raised seven children to university level, so we could not have any complaints against them either. The marriage was held in 1970. The Mass was celebrated by one of the girl's uncles, an Irish priest, together with our pastor, Father Forró.

Maureen and Maxi's marriage was a success. In 1972, Kathryn was born. For several years she was the first grandchild and became Ica's favourite. As I write, the little one is appearing as a debutante. This marriage has since been blessed with six other children.

The second to fly the coop was Andrew. He changed jobs and worked in the administration of a large hospital. There he met Noni, who worked as a nurse in pathology. Noni was of mixed Anglo-Irish roots. Her father was a real estate agent, and the wealthy Catholic family lived in one of Sydney's best suburbs. Andrew and Noni had a beautiful wedding and soon they gave us four grandchildren.

My son Béla still lived a free life. He was courting a Hungarian girl, and we very much hoped they would marry, but she broke up with him.

I Become Independent 1973-1981

During 1972, even though I was not a partner of CR Potts and Company, I believed that I had produced about 30 percent of the firm's income. I thought it would be appropriate for the firm to acknowledge this contribution with a win-win partnership agreement.

However, there were significant hurdles. The company was led by a father and son, and they had recently experienced an unpleasant dispute with a former partner. As a result, they disliked the idea of admitting a stranger into partnership and reintroducing the concept of expanding the family business. They also rejected my proposal to bring my son Béla into the company once he had completed his exams and acquired his solicitor's qualifications. For these reasons, the negotiations became deadlocked. Thus, I began to think seriously about becoming independent.

In Greater Sydney, each major suburb had solicitor practices, and larger city firms were also trying to establish branches in these centres to increase turnover. We had been living in Burwood since 1963 and had seen that this suburb was at the centre of great expansion. We thought that if we founded a law firm there, it would be capable of growth. Burwood also seemed advantageous as it was the geographic centre of the metropolis, and clients could fairly quickly access the office from anywhere. As I was expecting mainly Hungarian clients, this was quite important. It was also convenient that our home was in Burwood, saving me at least an hour a day in travel time.

The big question was how much courage was needed to start a new business at nearly 60 years of age, when most people were preparing for retirement. I thought that with the help of my son I could establish the business within a couple of years and then work toward an orderly retirement.

Béla willingly volunteered to finish law school and later become my partner in the business. In his younger days, he had been more interested in physics and the natural sciences, but he could not commit himself to any direction. Later he frankly admitted that, in his rather frivolous youth, he was only interested in golf and motor cars.

So, when he turned again to the legal profession, he was pleased to have my guidance in gaining his qualifications. In time, he learned to love the legal work.

Against this background, I left the company. I found that they regretted not being more flexible in the negotiations, but the die had been cast. I rented a room in the centre of Burwood, in the National Bank building, and ordered the necessary office equipment—furniture, typewriters, and so forth.

So now, at almost 60 years of age, I started again as a lawyer. I was tormented by fears of whether there would be enough clients to maintain an independent office, but these fears proved unfounded. Old clients, who had visited me at CR Potts and Company and had been pleased with my work, committed themselves to my new practice. I could not complain. In fact, my life became easier because I reached my office after a five-minute walk and could spend my evening hours undisturbed.

In this relatively freer and lighter atmosphere, I undertook to write a Hungarian historical study that had long been in my thoughts. I had realised that Hungarian history had often been taught almost entirely within a legal framework, neglecting the history of social policy and foreign policy. This crystallised in my mind. I believed that Ödön Málnási had written about Hungarian social history in his work *The Hungarian Nation's Honest Story*, but this book had been greatly challenged.

Perhaps it is understandable that, in exile, I meditated on geopolitical and foreign policies in light of the lost Second World War. After many years of research and reflection, I eventually

completed my study entitled Turkish Dominion, German Rule and Russian Occupation.

In this paper, I confronted the fact that the thousand years of Hungarian statehood was never in dispute, but was certainly questionable when one considers that, after the Battle of Mohács, the country was divided between the Ottoman sultanate and the Habsburg Germanic powers. It was also true that, during Germany's command of Hungary, the emperor's power was sovereign in the areas under the Hungarian Crown.

Transylvania ultimately became part of the Ottoman sphere, gaining more freedom during the declining years of the empire.

After the fall of Turkish power, the country ostensibly returned to being a European Christian community. This obscured the reality that the German emperors used military law to govern the fate of Hungarians. Against this arose our best leaders, in the persons of Rákóczi and Kossuth. The compromise formulated by Ferenc Deák was the first sign that the political will of the German imperialist Habsburg family was ready to relinquish its role, as Prussia was building the Second German Empire. This compromise gave Hungarian statesmen the right of administration in the dual monarchy which, after fifty years, resulted in a truncated independent Hungary following the First World War.

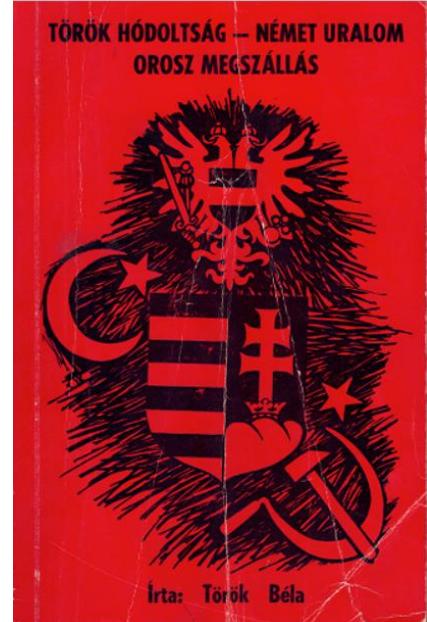
However, South-East Europe was unable to maintain its independence. As the sleeping giants of the Russian Empire—later the Soviet Union—and the German Empire—later national socialist—engaged in Caesar-style mania and again threatened our country, Hungary became a battlefield. Russian suppression and occupation began in the second half of the twentieth century.

Of course, I could not resist the urge to address this oppressive, genocidal Russian occupation and the problems of world migration. My thoughts were captured in my publication *Útkeresés* (Search for the Road).

At this time, I could see that none of the world powers presiding over a divided Europe wanted the birth of a new Europe. However, I believed that the rebirth of a spirit of Christian Europe could reverse our fate.

This book (later renamed *Török Hódoltság – Német Uralom – Orosz Megszállás*, written in Hungarian) was self-published in 1974. On page 159, these issues were discussed. The book business is not profitable in exile. In practice, the writer usually incurs a loss. Potential readers were scattered around the world, shipping costs were considerable, and the rights of the author against the bookseller were scarcely defensible, as the cost of international litigation was prohibitively high. My book was limited to 1,000 copies because of the printing costs I had to bear. Despite the release of such a small number of copies, they were all sold, and I received many encouraging reviews.

A Hungarian publisher in Switzerland proposed that my book be published in multiple languages. When the negotiations became serious, however, the publisher wanted to modify certain details. They asked me to change the account of the nation's struggles and fighting after October 15th, 1944. I could not agree to this. I was aware that the country was controlled by a puppet government aligned with the German Axis against both the communist east and the west, but I was proud that in eastern and south-eastern Europe only we Hungarians, and the Croats—just as in the battles against the Turks—were the ones who did not give up. The heroic defence of Budapest, I felt, could be taught in Hungarian history books as a new legend for future generations.



**Turkish Subjugation -
German Rule-Russian
Invasion**

The book did not receive much publicity—although the Széchényi National Library also sought a copy—so it is now difficult to obtain. It is therefore not superfluous if I quote one or two points that might illuminate my philosophy on history, which also considers the position of world emigration.

From the foreword:

“It has been half a thousand years since the independent Hungarian state was broken up after the upheaval of the Battle of Mohács. The history of the five centuries that followed was essentially the nation’s fight for freedom and the independence of the state’s sovereignty. The country lived sometimes torn in two, then three parts, or completely under foreign domination.

While in opposition to the House of Habsburg, we increasingly saw the essence of our history in the fight for our constitutional rights. The constant injuries and the fight against the oppressors gave our public story a certain legal framework and contributed to the illusion of national being. But today, when the Hungarian government’s restoration of its sovereignty is almost entirely dependent on external factors, it is useful and necessary to revise the approach to our country’s history by recognising our nation’s history and formulating a framework in light of the world political situation.”

From the chapter Searching for a Way, in which I sought a path out of Russian occupation:

“Today significant changes have occurred in world politics; the quarter-century-old Yalta world order has been replaced by a peace created by the world, shared by the occupying powers in the age of nuclear terror. Hungary is part of Europe—the Carpathian Basin was for thousands of years the nations’ highway and the scene of strategic decisions. From the Western European point of view, the Danube Valley was the ancient ‘troop way’ along which the German emperor’s army marched in the wake of Drang nach Osten (thrust toward the East), and from its banks drank the Turkish sultan’s army heading toward Vienna. From Vienna, Prince Eugene of Savoy’s troops pressed

forward to free Buda, and the armies of German, Italian, Spanish, and French soldiers' international efforts held back the Turkish Empire.

Today there are no border conflicts between the Western European nations. Germany was the only country in Western Europe with unresolved boundary conditions with the east. Thus the German forces could significantly influence our situation. In 1945 the German Empire ceased, and the Germans suffered an eerily similar situation to Hungary after the Mohács defeat. The Germans were torn into three states.

The Adenauer plans that believed in an American salvation failed, and it seems that only a united Europe would have the strength to force the Soviet Union to retreat.

Therefore, I believe that the emigrants should focus their attention on Cold War anti-communist sentiment so that we can aid restoration when Germanic and Latin European integration occurs."

I even suggested the possible reconciliation with the Russian Empire, expressing it this way:

"It may eventuate that a compromise becomes possible. In the event of national revolutions in Russia or a Chinese-Russian war adversely affecting Moscow's prestige, they would certainly need to ensure that their western borders were protected. In such an eventuality, the exiles should be prepared and formulate new 'Easter Points' (Austro-Hungarian Compromise).

The situation may change in the wake of political events, and it would be damaging to set up dogmatic terms. Basically, we can conclude that, for actual reconciliation, it is a prerequisite that Hungarian sovereignty be restored. Military occupation would not be acceptable even if allied Soviet troops remained in the country. The country's working people should have the right to freely choose their leaders, elect representatives, and formulate their internal political and economic systems. A prerequisite for reconciliation is that the relationship between Hungary and the brother Danube nations be

allowed in a spirit of friendship, and that the territorial and economic subjugation of Trianon be eliminated.

Hungary could reassure the Russian Empire that we would not become a potential springboard for Western imperialism. The Hungarians are fighting for their lives, and bleeding for foreigners is not in our interest.

Finally, Hungarian freedom of religious life would mean that the country cannot and will not break away from Christian Western civilisation.”

I also explained my views about the Carpathian Basin State Alliance, thereby ending my work:

“The Hungarians were the Carpathian Basin’s centrally settled people, numerically the most populous and the first among equals. It follows that the centre of such a union can only be Budapest. Within the finalised borders, the freely developing Hungarians can begin peaceful development and, through their biological strength, achieve the nation’s renaissance and political integrity.”

The year was 1974—a significant year for the emigration, because that year we were visited by Archbishop Cardinal József Mindszenty, the spiritual leader and father of the Hungarian emigration. Large masses of Hungarians welcomed the chief priest, and there were touching scenes between the leading pastor and the faithful. In fact, this applied even to those outside the church. St. Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, was where the cardinal celebrated Mass, and the faithful, with much emotion, filed down the aisle to receive the Lord’s body from the high priest’s hand.

As I proceeded towards the altar, I saw coming towards me my dear friend, Peter Bod, who came from a very old Transylvanian family whose ancestors included a famous Calvinist pastor, a prominent figure in Hungarian Protestantism. Peter and his family lived in accordance with the spirit of their ancient traditions. He then pulled me aside and whispered: “Béla, I trust I did not commit a great sin that, by being a Protestant, I accepted the wafer from the

cardinal's hand?" His words truly touched me. His behaviour demonstrated the charismatic force that shone from the cardinal.

Many exiled Hungarian Protestant pastors were thinking the same way as my friend Peter. Another good friend of mine, Peter Kemény, a Lutheran minister, attended a welcoming reception and concelebrated an ecumenical service with the archbishop.



**Cardinal meeting
Kalándy family**

The Cardinal's visit to Sydney was well organised by the Hungarian colony.

Former gendarmes acted as security guards for the archbishop. My friend István (Stephen) Jani was one of the organisers, together with his wife, György, who was the Cardinal's goddaughter. Pista (Steve) gave the cardinal a copy of my book, which, according to Pista, the cardinal read during the many unavoidable waiting times at the events he attended.

When the archbishop received me in an audience, he discussed parts of my book in great detail. Interestingly, the part he criticised was my evaluation of László Rajk's behaviour, which he judged to be too lenient. He pointed out that Rajk was one of those who led the campaign for the annulment of religious schools. The holy prelate did not consider it appropriate for the diaspora to visit Hungary, as he believed it would help the existing regime, which he said refused to acknowledge the nation's thousand years of history and supported the enemy.

When we said goodbye, he invited me to visit him in Vienna. At that time, we were planning another overseas trip and Vienna



Mariazell Church-tomb of Cardinal Mindszenty

was included in our program. Unfortunately, I could only pay tribute to him at his tomb in the Mariazell church, because by then he had passed away.

That same year, our son Béla also flew out of the family nest. He met an attractive girl who had recently arrived from the island of Mauritius. Mary Ann's family was of French-Irish descent. Of course, we would have preferred if he had chosen a daughter of Hungarian origin, but somehow Mary Ann's education seemed very similar to what we had experienced in the old Hungarian system, so perhaps she was spiritually closer to us than other brides.

Her ancestors on her mother's side had migrated after the French Revolution, fleeing as followers of the *ancien régime*. It was interesting to learn that Mary Ann and her family remained somewhat distant from the ideals of the Corsican Napoleon, despite the fact that modern France had since accepted Napoleon as one of its national heroes. Although they preserved their culture and the French language, theirs was a closed colony living on the island of Mauritius. Thus, a particular dialect emerged, so that when the young brothers visited France, they realised how different their language was from that of their River Seine cousins.

The young couple's wedding was held in November 1974. It was celebrated by Father Pater Fazekas, who had French memories from his time as a Dominican monk in France. Thank the Lord, they had a good marriage and blessed the family with three children.

The firm increased its turnover, and Béla became seriously engaged in the work. He was sitting his final examination, and we planned that he would soon officially become a partner. For me, the question of succession was solved.

Unfortunately, the economic situation took a downturn, and this caused serious difficulties in our lives. For many of our business customers, loans suddenly became scarce. In one example, a customer had almost completed six condominiums but could not

obtain the capital to finish the undertaking. The prospective bank was no longer willing to help.

Another difficulty at that time was that inflation ranged from 10 to 11 percent, yet the banks only offered 6–7 percent interest. Many people were therefore looking for other opportunities at higher rates to maximise their earnings on savings. Applicants came to me to see if I could find capital seekers willing to pay higher interest. The building contractor I mentioned, in desperation, was prepared to pay 15 percent so he could complete the construction.

Of course, I emphasised to them that their money would only rank in second or third position among the mortgages, while the bank held first lien in cases of liquidation.

By March 1975, however, the situation had turned into a crisis. The sale of condominiums had become difficult, and some lenders feared they would suffer capital losses. In such cases, it was easy to blame the counsel, and so I was blamed, bearing the complaints of the dissatisfied. I tried to help by buying a completed unit, thus allowing the disgruntled client to retreat from his debts. My friend Péter Bod was one of those who invested a large sum in this way. He vowed to follow my advice and also took over one of these units to secure his investment return. He kept the unit for only three or four years; it brought rental income and was then sold, tax-free, at almost twice the purchase price. I recovered my purchase price, and all the creditors were repaid for their invested capital.

I had another client who came to me only when her business was already in trouble. Creditors were pressing the construction company, which had failed to complete its condominiums. The lady was a shareholder of the company and wanted to withdraw her stake. She did not believe the company was in serious trouble, but she wanted to discontinue her partnership with the other shareholder family, with whom she could not cooperate for personal reasons.

After a lengthy trial, I succeeded in creating an agreement between the parties. However, I emphasised to my client that this agreement would only be of value if the company successfully survived the economic difficulties, finished the building, and sold the completed dwellings.

Unfortunately, the client proved too optimistic, whereas I saw the situation more realistically, and soon my fears were confirmed. The lenders turned against the company and began formal liquidation. This meant that the agreement between the parties was superseded. The proposed transfer of condominiums from the company to my client lapsed, as the official liquidator did not accept it. Initially, we took proceedings against the liquidator, but I told my client that this would only gain time, and her investment in the venture was obviously lost.

The first half of 1975 was quite exciting in terms of professional experience. Nevertheless, I did not want to give up our planned overseas trip. Preparation took quite a long time, as we had to coordinate with our relatives in Hungary, and cancelling the trip could have caused them hardship.

Mary Ann and Béla undertook to live in our home for the duration of the eight weeks and care for Digby, our little cocker spaniel.

Our first stop was South Africa. When we were planning our migration in 1949, South Africa had been considered, but in the end, we decided that, given the obvious difficulties of their racial problems, we would not submit our application there. At the time we began learning about South Africa for our trip, the situation was tense between the white and black populations, but the opportunity to see Africa's natural beauty and wildlife was one we did not want to miss.

We did not regret that in Johannesburg we shortened our stay. We enjoyed the colourful city life and travelled to Pretoria, the Boer centre, to learn from their history as we roamed.

Our three days at Kruger National Park were unforgettable. While in Sydney, a South African friend had advised us to register for this park tour. It undoubtedly cost more than travelling by bus, but the private park's personal experiences were worth the difference. We were given accommodation in Mala Mala Park, in round native-style huts, with every comfort. During the day, a four-wheel-drive jeep took us into the countryside. Besides the leader, a young black man travelled with us carrying a loaded gun, as there was no guarantee that a wild beast would not turn against an encroaching visitor. An Anglo-African couple were usually our companions. In addition to gazelles, crocodiles, giraffes, zebras, and buffalo, we even captured a leopard on our video camera.

Gordon, our guide, did his best to find elephants, but somehow, they avoided us. However, during a late-night trip we had the opportunity to witness lions feeding in the dark.

At noon we usually ate cold cuts near the car, but in the evening, we returned to our accommodation and enjoyed roast dinners cooked for us around the campfire.

During our stay in South Africa, we were assisted by Nicholas Szigethy, an airline official there. He did everything to make us feel welcome.

In the Soweto neighbourhood on a Sunday morning, we observed various black tribes competing against each other. It was a good opportunity to view South African politics, where tribal rivalries were used as a means of implementing the old controlling policy of Divide and Rule.

From there, our trip headed for Rome. At that time, certain sanctions were in place against the South African Republic, so our flight went via Lisbon, bypassing North Africa, and from there we flew to Rome.

We had visited Rome once in 1967, but the Eternal City is so vast that it would take many months to see all its sights and absorb its beauty.

We visited Tivoli, where our sightseeing was interrupted because, by chance, we met Géza Deák, whom I knew from Szeged. He had been the supervising teacher at the Horthy College. We also became friends with his wife, Eva. We shared a farewell evening at the Forum Hotel's restaurant and vowed to visit them at their home in Florida one day.

Next, we visited Naples, from whence, many years earlier, we had set off towards Australia. We admired Capri again, then spent a few pleasant days in Sorrento and drove along the famous Amalfi Road.

Returning to Rome, the Hertz rental car we had booked was waiting for us to tour Italy. We travelled via the city of St. Francis of Assisi, spending some lovely days in Firenze. We spent a couple of hours in Viareggio, where I remembered that my father had once vacationed, and I had heard much about his experiences there. We toured the shores of Lake Garda, sailed around this beautiful alpine lake, and were sorry to have to move on. After touching Verona and Padua, we arrived in Venice, where we returned our little Fiat car, which had served us faithfully, carrying us without trouble across the whole of Italy.

We felt at home in Venice and made a pilgrimage to the church of St. Gerard. There, Hungarians always referred to the 1896 Hungarian pilgrimage plaque.

We arrived in Vienna after travelling from Venice in a sleeper train. At the station, we were met by my sister Kata and brother-in-law Béla, as well as my friend Imre Juray and his wife, who had also just come out from Hungary with Kata to meet us. We hugged each other with great joy. In Vienna, Emil Kiss was waiting for us, and he had arranged a memorable evening in Grinzing with real Hungarian Gypsies to entertain us.

We were glad that, at this time, János (John) Baltay from the U.S. was also visiting, so again we could spend many hours talking. One day, Duci (Ica's sister) and Laci were almost lost in the heavy rain, but they eventually found us. We spent a lovely two weeks with the family, but then we had to part. The Hungarian relatives returned home, and we visited Zurich and Munich. We also went into the mountains around Garmisch-Partenkirchen.



Grinzing Vienna

The European Express raced us from Munich to Paris. Here again we admired the beautiful sights and attended a show at the Moulin Rouge. The performance was artistic, with semi-nude dancers who could not be regarded as immoral or offensive.

In France, however, we headed further south, where we wished to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. There again we felt the power of miracles in this deprived Europe—the power of the Christian spirit was still alive. When forty thousand people, children of different nationalities, sang the Ave Maria in German, French, or English, it reinforced our belief that there would be a Christian resurrection.

We visited Carcassonne, an almost completely preserved medieval town, where the visitor can imagine stepping back several centuries into the past.



Carcassonne France

Finally, we ended up at Frankfurt am Main airport, and a Lufthansa airplane transported us home.

1975 marked a turning point in the life of our law office. My son Béla, after the required waiting period, was able to enter into partnership with me in the solicitor's practice. Our premises, unfortunately, had to move from the first floor of the National Bank

Burwood Branch (the bank required the space itself). So we had to find new suitable business premises.

My son Maxi was already the aluminium company's financial director. The business was successful. They were looking for a room in Burwood, so it seemed a good solution to jointly hire an entire floor on the main street. This arrangement enabled the attorney's office and the company, Alproud Home Improvements Pty. Ltd., to share the premises and have impressive offices in the heart of Burwood.



Author Béla Torok in his office

The economic crisis did not last long, and the economy gradually recovered. Béla had begun married life in a unit in 1974, but soon it seemed necessary to purchase a house, as they were expecting their first child, and it was better for the child to be raised in a house with a garden than in a first-floor apartment. In Strathfield, a suburb next to Burwood, they bought a nice two-bedroom house, which they furnished tastefully.

My son Maxi also changed house this year. Until then, they had lived in a small house in Concord, but now, financially stronger, they bought a three- to four-bedroom house in Strathfield, which looked like a valuable property. It was also necessary, as their third child was on the way.

Andrew settled in the northern suburbs. It was a nice little house, but they soon moved again. Andrew worked with great diligence, became financially independent, and his turnover enabled him eventually to buy, in the upmarket area of Mosman, a large house with a wide, open view of the ocean.

Their second boy was born. Noni, under difficult circumstances, gave birth to a premature baby who needed the help of breathing apparatus. This treatment caused some damage to little Paul, who

could not walk for a long time and was slow to develop. Ten long years passed before significant progress was made, but now, as I write, he is attending school and progressing nicely. Since then, Noni bravely gave birth to two more children, Amy and Anna, both by caesarean section. They now have four children, bringing much joy to the family.

Of course, we very much wanted the grandchildren to learn Hungarian. However, our efforts failed because of the large distances between the families. We contacted them only occasionally, and we had to recognise the fact that the mothers were not Hungarian and the mother tongue had become English. Thus, I told them about their Hungarian origins, resulting in their using Hungarian words such as “Kezit csókolom” (“kiss good-bye”) after their visits and “jó egészséget” (“good health”) when toasting with wine.

Nothing can change the fact that, in our scattered state, the mission to keep the Hungarian language was impossible. In the emotional unity of the Jews in their Diaspora, it was not the language that preserved them, but their religion, which helped maintain their origins. However, we, as Christians, embraced the whole of humanity, and within Irish, Australian, Hungarian, and French marriages, religion only helped in creating new family units.

Later, the grandchildren learned about their Hungarian descent, and when, at school, they had an opportunity to write about Hungary, they themselves undertook such tasks. Of course, they were helped by their grandparents. Our home was already full of memories, Hungarian art, and handwork, so that they would keep in mind their Hungarian origin and possibly become enthusiastic supporters of Hungarian issues that came before international forums.

In March 1977, I had a conference with a most interesting client. An old client had recommended that the lady contact me because he

thought the matter was of such a nature that it required not only legal but also accounting knowledge.

The client, Mrs. JP, stated that her father, Mr. McGee, along with two friends, had founded a business engaged in various commercial activities in a limited liability company (Pty. Ltd.). Mr. W. was an expert in the funeral profession, while Mr. McGee was involved in the buying and selling of cars, which contributed to the growth of the joint venture's turnover. The third friend was Mr. G. Sinclair, who, as accountant and financial advisor, handled the bookkeeping and tax affairs of the business.

When the client presented her case, her father was already dead. He had died recently, as had Mr. G. Sinclair, while Mr. W. was hovering between life and death. It soon became clear that the firm's accounting had been neglected for the last few years. However, my client did not understand why she was unable to obtain sufficient information from the accounting firm that was now handling the business affairs.

She drew my attention to the fact that the son of the late G. Sinclair was Ian Sinclair, one of Australia's leading politicians, a minister in the Fraser government, and deputy leader of the National Party. After the death of Mr. G. Sinclair, his son—whom I will call "Minister"—saw clearly that no one else knew the company's affairs, so he took the matter in hand, though he was very hard to contact. The Minister was a powerful man, and my client asked me to undertake contacting this influential politician.

I contacted the stakeholders as a first step. Soon I received an invitation to take part, with my client, in a meeting of the company's shareholders. At the time, I thought the puzzling delay occurred because the Minister did not want the shareholders to negotiate, and therefore believed it might be best if a new accountant were appointed to clarify the company's financial situation.

I made the appropriate steps. First, I asked a well-known company to undertake the task, and then we had a meeting with

members of the W. family. We agreed that they should join uniformly against the Minister as majority shareholders.

The Minister was present at the shareholders' meeting, and I strongly objected, on behalf of the majority, that there were no records available to evaluate the financial affairs of the enterprise.

The Minister admitted that his father had neglected the company's accounts under the weight of his cancer. He also acknowledged that the first commitment was to instruct C. Hayle, an accounting office, to write up the books of the company as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that this work could not be carried out quickly, so he asked the shareholders to be patient.

When I glanced into the incomplete and incomprehensible accounting records, I understood what had caused the long delay.

The Minister also said that it was obvious the results so far showed too large a credit to his father and the Sinclair Family Pastoral Company. This could be inferred from the last approved balance sheet, and he assumed full responsibility for his father's omissions.

The shareholders realised they had to wait until the accountants were able to produce a current balance sheet. In the interim, they invited the Minister to look after the company's affairs and to place excess cash in an interest-bearing account.

It was therefore not necessary that I act as a solicitor, but I was asked to attend to the clarification of the company's position.

However, the case unexpectedly took on political overtones. Mr. W's son, who had hoped to take over as head of the funeral home agency after his father's illness, was offended when the Minister did not allocate this position to him. He contacted the press and television representatives and provided them with false and irresponsible data.

This case soon became a national scandal. Although the shareholders did not participate, they had to bear the political war

generated by the press and television publicity. My home was bombarded almost every minute by phone calls, and journalists did their best to sound me out. My advice to the shareholders was not to make any statement, hoping the case would die down and the company's affairs would be brought into order, allowing the shareholders themselves to finalise the situation.

At that time, in the state of New South Wales, the Labor government was in power, and it was in their interest to cause as much damage and scandal to the federal government by showing that the Minister had committed irregularities.

When a portion of the press accused the Minister of taking out more loans without the approval of the directors while administering the company's affairs, the New South Wales Government appointed a barrister to conduct an investigation.

At the next meeting of the company, the shareholders unanimously entrusted me to represent all individuals and shareholders. As much as possible, we had to prevent the company from being managed out of the reach of the shareholders, because this could seriously affect them—especially in the funeral business. With so many years of history, confidence in management would be shaken if an outside organisation took over.

The first months of the study did not cause serious problems for the shareholders. I was across the accounting results, but the inquiring barrister simply did not understand the numbers. More and more, the investigation seemed inconclusive, rendering the barrister unable to deliver to the government the results they were seeking.

Then the barrister focused all his strength on having me removed from the management of the case. He stressed that the shareholders could not act uniformly because their interests must be different, and therefore I could not represent them due to a conflict of interest. It made me feel that he was questioning my conduct. As this might violate the ethics of the profession, I immediately reported the

circumstances to the competent Bar Association (Law Society of NSW). The Institute examined the case and saw no reason to abolish my representation of all those who had entrusted me with their affairs.

The barrister then went to the W. family members and, in my absence—and this goes against the ethics of lawyers—tried to persuade them to withdraw from me as their representative.

When it came to making a presentation at the investigation, I showed that the most severe accusations against the Minister were not upheld, because the withdrawals had been approved by the other directors. Moreover, the monies taken were not loans but withdrawals from the company's current account. The barrister's conduct then became so hostile towards me that, in my clients' best interests, I continued only with the original client, Mrs. PJ.

The extent of the political frenzy can be illustrated by the fact that, at this time, there were six break-ins at my attorney's office. The burglars did not take any cash; they simply searched through my papers, hoping to find compromising documents. Of course, there were none.

The result of the investigation was reported in a summary of approximately one hundred pages. The unauthorised loans were hardly discussed, and finally they accused the Minister of forging his father's signature at the end of the company's annual report. There was no evidence for this, except the suggestion that no one else would have benefited from such an action.

The opposition was crying for blood. The Prime Minister of the Federal Government, Mr. Fraser, demanded that the NSW Government promptly initiate proceedings against the Minister so that he could defend himself. He stated that the Commonwealth was the responsible corporate affairs agency and, if the NSW Government did not take immediate action, he would appoint a royal commissioner. The NSW State charged the Minister with forgery.

The case was eventually won by the Minister, who was acquitted of the charge, which had not been based on any evidence, and he continued his political activities.

Meanwhile, C. Hayle wrote up the books, so we were able to work out the amount of money the Minister had to repay via his father's company, the Pastoral Company. One third of that amount was due from the Minister.

All shareholders were in complete agreement with these results, and I continued to be their lawyer and legal adviser for many years. When, due to divergent interests, the families wished to sell their shares in the companies, it was in our office that the sales contracts were drafted, and the shareholders worked together in the greatest friendship.

The Minister repeatedly expressed to me how much it hurt him to see me unjustly attacked in this case. He defended me in parliament when the then leader of the Labor Party made derogatory comments about my practice in the heat of debate.

These political attacks I had to endure, as what is spoken in parliament cannot be held against the speaker. Likewise, the investigator—a barrister—could freely attack anyone and still enjoy the protection of the legal system.

I valued this case of semi-political struggle, which elevated me compared to the matters I usually dealt with. The case was rewarding, as even after many years these clients continued to bring new matters to my practice.

I also want to mention that the six break-ins at our office occurred at our new premises. In 1977, I bought another solicitor's practice, which included new premises. This suited us because Alproud Home Improvements Pty. Ltd. had also moved to new premises in another suburb, and the old place had become too large for us.

In September 1977, I had an unpleasant surprise. A client, whom I will call Mrs. R—whom I had supported during the severe economic

crisis and for whom I had tried to save property through a partnership with a family enterprise—now attacked me.

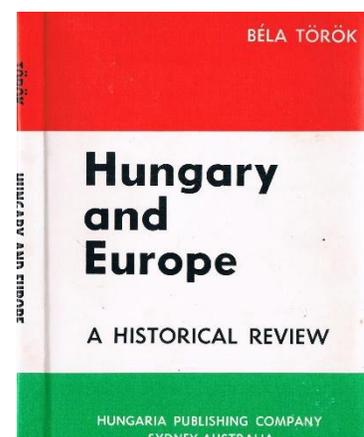
As advised by her lawyer, she blamed me for her inability to withdraw her share of the perceived wealth from the association. The fact was that, by the end of the crisis, it turned out to be worth nothing, as the quarter-million-dollar company had ceased operations and Mrs. R was threatened with bankruptcy. I had the feeling that the proceedings initiated against me were essentially designed to encourage creditors to delay opening bankruptcy proceedings, in case she was awarded large damages through obtaining a portion of the claim.

Mrs. R actually began the process of accusing our office of negligence, but failed to pursue it. For years, the matter remained dormant.

In addition to daily business, I took time to publish my Hungarian history book in English. For this work, I had the resources (typing, copying), so it was not a particular strain.

I was aware that it would not bring financial benefit to the company, as I intended to publish only a small number of copies. I felt, however, that this would be part of a Hungarian awareness program in which the Hungarian emigration participated.

I also thought that I could write, for the world in the English language, a Hungarian defence document—not a book beginning with our loss at Mohács, but one containing the entire history of Hungary. This book was not meant to be public history with references to sources, nor an academic work, but rather to serve Hungary's future in the expected resurrection. I foresaw the end of Russian occupation in the political development of European unity, so I gave my book the theme that Hungary and European unity were



inseparable parts of Christian Western civilisation. Thus, I gave the book the title Hungary and Europe.

I investigated World War II and the following decades. My starting point was that the Russian Empire and the USA were the winners of World War II, and that these two powers divided the world between themselves. A third world war could only be avoided if both Russian and American powers were willing to withdraw from Europe and allow the birth of European unity, within which Hungary could find its place.

The book was published in 1979, and I dedicated it to Ica, my faithful partner of 35 years in exile.

The book received much praise from critics. A Hungarian-born American university professor wrote that not only had he never read such well-written Hungarian history, but he had discovered many visionary and prophetic insights in it.

There were, of course, critics who observed improper grammar and the use of some English phrases. Most revealed which political group they belonged to. My book had the apparent “failure” of not being confined to one political view, so none of the groups were entirely happy with what I had written.

The national radicals complained that I evaluated Horthy’s Hungary positively; the Conservatives hesitated over my favourable view of the October 15th, 1944 Hungarian resistance as the nation’s last major effort; the Catholics disliked that I emphasised the national merits of Protestantism against the Catholic Austro-German oppressor; and the Protestants disliked that I viewed the Ferenc Deák compromise—which had resulted in half a century of peace—in a positive light. Yet in the freedom struggle led by Kossuth, I stressed the nation’s uncompromising stance.

There was no criticism from Jewish circles; they responded with silence. The local bookseller, for example, was not willing to attempt dissemination. My comments could not be called anti-Semitic—I had

handled the issues as objectively as I could—but this was not desirable from their point of view.

The reaction of Kázmér Nagy was interesting. The former Sydney Hungarian newspaper editor was, at this time, working in London at the BBC Hungarian department. His book, which attacked the national emigration, appeared in Hungary, so it was clear to us that sooner or later he would give up his resistance to the communist regime and return home.

He always behaved correctly with me. He wrote that he complimented the beautiful presentation of the book, but did not entirely agree with its contents. He philosophised that the existence of the Eastern superpower could not be denied and that, with the present state of military knowledge, dreams of “independence” were not realistic.

Many Australian politicians also gave me appreciative reviews—though, of course, only from conservative circles.

The Hungarian Veterans Organization, headed by László Duska, embraced the dissemination of the book. They purchased one hundred copies, which were then sent to many American universities.

Unfortunately, the Hungarian associations operating in the U.S. were reticent. This I understood. The book pointed out that, in the Yalta Convention, it was a joint decision of the U.S. and the Soviet Union to include Hungary in the Soviet sphere of influence. America’s policy was directed at not allowing the Soviet Union to go beyond the borders agreed to at Yalta, and we could not expect liberation from them. However, the associations were American-Hungarian colonies, and they had to be careful not to do anything contrary to U.S. policy. That is why, in my Hungarian historical essay, I suggested that a national political organisation of emigration should be placed in a neutral country in Europe, because only there could it exert major influence.

The distribution of the books without a serious publishing organisation was very difficult, so the enterprise was not profitable. Yet I felt that my duty to Hungary had been fulfilled.

The Eighties

In October 1979, I turned sixty-five years old. This date is significant in the Australian legal and social systems, as it marks retirement. This was mandatory in public offices, and many large companies used this institution of forced retirement. Smaller private companies did not force their senior employees into retirement, so I continued working.

However, I noted that time had passed over me and, as a good father, I wanted to be prepared to allow my son Béla to “inherit” the office, as life had brought him into partnership with me. That is why, when we moved to new premises in 1977, Béla was allocated the main office and I set up at the end of the corridor. This had the advantage of being near the back door, allowing me to leave the office without my departure being obvious to everyone.

When establishing the new practice, I tried to ensure that new clients were handled by Béla, thus facilitating my gradual withdrawal from office life. I joked with my friends that in this way I began “my flexible secession” from working life. In the late eighties, I worked mainly as a taxation legal counsel, since I was the accounting expert in the office. The Australian legal profession increasingly recognised that legal knowledge and accounting skills are intertwined, seeing the advantages in an advanced industrial society where dual qualifications were more common. I was able to shorten my working days to Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. That meant I had four days each week to relax, just as we usually enjoyed at Easter. I had time to tend to my garden as well as help Ica with chores around the house.

Our life in this decade increasingly revolved around the grandchildren, as the young families required the support of their grandparents. The boys’ birthdays were celebrated at their homes with their families, while the wives’ birthdays were celebrated at our home.

Christmas evenings for the various families were, for many years, always held in our home. After the candle lighting, gifts were exchanged. The atmosphere of these Christmas evenings was not exactly the same as what we had known in Hungary. The end of December was the middle of summer in Australia; the thermometer was above 30 degrees even in the evenings. It is true that, with the help of air-conditioning, we were able to withstand the heat. Our celebration usually began with the children swimming in our pool after throwing off the festive clothing their mothers had dressed them in. I diligently took pictures; I became the reporter for the family photos. One was from my Canon film recorder, an eight-millimetre camera. I then switched over to the “video revolution” in 1967. Finally, I had a whole family video, and I hoped that for a long time these recordings would be preserved, showing a happy family life and our existence.

By now I had retired from public life in the associations. In the seventies, I had received a number of awards. I became a Crusader Knight of the St. László Society and was inducted as a member in the ranks of the Árpád Academy, taking up a role within the Hungarian Academy. I also became a member of the European Front Fighters’ Association, which had been established through cooperation between Germany and France, in the spirit of a united Europe.



Author receiving one of his

The emigrants were inexorably growing older and soon could only organise dance gatherings. The sight of old men wearing medals became troublesome, and on organised occasions of national holidays, I wore only buttonhole badges. I thought that breast-engulfing awards and ribbons should be left to the Soviet generals.

I was encouraged by some to be involved in the Australian political scene, particularly by Ian Sinclair, minister of the Fraser

government, who had learned of my political views through the years of our legal relationship. I pointed out that, as Hungary had been in alliance with Germany in World War II, it was very likely that my views as an anti-communist would be labelled as fascist and would only embarrass my friends. The Minister understood this and did not pursue the matter further.

One of the outstanding presidents of the Hungarian Associations also suggested that I take an active role in the Liberal Party, but I managed to fend off his request. At this time, he worked closely with a fellow Slovene who became involved in local politics, and my predictions regarding the treatment he would be subjected to, came true. It was easy to accuse all nationalists who had fought alongside Germans of being fascists.

I decided that it was time to step out of my legal partnership with my son and gave him a free hand in running the office. From then on, I became an employee as an advising counsel, which was often the case with many retiring lawyers. In practice, this meant that the affairs were increasingly in the hands of my son Béla. However, if a client wished to make use of my services, I was at their disposal, thus ensuring a smooth changing of the guard.

In Australia, it had become fashionable in the postwar years, with the rapid development of the aerospace industry, to facilitate a retired person's travel around the world instead of giving the traditional gold watch.

I had planned a larger six-month trip. However, this was vetoed by Ica, who did not want to live out of a travel bag for such a long time and would not willingly leave the family for six months. We agreed that the proposed trip should be managed in two instalments. In the first phase, the trip would be to the U.S. It is true that in 1967 we had been in New York and San Francisco, as well as spending two days in Hawaii, but we had not seen much of that vast country. In 1981, we got to know Hawaii better; we took local flights, flying from one island to the next, gaining a comprehensive

picture of the island group. We flew over the volcanoes and had the chance to ride in a small boat, which truly enriched our experiences.

From there we flew to Los Angeles. According to the news, there were very disturbing stories about public safety. Therefore, when we got into a taxi with a black driver heading to our Sydney-booked hotel, we were filled with uncertainty. This was especially so after the driver said that the hotel was quite a distance from the airport.

After half an hour speeding through the highways, our driver called out: “The hotel where you are going is very famous and a good hotel.” We were relieved to hear this, but he continued: “That is where they murdered Robert Kennedy.” The driver was right—the Ambassador Hotel was a first-class hotel—and we realised that Los Angeles was not really that dangerous. We enjoyed visiting the famous Universal Studios, Disneyland, and touring the Hollywood area.

Meeting Elemér Buócz, an old friend from Szeged, gave me great pleasure; I had lived for a time in Berlin at the Collegium Hungaricum with him. We had dinner in a restaurant, met his wife and daughter, and visited their home, where we reminisced about old times.

Las Vegas was next. We had never played games of chance before, but were amused by the mass appeal of the slot machines and roulette tables. We toured most of the hotels, but were in bed by 10 p.m. and did not take part in the nightlife.

The next day we boarded a small plane which brought us to the Grand Canyon. This trip made a big impact on us, as the flight took us very close to this natural wonder. We alighted at the southern side of the canyon and spent a full day admiring the canyon walls, the changing scenery, and the way the rocks reflected the rays of the sun in the morning, noon, and night.



The Grand Canyon

In St. Louis we rented a car. The aim was to travel by car to Missouri's capital, Jefferson City, where Ica's sister's (Duci's) sister-in-law lived with her husband (Laci Somogyvári's sister). She was now a widow, as her husband, a gendarme captain, had died young, and she raised four children to university level. We stayed with her and spent a very pleasant time there. We toured the city and then learned that in the U.S., not only in the great metropolises with their chaotic life, but also in the American countryside, there were no public safety concerns. Cars were left by the roadside unlocked, with windows open. People did not even think of locking their cars.

Then we drove back to St. Louis and waited for our plane to New Orleans. There was a little excitement because, when we got out of the hire car, our air tickets somehow slid to the car floor, and we only noticed the loss when we wanted to confirm our flights. Ica sought the help of St. Anthony while I went to the car parking attendant, convinced that was where I had lost the tickets. When I got there, our hire car had been parked in a different location among several hundred others in the parking lot, but after a long search we found it. The tickets were lying untouched on the carpet of the car.

We stayed in the famous French Quarter in New Orleans. The French colonial relics were truly interesting. The town itself is a true American metropolis, and the huge domed eight-storey sports stadium was truly amazing. We participated in a guided bus trip, visiting a couple of pre-American, Civil War-era buildings, which preserved the memories of the old feudal way of life, at least in their style. The "Black problem" in America is still a matter of debate; there are many who believe that the patriarchal plantation coexistence of the two peoples was not filled with problems, and that the black population would probably have been better off being gradually released. However, after the North's victory, the unprepared masses of blacks were thrown into the capitalist, libertine city, which is why they still live degraded lives, despite the best efforts of governments.

The airplane flew us to Miami. Here, Géza Deák—whom we had met in Rome in 1975—wanted us to visit. We had promised to do so. They were waiting for us at the airport and thoughtfully drove us past the beach to our hotel. We really enjoyed ourselves in Florida. Géza and his wife were lovely hosts as we roamed through Miami. They also took care that we did not end up in environments where it was inadvisable to walk alone.

Our next stop was Washington. Here again we were not by ourselves, as Pali Baltay and his wife, Maureen, were waiting for us. When we had left Kempten in 1949 and said goodbye to the Baltay family, Pali was a nine- or ten-year-old boy, but I recognised him in the crowd waiting for us. We stayed



The White House

with them for two to three days, and they helped us get to know the capital. We could not get into the White House because it was closed to visitors at that time, but Palika took us to the Washington Estate, where the old mansion reminded me of past history and the wide Potomac River revealed the greatness of America.

We went to the Arlington military cemetery and walked among the graves of American heroes, as well as witnessing the ceremonial Changing of the Guard.

At New York's Kennedy Airport, we hugged our old friends, the Baltays, with whom we had lived through the most difficult years of our lives. We spent a lovely couple of days at their Long Island home. A bitter shadow was cast on our get-together because we felt that this would be our last meeting. But hope remained with us while we still walked the earth, and thus we hugged each other when we departed for Cleveland.

Here too, friends were waiting for us, and we slept at Dóra Dombrády's house the first night. My old commander and friend, Ervin Hollósy, had also insisted that we stay with him, so we divided

our stay between the two families. Ervin did everything to make us feel welcome, and we toured Cleveland with them.

The Hungarian Association chairman, János (John) Nádas, warmly greeted us and asked me to give a short presentation on my English history book in front of invited leaders of Cleveland.

We took part in a solemn Mass in Hungarian, held in connection with a Hungarian pastor's anniversary. Marching under the Hungarian flag, the groups amply demonstrated that Cleveland had once been a Hungarian city. Unfortunately, at the time of our visit, the number of Hungarians was not significant. The old Buckeye district, which at the end of the century had been the home of Hungarian expatriate miners, was no longer inhabited by Hungarians. The old people had died, their children had assimilated into American life, and they were scattered throughout the country. The magnificently beautiful baroque church can be regarded in name only as Hungarian. The parish priest was a Slovak man who knew only a few Hungarian words and frankly admitted that his flock was mostly black, as they made up the majority of the district by then.

In Cleveland we met leaders of various associations and groups. It seemed that even this community of local Hungarian emigrants had divisions. John Nádas and his family worked tirelessly to bring people together. Many successful programs marked their journey, but they had failed to lead to a fixed direction.

Unfortunately, I was only able to get in touch with István Eszterhás by telephone. He was a very talented Hungarian writer, one of the leaders of the Turul Alliance (Hungary's largest student organisation in 1922), and stood very close to me politically. Antal István was one of the leaders of the Ministry of Propaganda. During the war years, we had met a few times, as he was my supervisor when he was at the Justice Ministry. Both of us were very happy with this late meeting, and we stayed in touch through letters in the following years.

We made one trip to Niagara Falls and spent a day in Toronto, where we visited the Museum of the Gendarmerie. This stimulated dreams of old Hungary, while waiting for the relics to be placed once again on Hungarian soil.



Niagara Falls



Hungarian Museum artifacts Toronto and artifacts

Then we said goodbye to our friends in Cleveland and flew to the small town of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where we spent two days as guests of Zoltán Kocsondy.

I had studied law with Zoli at the University of Szeged. He was also a member of the Werbőczy Fraternal Association (named after the jurist and statesman of the 1500s), and he had joined our friendship group; we had spent many enjoyable hours together. Even now we were welcomed as old friends, and we came to know his family. In the isolation of a small town, with stubborn determination, Zoltán raised his six children so that they could all speak and write in Hungarian. He went so far as to speak only Hungarian to his grandchildren. But, of course, he could not prevent the third generation from gradually melding into the sea of American English-speaking people. This process in America was usually accelerated when young people were forced to take jobs away from the parental home, thus severing their ties to the source

of Hungarian life. Ica loved Zoli's wife, and we understood the role she had played in holding the family together and surviving all difficulties. She worked for many decades in a nearby Old Age Home, while Zoltán also had a regular job at the institution as a house painter.

We flew through Chicago to Spokane, Washington. We spent only one night in this small town in the western U.S., where wild western "cowboy-like" figures walked the streets. Here the calm of American rural life impressed us, in contrast to the hustle and bustle of the big cities.

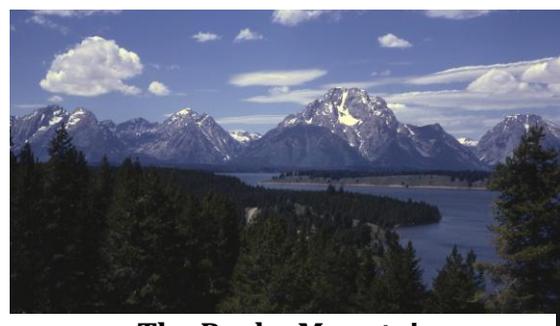
We rented a car and drove four to five hours to Glacier National Park, one of our planned destinations. This area bordered the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and the sight of



Glacier National Park

the snow-capped peaks and roaming wild animals was a great experience for us. The lakes scattered across the landscape between the glaciers and the romantic countryside left a deep impression.

We drove back to Spokane and then flew in a small plane to Billings, where we rented another car. From there we approached the famous Yellowstone National Park. We stayed in a hotel in West Yellowstone, from where we set out each day by car to tour the park. We explored the geysers and lakes and reached the adjacent Teton National Park. It was an unforgettable experience, taking in the natural beauty. The wildlife-rich area perhaps even eclipsed the beauty of the Swiss Alps. It seemed to me that while Switzerland's manicured wilderness was breathtaking, the Rocky Mountain ridge still revealed the rugged nature of the true Wild West.



The Rocky Mountains

Soon these wonderful days were over and, when we were well-rested, we flew to San Francisco Airport, setting off three days later on the way home. We toured this city, which reminded me very much of Sydney. Then we boarded the Qantas jet to begin the journey home.

At home everything was fine. I rejoined the office staff, brought the books up to date, and put together the film material from the trip, so I had pursuits enough.

In October 1981, my peaceful retirement was turned upside down by a disgruntled former client, Mrs. R., who brought a charge of negligence against me before the High Court in Sydney. At this time, the continent had begun to imitate the American way of suing doctors, accountants, and lawyers by more and more disgruntled customers. Against this, protection insurance was only of limited help. But in my day such insurance was not compulsory, and throughout my life I had always tried to save unnecessary costs, too often leaving matters to good fortune. Thus, this charge was not covered by insurance. I had the good fortune of being a lawyer and therefore could reduce the costs of litigation somewhat, so the problem was not so severe.

The process was first raised in 1977, but had been dormant for four years, so I thought it would not be pursued and perhaps had been instituted merely to reassure the creditors.

The hearing was set by the court for May 1982 but, because of case overload, was listed in November 1982. I worked on the defence, yet I had to use a solicitor firm to engage a Queen's Counsel to represent me, in order to preserve the formalities. At the preliminary negotiations, I believed that he understood the matter well and trusted him. Perhaps he did not consider the matter serious and, having suddenly received a mandate in another case, attended only the opening day of the trial and the final fifth day for the defence summary. This did not please me, but the situation turned serious because the subordinate (junior) barrister, who was

well acquainted with the matter, had sought my consent a few weeks before the hearing to represent a client in another case. At the time I agreed, thinking that the Queen's Counsel would conduct the case.

What happened was that there was no actual representation, because the substitute barrister simply did not know the case and his presence was purely formal.

To this was added the fact that, as it later turned out, the two opposing Queen's Counsel had agreed not to raise the issue of the illegality of the entire transaction in court. Company law prohibited company shares from being traded with loan assistance. Of course, there was the possibility that the client could attack the legal counsel on this basis, alleging that I had failed to inform him about the legal difficulties. I had not thought of that, and thus I did not protect myself by obtaining a signed declaration from the client. Obviously, I was careless in not protecting myself.

During questioning, I raised this issue, but the opposing attorney stopped me from speaking about the illegality. Then I realised that the opponent did not want the court to discuss this aspect. I drew this to the attention of my defending Queen's Counsel, who had entered into an agreement in this regard. But the case was basically of an illegal nature, and therefore compensation was not allowable.

It was interesting that the designated trial judge drew my attention to the fact that when I was working as a barrister, he had also been my colleague. I was not in a personal relationship with him, so I did not protest. I remembered later that our relationship had been during the Vietnam War, and we were not of one mind, as he was a member of the Labor Party and his judicial appointment was a result of the Labor government. I had never hidden my anti-communist views. It was improbable that I would receive sympathy from the judge. The case did not recognise the problem of illegality, which would have meant a nominal award of damages; instead, the judge decided to impose serious damages on me. Of course, I did not

let it go and appealed. The High Court Board of Appeal heard the case in March 1984.

To my great relief, the council saw through the situation from the beginning and questioned the applicant's representative, which indicated that changes to the verdict were imminent. In fact, he specifically criticised the legal representatives and expressed surprise that experienced attorneys could handle the case in such a skewed way. The judgment did not deal with the question of negligence, but noted that the applicant had entered into a business venture without capital, which owed a quarter of a million dollars to the firm's creditors. It was found that the claim was totally illegal and was an attempt to obtain money through the back door.

The court found that I alone had highlighted, in the first instance, that the Companies Act prohibits shareholders from assisting in the acquisition of company shares. The door was left open to the question of whether I had alerted the client to the existence of this problem, to be decided in a separate process. The High Court Appeals Chamber stressed that the only course left was compensation to cover costs. As our office had handled the matter at a fairly low price, the recovery could only be of a nominal amount. Thus, I offered the applicant the opportunity to settle the matter to avoid a further trial.

I do not know even today why the applicant did not accept my offer and did not initiate the process, but three years later she tried again to revive the case. Of course, she was only able to continue by relying on government-funded legal aid. The judge ordered that further proceedings in this prolonged litigation were merely an abuse of the legal aid system. Finally, assistance to Mrs. R was withdrawn, and she decided to accept my previous offer, and the case closed. Thus, the cost became a business expense and therefore reduced my income tax, so it was not a serious loss, but it left me with bad memories of my client's baseless accusations.

The 1981 U.S. trip created something that gave me joy. I was able to get in touch with István (Stephen) Eszterhás by phone, and we resurrected old shared memories. He gifted me copies of his books published in America.

His two-volume work, *Kováts Mihály Sets Sail*, was embedded in a historical framework. Pista's letter wrote at length about the novel and his publishing expenses. I think it summarises the difficulties that must be overcome by migrant writers who wish to go public, and I quote a paragraph from one private letter:

"Yes, the book price is quite high at 28 dollars because the publisher could only expect those who knew the Hungarian language to be interested. The exiled Hungarian writer often finds himself in a similar situation as one who has never published before. Even today, the Hungarian writer needs to find readers in the Hungarian community—countrymen and women, friends, and friends of literature. The difference between the old and the new is devastating. In the old days, all new Hungarian books increased the readership. Now, for those in exile, each new book receives fewer and fewer Hungarian readers. Therefore, the activity monitors can safely say that the numbers of readers of exiled writers will be extinguished by time. This is difficult to accept when we see all around us the author's tasks that no one else, elsewhere or at other times, can complete.

I found this task in the story of Michael Kováts de Fabriczy, the famous European hussar Major, who arrived in America in 1777, was appointed a colonel by Washington, and died in 1779 at the siege of Charlestown.

If my work succeeds, it could be a literary reminder as well as a warning. It points out that at the



*Michael Kováts
de Fabriczy*

beginning of the Western freedom struggles, we suffered military casualties for victory. The Hungarian hussar's death linked the history of Hungarians to the West.

I finished the manuscript, but I could not find a publisher. I honestly have to say that many people warned that I would lose if I attempted to publish the novel. I had to agree with their concerns. The two-volume edition of close to a thousand pages, considering our financial circumstances, could not promise benefits.

The current Hungarian nation's domestic dictatorship banned access to would-be readers, and our books could not get across the border. Local paper and printing rates are far above the émigré Hungarian readership's modest financial strength. The exiles are getting older and declining. Many of our reading friends who were once loyal supporters of Hungarian culture are no longer with us. In addition, the non-committed Hungarian reader has cheaper books swarming in his household that are subsidised."

István Eszterhás published this historical novel at his own expense, trusting that the torn-apart Hungarian readers' interest in national matters would prevail. The book's success was not only literary but also guaranteed the writer's place in Hungarian history. Honestly, I must add that this edition of the book would never have gained exposure without the help of his son, Joseph Eszterhás.

The talented Hungarian writer drifted toward English, and his gifted son achieved remarkable results in the USA. Joseph became a journalist and later the editor of one of America's great weekly magazines—Rolling Stone. He wrote three novels, one of which became a nominee for the American Literary Award. After that, he was drawn to cinema and became a screenwriter. So far, four of his books have been made into films. The most famous, depicting the lives of early Hungarian immigrants, was F.I.S.T., based on his novel of the same name.

My friend Stephen (Pista) never wrote to me about it, but I believe that his talented, loving son helped his father in publishing the unprofitable Hungarian books.

However, Christmas 1989 revealed a surprise in judging Joseph Eszterhás. It was revealed that he had become the screenwriter of a film which served to renew the chase against “war criminals.” In this movie, retaliation against the gendarmerie, the national radical movements, and indirectly the whole of Hungarian society was depicted.

The fact that the writer stated to journalists that he did not feel Hungarian was not surprising under the circumstances. But he did point out that his father had nothing to do with the atrocities illustrated in the film. He said this knowing that his father had been the leader of the Turul Alliance and the young assistant of István Antal, the press officer, and, at the time of the Sztójay government, was actually the head of the Propaganda Ministry. His role was not questioned in those areas. Perhaps the birth of the film and its “idealism” was the price for leaving the father alone? However, in the U.S. in recent decades, proceedings have been launched against a number of high-hearted individuals like Albert Wass and Francis Koréh.

In 1985, István (Stephen) Eszterhás’s book *The Cardinal and the Guard*, a classic psychoanalysis of Joseph Mindszenty’s mental battle while exiled in the U.S. embassy, was published. I even tried to help Steve with its dissemination. The local newspaper also praised this work.

But perhaps it is best if the writer speaks again:

"I met the cardinal at home and from the beginning of his bondage I wrote about it. In his diary, he often praised Sunday. He could now read in the U.S. embassy. When he was finally free, our meeting shocked me.

The book had unusual repercussions. There were people who wanted to cling to their memory of him and rejoiced in the

book. But there were people who, while he walked among us, fought hard to be near him, but today wondered coldly why this book was necessary?

Even if this book cost me money, I will lovingly pamper it because we Hungarians in literature have always felt a debt to our national greats. In our time, the greatest Hungarian was József Mindszenty, and in literature no one had paid him homage."

I suggested to Pista that his friends and supporters would expect him to publish his memoirs. In response, he admitted that he had been thinking about just this. He wrote:

"When my first wife, who was from Kispest, died, all our memorabilia had been shared, thus I felt that half of my memories had died. Since then, all my friends have gone, and if someone cannot talk about his memories, the memories just fade and disappear. I have passed my time.

In our time, the Trianon generation age tore us almost in half, because not only did we have to fight for the restoration of St. Stephen's country, but we also had to fight for the new age—for the implementation of reforms for a visionary generation.

Perhaps there were deadlier ages in the Hungarian nation's life, but never more hardship, more crisis, and more nagging problems of an inhumane age. Shall we be proud that we lived through it or lament it? I think we can do both."

In the early 1980s, world politics shifted. President Reagan decided on an arms program that had a depressing effect on the Soviet Union, because the USSR realised it could not win this race. In Europe, a large peace propaganda movement had begun. This movement sought to harness the desire of the masses for peace and disarmament, thereby ensuring the status quo. The strength of the U.S. President created panic among the people of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet leadership realised that in this atmosphere a successful war could not be waged, so they changed their tune.

Gorbachev, before a summit, said that the time called for bold steps toward disarmament, because some actions already taken could lead to unavoidable war. Now that it was clear to everyone that America would not give in, the Soviet Union began to play a different tune and tried to calm its own population as well.

I followed world events on my shortwave radio. I wrote a study of what I believed would follow these events. I preached the unity of Europe and tried to raise the idea that a united Europe was needed to ensure Arab-Israeli peace.

This paper received no publicity, as events were still fluid and there was, therefore, not much that could be written objectively.

In a more relaxed, post-retirement atmosphere, I started to plan our second halfway-around-the-world trip. We wanted to focus on Europe, but we also wished to get to know Japan. The traditional Middle Eastern route was experiencing many airplane attacks, so we organised our journey to avoid touching the eastern Mediterranean region.

We travelled through Tokyo in July 1986, and then touched down in Alaska on the way to Zurich in Europe.

Alaska was very interesting; we had decided to interrupt our journey for three days there, partly because the 10-hour time difference made it easier to endure. The brevity of the night in Alaska was strange. We travelled by boat and bus to see the most notable sights. The glaciers and snow-capped mountains left a deep impression on us.



Alaskan Mountains

We rented a car in Zurich and travelled across Switzerland and Austria towards Vienna. We stopped for a few hours at Mariazell, where we prayed before the tomb of our country's Archbishop Mindszenty. We met my sister and her granddaughter Ági in Vienna, at the home of Emil Kiss.

Together with Kata, we drove to Hainburg an der Donau. It had previously been a Hungarian town; a few years earlier we would have found one of my Török ancestor's graves in the old cemetery. Unfortunately, by the time of our trip, this part of the cemetery had been revamped, and no one could provide information about what had happened to the memorial crosses. After spending a couple of very pleasant hours with the Kiss family, we set off towards Lockenhaus in the province of Burgenland, which, of course, we knew as Léka. The proud Nádasdy castle still overlooks the small municipality and remains a fragment of our thousand-year-old Hungarian history. Here we were expecting visits from our Hungarian family members.

Before arriving in Léka, we also visited the spa town of Vöslau, where I had lived as a student learning German some sixty years earlier. Naturally, I walked those streets with nostalgia, remembering my youth.

We stayed at a guest house in Léka, where waiting for us were Duci, my sister-in-law, and her husband Laci, as well as my dear old friend from Szeged, Imre Juray, who had again volunteered to come to Austria so we could embrace each other and renew our friendship. My sister's children, their spouses, and grandchildren visited us for a day or two during the two weeks we spent in Léka.

We organised this great family and friends' reunion (and perhaps farewell) in Léka because I resisted the temptation of all my relatives and friends urging me to return to Hungary. Our hearts always ached from being separated from the ancient soil of our homeland and our sweet memories. Ica understood that my political beliefs forced me to deprive myself of my country while it lived under foreign occupation and a foreign-imposed ideology. We went to the



Léka Castle

lookout at Írottkő, so that I physically crossed the Trianon borders of our country. From there I see med to see, in the distance, the village of Nemescsó, from where the family had emigrated in the early 1700s, and so I had come home in a small way. There, at the Árpád lookout balcony, we sang the Hungarian national anthem and embraced each other warmly.



Írottkő Tower & Arpád Lookout

When we walked down from the mountain-top, I discovered that on the roadside, in the middle of a small park, was a war memorial listing the names of fallen heroes from 1939 to 1945. The German text read: “You do not die if you are never forgotten, and we will not forget you.” I bowed my head before the memorial, remembering fallen comrades.

The province of Burgenland, Austria, is full of Hungarian memories. We toured the whole region. We visited the birthplace of Franz Liszt, whom both Germans and Hungarians claim as theirs.

Felsőőr and several other towns, along with the Batthyány and Esterházy Palaces, reminded us of the past. When I was a child collecting stamps, I remembered my father giving me a Lajtabánság series, which became some of my most precious treasures.

We then said goodbye to the family and our country, which at Léka was so close to us and yet, for me, remained an unattainable distance.

Venice was the next stop. We again walked in the City of the Doges and made a pilgrimage to St. Gerard Church.

In Ravenna, we admired the remnants of the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire, and Florence became our home once more.



Memories of
childhood
stamp
collecting

In Rome, I made Ica very tired because I could not get enough of the Eternal City—from morning to night we visited the churches.

Next, the Azure Coast Express train took us to Avignon, where memories of the French papacy still define the city's image. After trips to Nîmes, Arles, and Lyon, we arrived in Switzerland. We spent a week in Brigg, visiting the mountains.

Then the Europe Express rushed us along the banks of the Rhine. In Cologne we admired, once more, the Gothic splendour of the Cathedral. We made a pilgrimage to Aachen as well. The cathedral crypt preserved the relics of St. Stephen, St. Imre, and St. László, donated by Louis the Great.



Aachen Cathedral

These moments, when I stood before the holy relics, also represented a farewell to my home and Europe. With my advanced age and limited financial position, I could not count on another overseas trip. From there we travelled to Paris and, after a few days of sightseeing, we toured the Louvre, Versailles, and the Church of the Invalides (Napoleon's Tomb). We then boarded our plane for Australia, via Tokyo.



Church of Invalides

We spent a wonderful week in Tokyo and, with the Japanese express train, travelled to Kyoto, visiting the former capital of feudal Japan.



Tokyo Fast Trains

Japan left a deep impression on us. The extremely hard-working and talented people rebuilt the capital city, which had been bombed to the ground. The modern and extensive underground railway network they created is superior to those of the major cities of the world.

In Sydney, our loving family was waiting for us, and we reintegrated into their everyday life.

I did not read the books being published in Hungary, but a friend drew my attention to one in which I was mentioned in unflattering terms. I acquired a copy of Lajos (Louis) Tardy's memoirs, Szaggatott krónika (Broken Chronicles), and indeed on page 61 I found the following lines:

"Dr. T Béla was the only person in the Justice Ministry before and during the war who left the country. He was a fellow former soldier who was influenced by the Nazi party and went so low as to become one of the authors of a rag called the 'White Book,' which was written in response to Louis Iván's soul-mobilising book called the 'Grey Book' at the beginning of World War II."

I have already reported on the history of the Reply to the Grey Book, so here I confine myself to the following conclusions:

I vaguely remember Lajos Tardy, a soldier with whom I spent one or two weeks during a military exercise. I thought he was a comrade, but now I realise we only served at the same place.

He is mistaken in claiming that I was the only one who left the ministry. After all, people such as Minister Gábor Vladár, László Gál (Minister Counsellor), and János Csiky (a member of the Pre-Law Drafting Division) also left the country. Many others departed as well, including Agárdy, ministerial staff supervisor; László Tamásy, Deputy Crown Prosecutor; and ministerial secretaries Jenő Csorna and Sándor (Alexander) Kálnoki Bedö.

Amongst the authors of the booklet Reply to the Grey Book was magistrate István (Stephen) Arató, who was not employed further. It is interesting that the third co-author, Béla Csikós Nagy, rose to ministerial rank despite having been a co-author of this so-called "rag." In any case, neither Stephen Arató nor I ever belonged to a political party, and we zealously guarded our judicial independence.

I do not want to repeat the content of Louis Iván's book, but I quote a few lines from the "rag," as labelled by Tardy:

"The German literature on the subject of Southeast Europe emphasised that the German Empire and Southeastern Europe, as economic regions, complemented each other. The only political requirement for this economic fact was to ensure that none of the Southeastern European nations be in the camp of the enemies of the German Empire.

In the case where we joined the enemies of the Reich, (as Louis Iván's book suggested), then we should be prepared to fight them."

Today, we know what would have happened if Louis Iván's suggestion of a forced anti-German sentiment had gained control in a coup d'état. By 1941, we would have been invaded by the Germans, followed by the establishment of a puppet government. This would have resulted not only in major casualties for our country, but also in the deportation of the entire Jewish population.

The course of World War II was naively considered by Louis Iván. He predicted that Germany would starve and foresaw victory in a German counter-revolution. In contrast, the book *Válasz* (The Answer) considered the future thus:

"We believe that, between the extremes of a lightning-fast war and one of a completely sluggish nature, built on financial blockade, there is a different scenario which seems more likely based on the experiences of the Spanish war.

This would be a durable but not a slow-moving war. In addition to defensive action, the air and armoured forces would be able to apply pressure, as demonstrated in Barcelona. In this anticipated three-to four-year war, it is possible to reduce the significance of a blockade."

And in another passage:

"The United States has great economic and human reserves which, if used, would be of great importance. If it really is a situation where a blockade could be effectively used against the German Reich, it is likely America's vast reserves of power

would tilt the balance towards the Western democracies to win the war."

That book appeared in August 1939. Today I can still agree with every line and say that the authors dealt with these serious problems in a responsible way.

Recently in Hungary, many memoirs appeared. This was the era when one could write about the abuses of Rákósi, but it was required to celebrate the Kádár consolidation. One such book was written by László Zolnay: *Book of Facts and Witnesses*. It was sent to me by Imre Juray, an old friend from Szeged. Zolnay's nephew was Aigner Dodó, one of our beloved team of three. The Zolnay family had close ties with Szeged and was related to the László Gál family. My friend Imre rightly thought it would be of interest to me, as many memories related to Szeged.

I was surprised that the writer's brother, Kálmán Zolnay, had notes included in this book. Kálmán served with me in the Ministry of Justice during the war. I knew that he was anti-German and "pro-British," but he hid his communist stance. For me, the most interesting aspect was that the book's notes provided a comprehensive description of who in the ministry were "German friends." As it turned out, he did not spare his uncle and thereby contributed to his torture. Yet poor Uncle Laci was a very conservative man, a true old-fashioned Magyar, to whom both communism and Nazi ideology were unknown entities.

I had been working under István Antal as personal secretary and expert in German affairs, so I was on a list that served Soviet interests. Yet I was not mentioned in this book. The reply to Louis Iván's book was only mentioned in passing. I think the reason was that my dear friend Dodó, when the book was prepared for press, removed references to me.

Notwithstanding personal comments, I found the book hurtful because of the writer's life and moral nihilism. In my eyes, it revealed only the favourable face of the Russian occupation leaders.

Another memoir also reached me with the help of my friend Imre: Kálmán Shvoy's Secret Diary and Memoirs from 1918 to 1945.

I have already written about Kálmán Shvoy, who was a contemporary of my father. I knew the two of them had taken part in a duel in the early twenties, but in my undergraduate years they appeared to have developed a strong friendship. However, I can imagine that immediately after the duel, Shvoy regarded my father as a Teleki "lackey," whom he hated for some reason. Of course, this was a very unjust characterisation. My father had flaws, but in the opposite direction to Shvoy's claims. My father was a proud, haughty man who always gave his opinion truthfully, even if the other person did not like it. As an independent personality, he was not suited to diplomacy. But with Teleki, they truly understood each other.

The journal's "interesting" part included the political life of Szeged from the outbreak of war. At this time, my father was no longer in Szeged. Yet the fact that Shvoy portrayed virtually every leading person in a completely negative way suggests that, by then, he had become so biased and unsuccessful in his politics that he had lost his common sense. I also thought that perhaps the draft had been "doctored." This seems supported by the last chapter of his memoirs, where he assessed the achievements of the Communist regime in a very positive light. Somehow, it does not fit the outpourings of the old Kálmán Shvoy and radiates the methods of Communist "self-criticism."

In 1986, in Australia, there was a group that could not forget and was, for some reason, trying to revive the memory of the uncontrolled years of World War II. They attempted to continue—if now in a more civilised form—the bloodbath of the war by searching amongst the immigrant population of Australia for "war criminals" who were still living amongst us and who had so far managed to evade justice.

At this time, there was a major wave of immigration which increased the size of the Arab population; the role of Israel in the

Palestine region was attacked. The aim of those searching for war criminals may have been to divert attention from Arab-Israeli war crimes and once again revive sympathy towards the Jews' suffering in World War II.

The son of a former head of the Australian Communist Party, who was not personally acquainted with World War II history, began an inquiry. With the help of a public radio station (ABC), he repeatedly called the Australian public's attention to the fact that Australian authorities had admitted people who had committed serious war crimes against the Jews of Europe, allowing their anti-communist behaviour to blind them to the facts.

This radio series described individual cases. We Hungarians, of course, were only interested in the Hungarian aspects. What happened to the Baltic States, Croatia, and Ukraine none of us could contribute more information about, but from the description of the Hungarian cases we were able to assess that the writer was not aware of the facts or how the events occurred.

The radio series placed László Megay, one of ours, in the "dock." It is true that he had been dead for years and could not defend himself. However, in English law, desecration of a dead man's reputation is not protected. His friends remembered that, when the Germans invaded the country on 19 March 1944, László Megay was Mayor of Ungvár. When the German troops carried out the deportation of the Jewish population of the city, Megay was forced to cooperate with the invaders, who were under the control of the legitimate Hungarian government. Indeed, he contributed to the so-called "ghetto" set-up because, as mayor, he had to designate a place to process the migration.

László Megay, who lived in Germany as a refugee after the war, had been investigated for his role during the war. The Allied military courts found that he had not participated in any atrocities and therefore acquitted him, thus allowing him to immigrate to Australia. This was highlighted by the radio series, though the fact

that the authorities had already investigated the matter was omitted.

Another accused in the radio series was Victor Padányi, an eminent Hungarian historian and former high school teacher in Szeged. Padányi was not even a member of any political party. In Australia, as an outstanding intellectual writer, he worked tirelessly to raise Hungarian national cultural life. The attacks launched against him were similar to the Megay case. During the broadcast of the case, Padányi was already deceased.

The author of the radio broadcasts later published a book on Hungary which contained platitudes and clichés. For example, Miklós Horthy was described as a “fascist dictator.” Of course, those who knew Miklós Horthy, his family connections, and ideals would understand the depth of antagonism between the radicals and the Hungarian national state and would only smile at such a description. When the writer mentioned that a person was a “Hungarian army lieutenant,” the reader would automatically presume that this served as proof of being a “Nazi.”

In any event, the Australian Parliament appointed a judge to investigate whether the previous governing Liberal Party, before the Labor Government, had “smuggled” war criminals into Australia. This examination was negative. But another study was started to discover if there really were, amongst us, those who had denied their past and had participated in war crimes.

Allegedly, hundreds of cases were considered by the authorities, who used offices of the communist countries behind the Iron Curtain to gather data against the suspects.

Meanwhile, the Labor government prepared a bill aimed, in the case that the investigation was successful, at prosecuting Australian citizens from Central and Eastern Europe who had been caught up in actions that led to the deportation of Jews to “extermination camps.” The bill developed the concept of murder committed during the war as crimes against humanity.

Australia's leading legal authorities spoke out against this plan. They highlighted the fact that it would be almost impossible to establish a crime committed half a century earlier. Human memory has its limits, and the ability to recognise someone who was then a young man and is now an old man would not be reliable. They referred to the fact that international criminal law jurisprudence recognised its territorial nature, and Australia could not lead criminal proceedings for an offence committed in a different country and jurisdiction. How could one assume that a jury would be able to judge events so distant in time and space? It was doubtful that Soviet "evidence" would be acceptable, especially given that the Soviet Union admitted to thousands of show trials as well as the murder of political opponents. One could also mention the Katyn massacre, where thousands of Polish officers were shot to death.

I watched the developments with interest but did not take part in the discussions. When the bill was debated, as a constitutional lawyer I arrived at the conclusion that the federal government lacked the legal basis on which to draw up a law on this issue.

The appropriate ministries of the federal government were dealing with the problem. They drafted the bill as an amendment to the War Crimes Act of 1945. The legal basis of this constitutional law was the London Convention, concluded by the four major victorious powers. With authorised international consensus, the Australian authorities had been allowed to participate in the trial of Japanese war criminals in Tokyo. But the original idea that this jurisdiction could be extended to offences committed in the European theatre of war was prevented in the heated political debates. For such an addition to the 1945 Act, it would have been necessary to undergo a basic constitutional review.

According to the Australian Federal Constitution, legislation could only emanate from the so-called foreign affairs department. There was a prerequisite that there must be an international convention to which Australia was a signatory, or an international organisation—

for example, the United Nations Security Council—that called for Australia to take appropriate legal action.

In this case, Australia had not signed any international agreement, and no international body had asked Australia to take such steps.

Therefore, I argued that this proposal to change the law had no constitutional basis. The government had only two options: either to seek the cooperation of the states and the people to vote and create the basis for an appropriate legal means to solve the problem, or to administratively deprive the accused of Australian citizenship.

I prepared a twenty-page technical study, in English, in which I validated my point by reference to recent higher court decisions. The study was sent to the government and leading opposition politicians, as well as other prominent legal and political figures. The government gave my view a frosty reception, whilst the opposition conceded to my detailed arguments. The legal advisors' exposition agreed that, if the matter were to be brought to justice, the defence would ask that the High Court review the constitutionality of the law.

In response, Australia's "grey eminence," Mr. B.A. Santamaria—whose opinion I had always held in high regard—stated that the study was thoroughly developed, well supported, and persuasive.

The bill eventually became law. Perhaps a year later, a prosecution was launched against a 74-year-old Ukrainian forester who was charged after becoming involved in a German "cleansing action."

I gave the defence a copy of my study. The High Court finally, by a ratio of 4:3, upheld that the law was constitutional.

Meanwhile, in Canada, a similar judicial process was initiated against Imre Finta, who had been a gendarme captain.

I sent a copy of my study to the defence team. Eventually, Canada's top court acquitted Imre Finta, but his wife died from the stress of the trial. One of the defendants was assassinated, and my

friend Imre, whom I had met in Szeged, had become a shadow of himself.

In those years, the Soviet Union began the process, within a set framework, of reorganising itself and implementing a foreign policy of openness.

What was the background behind this initiative in geopolitical and national-political terms? I believed that the Soviet Union's leadership had decided to boldly draw on the consequences of the world economic situation and, for political reasons, make substantial changes. At the end of World War II, only two superpowers remained: the Soviet Union and the USA. They divided the world between themselves. The American forces alone would have been unable to cope with a possible third world war, so they assisted their former enemies. Japan and West Germany, with the support of the USA, now contributed to the balance of power. The Soviet Union and the USA, who had previously played dominant roles in the global picture, were now only two forces amongst many: Japan, China, India, the Arab world, and the increasingly unified Europe.

Gorbachev, with good insight, sought to limit his objectives to the area between the Carpathian Mountains and the Persian Gulf. Ironically, this had once been proposed by Hitler to Molotov. The Russian leadership had wished to control the Balkans and the Dardanelles, but this demand had been inadmissible to the German Empire.

The Soviet Party Secretary raised the idea of a "House of Europe," in which the Soviet Union would take part. This seemed utopian to me, because Gorbachev only wanted to pursue discussions on domestic policy, so that the Communist Party's leading role would be preserved in a democratic climate for his country.

Therefore, a neutral Central Europe would serve as the dividing area between the NATO military alliance and the Warsaw Treaty

forces. This would mean a neutral West Germany, which neither the Germans nor the other nations of Europe were willing to accept.

The Hungarian point of view on this political process indicated a breakthrough opportunity to regain freedom. After all, the only reason it was possible in 1956 for changes in Hungary was that the Soviet Union listened to national wishes to forget past problems and develop a truly neutral area. However, in 1956, it was not possible for Hungary to proclaim neutrality, regardless of the world situation, with Soviet forces stationed in the country giving warning that the time for neutrality had not yet come.

If the USA had been prepared to withdraw its troops from Germany and give up its bases in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, it would have completely eliminated the "Cold War," and Hungary could have become neutral.

It seemed to me in 1989 that our struggle for independence was only at the beginning. When Antal (Anthony) Endrey, one of the leaders amongst the Australian Hungarian emigrants, repatriated and was very optimistic about the changes that had occurred, I responded in an Easter letter to the local Hungarian Life newspaper:

"Dr. Vitéz Antal (Anthony) Endrey.

Dear Friend!

All of us who know you, either personally or through your writings over the decades, were surprised and shocked by your announcement that you would return home and wish to continue the struggle for the rebirth of the Christian Hungarian nation.

I can sense what severe personal agony preceded this action. Leaving your family and ordered circumstances in Australia would not have been an easy decision.

I agree with you that Hungary will remain our country, despite the fact that we have gained new citizenship and gradually become connected to Australia's economic and political life.

It is also certain that our country can only be built by the Magyars in the Danube-Tisza landscape. As exiles, we left the ancient lands and hoped that we could return once more.

I know how painful it was for you to accept that the emigration days are numbered, and that the vast majority of the second generation has already merged into the foreign population, while the third generation has now been assimilated completely.

Indeed, it is the case that political emigration—whether of the 1945–49 or 1956 exiles—who once were aware of a free and independent Hungary, is shrinking in numbers. But we give thanks to the Lord that, in this final decade, He allows us the ability to support the fight to resurrect the national and Christian spirit in our little country.

So, you cannot claim that, in our immigration, we cannot contribute in any way to the Christian way of life in Hungary from our new (adopted) home.

I do not completely agree with you in how you value the undoubtedly transformed Hungarian domestic life.

I am touched to see, through the miracle of video, and hear the echoes of the song Blessed Virgin Mother, and follow the Holy Right as it precedes a tour of the country, with young people turning to Jesus again to find a way.

This we always hoped for and believed—that this half-century ordeal would one day end.

But the people's enthusiastic demonstrations, the love of our Transylvanian brothers, must not allow us to forget the real global policy objectives, as demonstrated previously by the tragic events of 1956, which ended in blood because the West convinced the masses that the Stalinist Empire was tottering and it was time to regain our freedom."

"I am sure you can see all this well and therefore restrict your strategies to the nation's spiritual renewal. Indeed, this is

possible, but only because it is in Moscow's interest to obtain credit and support from the West. It needs to reorganise the bankrupt Marxist system and has already announced a policy of openness and authorised transformation.

For the time being, it is said that the level of control will be reduced for the peripheral states and peoples.

The free exercise of religion, the restoration of the rule of law, the use of genuine traditional national insignia, and the reintroduction of a free-market economy are all factors which the nation shall embrace, but this does not mean Hungarian independence.

To ensure Hungarian independence, it is a prerequisite that invading Russian forces must leave the country, and the demands of 1956—Hungarian neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty—must be fulfilled.”

Only this will lead to “reconciliation” with the Russian Empire!”

(I wrote about these matters in one of my books in 1974:

“The basic conditions for all reconciliation are that the disputes between the Hungarians and the Danube brother nations be settled in a friendly, peaceful manner, with the two Trianon territorial and economic subjugations eliminated.

Hungary should ensure that it does not aim to be a potential springboard for Western imperialism against the Russian Empire; Hungarians are fighting for their lives and do not need to bleed in the service of foreign interests.

Finally, the Hungarian freedom of religious life could mean that the country both does not want to and cannot break away from Christian Western civilisation.”*)

“Today, as I write, it is doubtful that Moscow would extend openness and restructuring to the internal framework of its foreign policy. Are they willing to retreat behind the ancient Russian borders and accept a neutral Central Europe?

Behind the scenes, negotiations essentially revolved around this issue. The Hungarian national emigration task is to provide the powers involved with information on the need for an economically and politically united Europe, and to demonstrate that the Hungarians, in the Carpathian Basin, are the central people—without them no lasting peace in the region can be assured.

This fight, my dear friend, the Hungarian national emigration wants to continue. However, we do not consider your return to the homeland an about-face, but wish to draw your attention to the fact that your ability to work at home will be substantially limited, because only across the borders are you guaranteed the freedom to do so.

Your repatriation, therefore, is a dangerous business. If current Russian policy changes—because they see that economic restructuring requires too many sacrifices in foreign policy—then it may be necessary to face the forces of retribution again.

It is also true that, in this case, the new national emigration forces could thrive and rejuvenate the fading guards who have been fighting for Hungarian freedom.

We ask the great blessing of God, my dear friend, on your hard journey and your work for your homeland.”

The events have accelerated dramatically since then, and today it seems that the Soviet Union might be willing to accept that some Eastern European nations could join a united Europe. But Russia still insists that the U.S. carry out a large retreat and limit its activities in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Of course, the U.S. was not willing to give up its established Mediterranean positions. At the Maltese meeting, when the Soviet Union suggested that the disarmament talks be extended to the navy, the U.S. president could not give a positive answer. In fact, the foreign minister later insisted

that naval disarmament could not be included, because only the Navy can ensure America's relations with its allies.

Will the Soviet Union allow more concessions? Can they allow more concessions when the internal politics of the various nations apply such intense pressure that disintegration might arise? The U.S. has provided reassurance to the USSR that if the Soviet leadership applies violence against its restless minorities, the USA will only watch and guarantee the survival of the Russian Empire. We do not know the position of the Soviet Union's armed forces or the stance they will take in the final decision.

Will they risk an outbreak of another world war? If the Soviet Union's economic and moral power reserves are at such a low ebb, as the world's press shows today, we can be sure they would want to avoid a world war. As Jesus stated in the Gospel of Luke: if one king has only 10,000 men while another has 20,000, the weaker kingdom is likely to seek peace. Clausewitz also argues that war only occurs when both parties perceive a chance for victory.

This does not mean the end of Russian history, but it is likely that the Russian Empire will finally accept the inevitable and retreat from the West, thereby anticipating a growth in strength. Russia would rid itself of the restless, obsessed European nations, and then the U.S. would also be forced to retreat from Europe. Russian imperialism would have released forces available to it, and it is not impossible that it would gain security of Middle Eastern oil as compensation

