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Declarations of War, World War I

Erika Papp Faber

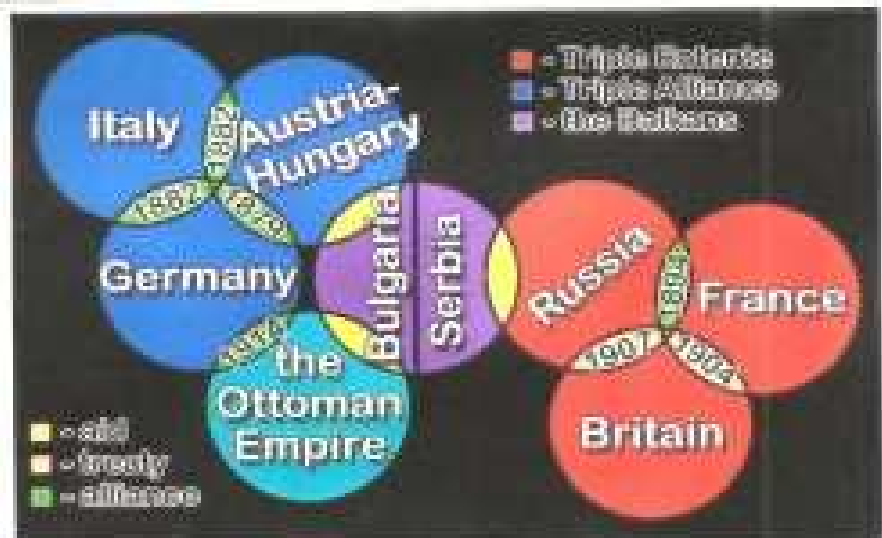
What started out as a local punitive action, the original declaration of war on Serbia by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy soon mushroomed into a global conflagration. This was due mostly to the intricate web of alliances woven across Europe which even reached to the Far East.

The Central Powers, or Triple Alliance, consisted of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Germany and Italy. They were faced by the Triple Entente, consisting of Great Britain, France and Russia. These were the main participants.

But numerous others also joined in. I will try to untangle the various reasons why some of them entered what became World War I, and why such an array of countries was represented at the signing of the Treaty of Trianon at the end.

(Just a point of interest: the rulers of the three main participants in the conflict were related by family ties! German Kaiser Wilhelm II and King George V of England were first cousins; King George and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia were also first cousins; and Kaiser Wilhelm and Tsar Nicholas were third cousins! Unfortunately, theirs exploded into much more than just a family squabble!)

What Austria had wanted all along



was accomplished on July 28th, 1914: the Monarchy declared war on Serbia (as reported in our last issue). Since Germany was allied to Austria-Hungary, this was followed by Germany's declaration of war on Russia on August 1st and on France on August 3rd.

In response, Great Britain and Belgium, its protégé, declared war on Germany on August 4th.

Being part of the British Empire, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India also became involved when Britain did. Some 600,000 Canadians volunteered for service. According to Wikipedia, "the Great War changed (Canada's) history and enabled it to become more independent, while also opening a deep rift between the French and English speaking populations." – The Australians fought mainly in the Middle East, and especially at the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign in Turkey. – The New Zealanders cap-

tured German Samoa, where Germany had set up a wireless station, and they helped to keep Britain supplied with food. – In India, people saw volunteering for the war as a way to break out of the caste system, and 1.5 million signed up. They fought mostly in East Africa, Mesopotamia, Egypt and at Gallipoli.

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On August 6th, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy declared war on Russia, while Serbia declared war on Germany the same day.

The French then declared war on the Monarchy on August 11th, as did Great Britain the following day (August 12th).

Then, on August 23rd, Japan got into the fray as an ally of Great Britain, declaring war on Germany too.

The Monarchy waited until August 27th to declare war on Belgium.

The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) joined the war on October 29th, on the side of the Triple Alliance. In response, Russia, Great Britain and France declared war on Turkey.

But wait – it gets even more complicated! Italy, a member of the Triple Alliance, turned on its allies and declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on May 23rd, 1915!

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Then there was Portugal. There had been skirmishes between the colonial troops of Germany (which had a colony in Southwest Africa) and Portuguese colonial troops stationed in their colony of Angola. The British had requested Portuguese aid to protect their African colonies; consequently Portugal interned some German and Austro-Hungarian ships in Lisbon, on February 23rd, 1916.

Reaction was not long in coming: on March 9th, 1916, Germany declared war on Portugal, and Portugal reciprocated. On March 15th, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy declared war on Portugal.

*

Romania jumped into the fray on August 27th, 1916, when it declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Germany, the Monarchy's ally, then declared war on Romania on August 28th, 1916.

This was followed by Bulgaria, which declared war on Romania either on August 30th or September 1st; and by the Ottoman Empire, which followed suit on August 29th, 30th or September 1st, 1916 (the date is uncertain).

*

Another participant in this boiling cauldron of combatant countries was China. As a bit of background: Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany had declared the port of Qingdao, China a German colony in 1898, and wanted to make it into a "model colony". He then proceeded to military

occupation of the Bay of Jiaozhon. China remained neutral for the time being.

Then the Japanese made political demands and wanted economic privileges in Manchuria and Mongolia, and Japanese control of the Chinese central government. Around that time, a German U-boat torpedoed a ship carrying 900 Chinese workers (among others), southeast of Malta, in the Mediterranean. Among those who died in the attack were 543 Chinese. That is when China broke off relations with Germany, and on August 14th, 1917, declared war on Germany.

*

It was not until the sinking of the British liner Lusitania that the US declared war on Austria-Hungary and Germany, on April 6th, 1917.

One day after the US, Panama declared war on Germany, because its wellbeing depended on America's success in the war.

On the same day, Cuba also declared war on Germany because German submarines were sinking ships – even those belonging to neutral states – in off-shore waters. Yet it was not until December 16th, 1917, that Cuba declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A draft was instituted then, but by the time troops were ready to leave for Europe, the Armistice intervened.

Nicaragua had been under US military occupation since 1912, and a treaty signed between the two countries in 1914 consolidated the American protectorate in Nicaragua. So on May 8th, 1917, Nicaragua declared war on the Central Powers. It did not send troops to Europe, but it broke off relations with Germany which had wanted to construct an inter-oceanic canal through that country.

*

Greece, one of the beneficiaries of

the Balkan Wars (mentioned in the February issue of Magyar News), had allied itself with Serbia against Bulgaria. Greece remained neutral at the beginning of the war, but on June 25th, 1917, also declared war on the Triple Alliance.

*

We're not finished yet! Siam – of all places! – today known as Thailand – was not allied to any of the combatants, but saw an opportunity to regain territory it had been pressured to give up by the French and the British. It also hoped to terminate German treaties it had been pressured to sign (and perhaps also gain some of the German colonies in the Pacific). It waited to see how the chips would fall. After the entry of the US into the war in April of 1917, it became apparent that the Triple Alliance would be on the losing end of the conflict. That is when Siam declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, on July 22nd, 1917.

A Siamese expeditionary force arrived in France on July 30th, 1918, and some of their pilots were sent to French air schools for training. The Siamese contingent took part in the Second Battle of the Marne and in the Champagne and Argonne Offensives before the Armistice. It was this token participation which entitled them also to a seat at the table in Versailles and Trianon!

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Who would have thought that the assassination of one royal couple would lead to a conflict of such immense proportions, involving so many different nationalities from around the globe? Or that "the war to end all wars" would not achieve that goal, but would have unimaginably far-reaching effects on the history of the world, including the history of Hungary?

On the Way to the Trenches

By: Paletta

In this centennial year of the Treaty of Trianon, when we recall the outbreak of World War I, we might wonder what it was really like for the soldier on the battlefield. In a handwritten family publication which appeared in 1921, I have come across a description by a soldier who had been there. This piece is taken from the first and the last of a series of four about his military experience. He signed them only as "Paletta". It seems more than likely that this pseudonym was used by one of my Dad's friends, Éliás Győző, who was also a talented painter. The illustrations here are his own.

We had originally published this piece in 2014, when we commemorated the centennial of the outbreak of World War I.

*van a néven íjeltől ismét,
m, aztán alaposan elfordoa a
odoba a kőre fűhelye*



When I was first assigned to the march on December 29, 1915, I was, so to speak, still a mere boy. That great enthusiasm in which the people had been caught up at the outbreak of the war had disappeared by then, being replaced by indifference. Everyone began to feel the thorns of the war. The stories told by those who had been at the battlefronts depicted the stark reality of hardship and suffering rather than romantic fairytales.

And it was perfectly natural that they told about their eventful days. We young ones listened to them with awe mixed with horror. On the basis of these, a terribly chaotic picture of the battlefield had formed in my mind too; I imagined that military life consisted of a series of bayonet charges and an incessant series of fusillades, where one would fight strenuously until a charitable bullet redeemed him from privations – some for only a short while – others forever...

...I have been assigned to the march, therefore this fate awaits me too, exhaustion, suffering, and finally leaving this world with a violent, so-called heroic death even before I had enjoyed anything of life's joys... No! That can't be! But why should you be the exception? ... Perhaps you are different from your contemporaries who were not spared the scythe of the bone man? ... No! But then why are you expecting a different fate? ... Such thoughts chased each other in my mind. In my dreams I saw myself fall in bloody assaults, pierced by a Russian bayonet, at other times maimed by a grenade and bleeding to death all alone ... or collapsing after having been shot treacherously... and I saw the aching sorrow of my parents, my sick mother's tearstained, red-rimmed eyes when they got news of their son's death...

It is only natural that such dreams did not bring rest after the day's activity. Drills continued unrelentingly until we started, in sleet, in -25°C cold, in biting wind.

I felt like one sentenced to death, like one who doesn't even know what he did to deserve this punishment. I made every effort to complete my drawings and any unfinished business so that the administration of my papers, as I thought at the time, should not cause any concern for others. I

had nothing more to hope for; the thought that I had to leave those whom I loved so much and who thought of me with love, was painful.

*

The winter of 1916 was a hard one in Bukovina. In many places, the snow was waist high. The cutting cold was replaced by unexpectedly mild weather; the snow melted suddenly. Melting slush, thin mud gushed in rivulets in all directions. I first got into the trenches at this time, into the forest of Dolrok (?) near Czernowitz, known at the time as the most vicious part of the Bukovina front. Behind the front, everyone talked about the horrors of the Dolrok craters. Those who had been there recalled it as having been hell. And I'm still glad I'm assigned there...

...We started out toward the trenches at dusk on March 18th. By the time we reached the forest, it had become totally dark. Some kind of fearful feeling came over me, as I approached that place which I thought would become my cemetery. Time and again rockets flash into the air, spreading blinding light around them, making the night all the darker afterwards. We are going, or rather, stumbling and groping our way forward on the slippery clay of the mountain-side... Already one can clearly distinguish the individual gunshots. What's this? I ask unwittingly when I hear a strange whizzing. They reassure us that it's only a stray bullet. The whizzing becomes increasingly frequent, bullets whistle from every side. I shudder when one of them comes close to me, although by then it's too late...

...It's pitch dark by the time we reach the reserve trenches. The head of the battalion stops. We are waiting for the leader. Finally, singly and in groups we step into the communication trench which takes us to the front lines. I have

enough time to look around until it's my turn to start. A mild light twinkles into the darkness from the dugouts scattered through the forest, calling to us cheerily to rest a little before going on. I can't rest yet. About 200 steps from me some larger brightness can be seen; I am incapable of recognizing what it is. As I approach it, I see that it is not the light of one lamp. It constantly agitates me, disappearing behind trees, and then appearing again...Now I see it, the battalion is heading that way; the communications trench starts right next to it. Actually, it is not the light of one lamp, but the flame of candles placed on the kneeler of a simple crucifix that vibrates before me. Were they votive candles, or were they lit in memory of the fallen? I never found out.

The candlelight flickering in the dark forest directs my thoughts toward heaven. I lift my cap, make the sign of the cross, and send a brief prayer to the Lord of heaven: may he grant that the flame of those many candles may not be my funeral candle. A sigh escapes almost everyone's chest. The eyes of the older ones fill with tears, they are probably thinking of their children, their families. What will become of them if they don't go home? Who will take care of them? ... The many candles light up the figure of the Savior, and he seems to promise: He will be their Father instead of their father... One more glance at the crucifix, and I step into the communication trench. Everyone has become silent; all are absorbed only with themselves. Listlessly we drag ourselves forward in the water that reaches way above the knees.

Walking in the thin, clayey mud is exhausting, the boots stick. As we keep stopping, I feel that I'm cold. I am wet and muddy up to my ears. Several times we get lost, then return to the nearest fork to look for the head of the battalion. We just stop again, when I hear some kind of whizzing – it's not a gunshot that I already know – and then there is a horrific crack, after which the air continues to whiz for a long time. My heart is in my throat all of a sudden, it almost stops beating, so that afterwards it starts to tick even more crazily...It was only a mine. Even more came by the time we reached the front line.

The communication trench had been drenched in several places, it had collapsed and we had to go on the open terrain, constantly lit up. Bullets whistle from every direction: it is useless to seek cover.

After a very long time we reach the front line. In those days some parts of the trenches were covered with shrapnel awning. These sections were unusually dark. Several times I bump my head on a beam, so that

I'm almost dizzy. These covered parts of the trench serve as living quarters for the rank and file. In some places fire blinks in holes cut into the wall, spreading smoke that stings the eyes. The smoke is choking, but the warmth still feels good to the soaked men. Steam rises from the clothing of the soldiers lying next to the fire as they dry. The vibrating human shadow cast on the wall by the glimmering embers is something frightening, ghostlike. Unwittingly, the fantastic witches' kitchen of children's fairytales comes to mind.

At intervals, I get goosebumps as a I pass by a mine thrower, a flame thrower or the entrance to a communication trench leading to a crater ...

... I still take over the section of trench marked out for me, assign the posts, and then thoroughly exhausted, lie down in a drier hole, in an "officer's accommodation".

Translated by EPF



Personal Memories of the Outbreak of World War I

Vajk Edit

In the early 1900s, my (EPF's) Grandfather, Vajk József, was Chief Engineer of the Vajdahunyad Iron Works in Transylvania, a position that was a government job. My Aunt Edit Vajk, fourth of the five Vajk children, was 14 years old when World War I broke out.

Based on her diary, she had recorded in her memoirs how she and her family experienced that tumultuous event.

Although we had published this article six years ago, on the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the war, it seems appropriate to revive it now, when we recall the events that led up to the Treaty of Trianon.

In 1914, 5 (five) Vajk children were taking their exams at the secondary school at Déva: Vivy from the first year (corresponding to our 5th grade), Paul and I from the fourth (the equivalent of 8th grade), Dusi and Raul finished their eighth year (12th grade), and would graduate. The teachers said, 'The Vajk School has arrived!'...

"On June 29th, Mama and Apa took Dusi and Raul with them for the closing ceremonies, in a way to say good-bye to their *alma mater*. They returned home saying that the festivities had been greatly simplified, because news had come that the Serbs had murdered Francis Ferdinand and his wife Sophie at Sarajevo, through some assassin. Of course, every newspaper was full of the events, and the '*Vasárnapi Ujság*' published photographs of the imperial couple, and of the orphaned children. This remained a topic for quite a while.

"After some time, our parents decided that we would start out for our summer vacation. There was no question as to where, since the previous year we had vacationed at Portoré (today's Kraljevica on the

Bay of Buccari by the Adriatic), where we all had a wonderful time. We bathed a lot in the sea, and right after our return had started to count the months and weeks until we could leave to go back again...



Vajk Edit

"The large suitcase boxes were brought down from the attic, and Mama sat in front of them and packed, starting with the tub of lard, all kinds of foodstuffs, baked goods in big boxes, clothing and heaven knows what else. Meanwhile, she would send us children to get this or that. She was finished in an amazingly short time, her mind worked like a fully programmed computer...

"Next morning, the ironworks' carriage took us to the early train. Apa registered our luggage, and after having changed trains at Piski, the express was already flying us to Budapest, the first stop on our trip. We were given guest rooms at the state motor factory, whose director was the superintendent of all the state ironworks...

"I was sick all day; only when one of the children yelled, 'There's the sea!' did my malaise stop instantly...

"Now we spent the night in a hotel in Fiume (called Rijeka today), but the bedbugs were biting fiercely during the night. Amazingly, only

Dusi and I could not sleep. After a while we got up and, leaning out of the window, we feasted our eyes on the sea and the lights that moved here and there... Next day, a small boat took us to Portoré, on the edge of the Bay of Quarnero. As we got off the boat, women offered to carry our baggage and large trunks to our hotel up on the mountain. I remember one elderly woman began to cry when Apa did not want to let her carry the large trunk. They would attach some kind of rag pillow at their waist, and putting a strap around the load and across their shoulder, they would proceed upward with even steps.

"Young girls get used to carrying heavy loads early on, because they carry water in largish barrels on their back. Water is a precious treasure here among the dolomitic rocks. We were horrified to see that the rainwater from the roofs was led by pipes into cisterns and was used even for drinking. It seems to me we kept buying mineral water while we were there.

"We lived on the first floor of a house a fairish way up along the steeply rising road... It was a longish walk down the steep road to reach the harbor – usually in blazing sunshine – where going around the pier's bay we reached the bathing establishment. There was a long row of cabins, with a pleasant sandy beach in front of them. We enjoyed the seawater immensely, although in the salt baths of Lobogó we had already experienced how much the salt water lifted our legs. Mama and Dusi wore bathing suits with long sleeves, separate coat and long slacks, according to the etiquette of the time, while we younger ones had short-sleeved one-piece bathing dresses. Even the boys bathed in bathing costumes that buttoned at the shoulder...

"For lunch we had to go back up to the apartment. An engineer's salary did not run to feeding so many children in a restaurant. In the af-

ternoon, we went down again to the shore, but not to bathe; instead, we looked for a suitable spot further along the beach. We kids would take off our shoes and stockings and go splashing into the water, although we had to be careful, because the rocks along the beach easily bruised our feet.

"We admired the wonders of the sea. We used stones to surround a small area for an aquarium, and gathered the starfish; the red brush-like floating strands which would collapse when a tiny animal lit upon them; sea cucumbers; tiny crabs...

The tide would come in at dusk. Ever higher waves came in, and we often sat on a rock, unbelieving, saying they won't come this far...but they did!

"Apa explained what caused the tides – this way, things stuck in our minds, without even noticing, not during lessons.

"It was an ideal, wonderful vacation. Into this broke the news of the declaration of war. For us, the most painful part was the telegram for Apa: 'Return immediately to your post!' This was followed by sudden packing, and travel to Fiume. There, the mood was of near panic, and at the station, there was veritable hysteria. 'The last train left today!'... 'The last train leaves tomorrow, and all railway service will be suspended!'

"We stood there before 'the last train', amidst terrible commotion. Finally, some smart aleck 'made order'. First, the children must be put on the train! ... They shoved Vivy and me up into the carriage, while Mama looked up at us in despair...'Next the women!' was the command... A lot of yelling, chaos... then by way of the window we were handed down to the embracing arms of our parents...

"Slowly the craziness subsided,



Vajk family c. 1905. L to r: Raul, Dusi, Paul (standing), in cart Vivy and Edit. Mama and Apa standing on the steps

and all of us somehow made it into one compartment, in which we sometimes had to make room for others, or give it over so they could rest.

"At the last minute, Apa gave a porter our luggage, with the appropriate fee, and asked him to take care of it. I still remember: he wore the number 1 on his cap. At home, everyone was horrified and predicted that we would wait for it in vain.

"Nevertheless, everything arrived intact, although with considerable delay. It was true that the pieces stank terribly, because the sea cucumbers and starfish had begun to rot.

"At that time, we could not see much change in Vajdahunyad. We didn't understand why Apa had to return home so post-haste.

"We had brought some seawater in a bottle to convince Paul's friends who did not believe that seawater is salty. The friends, sons of the machinists and mechanics of the ironworks, tasted it one after the other and spat it out,

perhaps unbelieving, accusing us of having put salt into it ourselves...

"It's true that Raul could not go to Budapest to register at the technical university, as he had planned. Instead, he became an employee of the ironworks, as a trainee, in hopes that he would then be exempt should he be drafted. Together with Dusi he went up to Kolozsvár. Dusi stayed there, enrolled in mathematics and physics courses at the university, while Raul enrolled in law school, and returned home, being a kind of absentee student, going back to the university only to take exams...

"In the beginning, there were some – including Apa for a while – who put out little flags on a wall map, indicating the fronts. They also talked politics, scolding Tisza István, although I recently learned from the Révay encyclopedia that he had struggled hard against the declaration of war, recommending that they should be satisfied with demanding some form of restitution. But it was all for nothing: Vienna and Berlin decided in favor of war.

“Saturday evening movies at the ironworks club were important events in the life of the city. Here, in the hall, the officials sat around tables and during the intermissions, and during the long-drawn out waiting time before the show began, they would drink beer and eat *sóskifli* (salt crescents). Once we were sitting at the same table with the Kabdebo’s (the husband was a city official), when someone began the song which had become popular then: “*Megállj, megállj, kutya Szerbia! Nem lesz tiéd Hercegovina, mert a magyar nem enged, míg a vére nem ered, bármennyit is szenved!*” (Hold on, hold on, you dog, Serbia! Hercegovina shall not be yours, because Hungarians won’t let go, until their blood spills, no matter how much they suffer!) Poor Mrs. Kabdebo burst out crying, because she was born Serbian...

“In the fall, news came that the Russians had broken through the Carpathians at Galicia. Mama became very frightened: what will happen if they came further, and reached Kolozsvár first? She got on the train to bring Dusi home.

But by then, railroad travel was very chaotic. She had to wait all night at Tövis for a train, the starting time of which no one knew.

The waiting room was not heated, neither was the train compartment. She was chilled through and was sick when she arrived home. From then on, she had a constant fever and became a bedridden invalid.

“The war situation seemed to improve and Dusi went back to Kolozsvár, coming home again only for Christmas...”

(Mama - my grandmother - died the following year, of tuberculosis-related kidney failure, six weeks after her son Paul died of tuberculosis. Ed.)

*Translated from Vajk Edit' Memoirs
by Erika Papp Faber*

Ha vége lesz a háborúnak ...

Vajk Viola

Ha vége lesz a háborúnak
Mily nagy lesz a nyomor:
Mily sok helye lesz a búnak,
Nem lesz jól lakva a gyomor.
Mindenki örvend, ha valamit ehett,
Patkányhúst eszünk - lehet.

When the war is over...

When the war is over
What great misery there will be:
How much room there will be for sorrow,
Stomachs will not be full.
Everyone will be happy to be able to eat anything,
We will eat rat meat - perhaps.

(Vajk Viola became the Mother of EPF)

Öt óra, este

Csanády György

Meleg szalon, elszongó lágy dalok,
Öt-óra-tea, este.
Hervadt virágok, zizegő ruhák, égő illatok.

Kanál megreszket a csésze falán.
Fölcseggel zokogva régi porcelán,
Egy emlék réved el a szíveken,
A némult zongorán:

A Kárpátokban egymást eltemetve
Szállong a hó és gyöngyözik a vér.
Most minden messzi, s végtelen fehér;
Mély sápadt csönd.
Öt óra, este.

Csanády György (1895-1952), author of the "Székely Anthem", was a soldier at the Russian front in World War I, an experience that left an indelible impression on him. This poem captures a brief moment, a small episode after his return to civilian life, a moment that today we might call evidence of post-traumatic stress syndrome, as he is transported back from a warm social affair to a snowy Carpathian battle scene.

Five o`clock, evening

Csanády György

Warm drawing room, murmuring, mellow tunes
Five-o`clock-tea, evening.
Wilted, drooping flowers, rustling, swishing gowns,
flaming perfumes.

A spoon trembles against a teacup wall,
Old china gives a sobbing, tinkling call,
A memory strays over every heart,
O`er silenced piano tall:

In the Carpathians, on each other heaping,
On sparkling blood the snow flurries alight.
Now everything is distant, endless white;
Deep, pale silence.
Five o`clock, evening.

67th Café Budapest

Allyson Szabo

This traditional fund-raising event is the highlight of the annual Hungarian social season in the Bridgeport, CT area. It is so uplifting to see the young students who are the recipients of the donors' generosity.



Ally, Beau (Ally's escort) and Livvy (Ally's sister)

For 67 years now, the Pannonia Hungarian-American Club has held an event very near and dear to the heart of every Hungarian-American who is a part of it. I've attended this Café Budapest debutante ball for four years now, and every year I look forward to another one. In such a beautiful and ceremonious way, young and old come together not only to celebrate the coming of age for the debutantes and escorts, but to also commemorate the history of Hungary and the strengthening of her people in America.

Not only do the young folks of the Hungarian community get to experience a world of its own at this ball, but the funds are used to support them in their academic success. Annually, Mrs. Claudia Balogh presents the Justin Margitay Balogh Scholarships in honor of

her son. This year, four rising stars were awarded this scholarship: Julianna Lajko, Adam Barnett, Grace Geckeler and Onora Brown. Even though I know I won't be old enough until a few years from now to accept such an award, every year I sit on the edge of my seat awaiting the names to be announced.

Ever since four years ago at my very first experience at the Café Budapest, I wanted to be one of those girls who dresses up in a gorgeous white gown and ballroom dances with a partner... and last year I lived my dream. It is surreal to meet other people my age who share the same love for a culture that is so deeply engraved in our hearts. I made friends I didn't know I could make, and even in that hour or so that

we all spent in our suite laughing and eating some appetizers before we presented ourselves was the most fun I've ever had at the Café Budapest ball.

Before the presentation of the debutantes and escorts, another part of the ceremony are the various speeches that embody exactly what the Pannonia Hungarian-American Club stands for and promotes. H.E. Péter B. Nagy, Consul of National Cohesion, presented a beautiful speech at this year's ball:

"You all may know since 2010 the Hungarian Government gave citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living beyond the borders. Many of you have already received what is rightfully yours. There can be no question for us that this decision was necessary in the light of historical justice. This year we celebrate the year of national

unity. Nor can our belonging be overshadowed by the dark past. We all know how much this nation has suffered over the last 100 years. But we need to work on the painful memory of the past and focus on the future and work together for making a happy Hungarian nation, together with a happy Hungarian diaspora. At the same time, it is extremely important for us not to forget the past and to commemorate our heroes and victims. Hungarian national culture is also essential for a strong Hungary, and it is the state's duty to preserve and maintain it. In this year when we are celebrating the national unity and commemorating the 100th anniversary of the unfair Trianon treaty, when Hungary lost about two thirds of its territory and population... in this year it is especially important for us to make us feel together with those who live here in the United States and beyond Hungary's borders."

What I found so compelling about his speech is that it really sounded like a rally call to me and my fellow Hungarians to preserve our culture and expand it, so that we may be recognized and be supported by all those around us. No matter what event it is, whether it be the Café Budapest ball or the memorial for the 1848 Revolution, I always step back and admire the sense of pride and unity that everyone shares in that room. This community has become a world that I want to keep in my life forever and that I love to share with my family and friends, many of whom wish they had something like that to call their own. I'm extremely proud to call myself a Hungarian and I know I will always find a home with my people.

Allyson Szabo attends Trumbull (CT) High School, plays the flute and is a member of the school's marching band, which has been ranked second in the nation. She is a granddaughter of our webmaster Karolina Tima Szabo.

67th Café Budapest



*Top: Valéria Miklós, President; Prof. Christopher Ball, Chairman; Péter B. Nagy, Consul;
Middle: Claudia Balogh presents the scholarships with Christopher Ball;
Bottom: Debutantes and their escorts*

Magyar Treasures: *Aranybulla* – the Golden Bull

Judit Vasmatics Paolini

Signed seven years after the Magna Carta, the Aranybulla (Golden Bull, so named for the seals – called bulla in Latin – attached to it) was written in Latin, and was one of the first European documents constitutionally restricting the power of a monarch. It became the basic charter of the country.

N.B. The King's name can be interchangeably András or Endre.

King Imre (Emeric) ruled over Hungary and Croatia from 1194-1204. Hoping to overthrow his older brother the king, Duke Endre (Andrew) fought Imre in a few battles. In 1203, Endre attempted this venture once again but did not prevail. Instead, he was imprisoned; nonetheless, he was released from captivity the following year. Nearing his death in 1204, King Imre decreed the coronation of his young son, László (Ladislaus III), who was only four years old.

King Imre hoped the child's coronation would protect the boy's succession to the throne. The ailing king made peace with Duke Endre and appointed him as regent for László until the young king would reach the age of maturity. However, this was not to be. Endre did not honor or protect the child king's interests. Instead, he looked after his self-interest and confiscated the money Imre had bestowed on László.

Fearing for her young son, Imre's widow, Queen Constance of Aragon escaped with the child



László to Vienna, Austria. Here the two received protection from Duke Leopold VI who was a cousin to Imre and Endre. However, young King László met an untimely death in Vienna in 1205; his reign lasted only five months. Had King László lived, Endre would not have become king under the normal order of succession. As it was, Duke Endre was crowned King Endre II of Hungary and Croatia in 1205.

In 1222, King Endre II issued the *Aranybulla* (Golden Bull). This proclamation leveled some of the King's authority, for it constitutionally restricted the powers of the monarch. Though signing this charter was forced upon him (as explained further below), it is exactly this act for which King Endre II is most remembered.

The ideas presented in the charter were influenced by the advent of a "nobility-middle class" which was quite extraordinary for a feudal system. However, it was under King Endre II's reign that the former social structure started to deteriorate.

So what were some of events which eventually forced the king's hand and resulted in a document such as the *Aranybulla*? We must consider the actions of the

king and his wife. King Endre and his queen, Gertrude of Merania, were quite extravagant and self-indulgent. (This formed the basis of the plot of the opera "Bánk bán".) In addition, the king recklessly spent exuberant amounts on his numerous military expeditions. Gertrude successfully advanced the stature of her relatives (who were of German ancestry) in the court by convincing Endre to grant them royal lands. In fact, Endre habitually bestowed land grants – gifts, royal estates, castles, etc. – to his steadfast servants, many of whom had fought in his numerous military expeditions. The king had hoped such gifts would maintain their loyalty.

The Magyar royal servants (freemen who owned property and were subservient only to the king) were disenchanted by such gifts, for the recipients were not of Magyar lineage. The foreigners gained dominance and attained more power than the *servientes regis* (royal servants). Furthermore, this shift in power brought about a change in the nation's class and economic structure.

Without examining Endre's entire reign, we must look at his involvement with the Fifth Crusade. In 1217, King Endre II finally fulfilled the commitment he had to lead a crusade to the Holy Land. He was bound to do so by his father, King Béla III, who had left him land and money purposely for this task, but Endre kept postponing this obligation. Nonetheless, Hungary participated in the Fifth Crusade as did France, Germany, Portugal and others. As mentioned, King Endre II had recklessly spent large sums on military expeditions. So in order to finance the crusade, he had to sell and mortgage a sizable number of royal estates. He embarked on this journey with a massive army. The



Proclamation of the Golden Bull. Painting by Jantyik András, in chamber of the Upper House of Parliament in Budapest

cavalry was 10,000 strong (if not more), and the infantry was also immense.

The crusade was a colossal disappointment and without victory. Yes, initially Endre won a few battles, but he became ill and returned to Hungary in 1218. Added to his lack of success was his great debt which compelled him to levy exceedingly high taxes on the serfs which ultimately cut into the lesser nobles' revenues. He debased the coinage, which meant that there was less precious metal in the coins while their face value remained the same.

Finally, the lesser nobles rebelled in 1222, and coerced King Endre II to sign the *Aranybulla*. This document of utmost significance was formulated by Klétus, Provost of Eger and Royal Chancellor. It is worth noting that a good portion – one-third! – of this document addressed grievances of the royal servants. This charter not only restricted some of the King's power, but it also introduced the rights of the Hungarian nobility and aristocracy by elevating royal servants above all others.

Furthermore, it granted the unique right to disobey the King when his actions conflicted with the law. In

addition, aristocrats and the Church were liberated from taxation. No longer were noblemen obligated to go to war outside of Hungary's borders or finance such wars. We will not discuss all the articles (31) presented in this charter, but simply note that the *Aranybulla* is of great historical significance, for it presented a pattern which set the foundation for the nation's first constitution.

The *Aranybulla* of 1222 is often enough likened to the Magna Carta. It is the original constitutional charter set forth in Hungary, as was the Magna Carta the first of its kind decreed in England in 1215. Yes, contacts between the two nations can be easily demonstrated during this time period. However, there is no evidence to support the idea that the writing of one doctrine influenced the construction of the other, for one finds no direct relation between the texts of these two documents. A distinct difference between these two charters is that the Magna Carta enhanced the stature of all royal subjects, but the *Aranybulla* empowered the Hungarian aristocracy to dominate the lower orders and influence the crown!

Yes, King Endre II was coerced into signing the *Aranybulla* in 1222

which set the foundation as the nation's first constitution. Yes, it restricted the king's power and granted rights to Hungarian nobility and aristocracy. However, signing the decree also benefited Endre, for it eased the tension between the royal nobles and the flourishing middle class. In this manner it also prevented tensions among the classes from escalating to a greater conflict at the time.

Judit Vasmatics Paolini is a former member of the Southern Connecticut State University Alumni Association Board of Directors, former lecturer at Tunxis Community College, and a member of the Magyar

Magyar News Online

242 Kings Hwy Cut-off
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.magyarnews.org

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An Increasingly Rare Easter Custom

Erika Papp Faber

Hajdúdorog, located in the northeastern part of the Great Plain, is known as "the city most faithful to its Greek Catholic faith". The Greek (Byzantine) Catholic cathedral has retained a characteristic way of celebrating the Resurrection of Christ at Easter. In a tradition handed down from one generation to the next, young men in festal attire stand guard before the symbolic sepulcher of Christ (Krisztus-sír), from Good Friday until Easter Sunday. (We had mentioned them briefly in the April 2017 issue of MNO).

Wearing the traditional garb of white shirt, black jacket and pants, a white decorative handkerchief and a "Bocskai-sűveg" (felt cap), pairs of young men stand guard, with sabers drawn, before the symbolic holy sepulcher set up in the Greek Catholic cathedral of Hajdúdorog, from Good Friday until Easter Sunday. They also participate in the midnight Resurrection service on Holy Saturday, in the Easter Sunday festive Liturgy and at the blessing of the *pászka* (the Easter bread).*

They are the *Krisztus-katonák* (the Soldiers of Christ), a position that even today is considered an honor. Until the middle of the 20th century, only young men who had completed their compulsory military service and had not yet married could volunteer for their ranks. Today, the military service requirement has been dropped; they are only required to be unmarried Greek Catholics from Hajdúdorog.

Their service is not for show. It does not matter that the church is sometimes empty when they are guarding the sepulcher. They still perform the prescribed movements with discipline and precision. "We are not stars of the moment. Ours is the hard work of several decades, as we guard our faith and practice our tradition", said the leader of the *Krisztus-katonák*, Corporal Horváth Zoltán last year. "It doesn't matter whether there

is anyone there, whether people are looking at us. We are not *Krisztus-katonák* so that people should notice us, but they notice us because we are *Krisztus-katonák*." Although by now he has a job as an agricultural engineer, he has continued to be involved with this ministry.

For festive occasions, local families lend them the sabers (most of them date to the 1848 Freedom Fight) as well as the attire which, in days of old, was what grooms wore for their wedding. Horváth Zoltán wears his grandfather's wedding attire and boots. Only the tassel hanging from his saber indicates his rank. His duties include calling together the young men and leading the rehearsals, starting at the beginning of Lent. They meet two or three times a week to practice the basic steps and movements. Stress is placed on spiritual preparation as well. Discipline is basic to the training, and volunteers have sometimes had to be taken down a peg or two in the process.

Family tradition often plays a role in a young man's decision to volunteer as a *Krisztus-katona*. In many instances, the fathers and grandfathers were also members of the group, and lifetime friendships are frequently developed. Membership is an experience that lives within, and the young men remain proud of the fact that they also stood at the sepulcher at one time.

The group also takes part in other Church feasts and at other festive occasions, such as the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Archdiocese, but they never wear their distinctive garb at those times.

Pastor Dalanics Zoltán related: "The service of the *Krisztus-katonák* is a real miracle for me. I see these boys on weekdays too, but when they put on the garb, and arrive at the church and stand at Christ's tomb without moving, then it's not their exterior that changes, but their concentration and absorption radiates from their glance."

Making the National Register of Spiritual Cultural Heritage in 2016 has given a boost to this tradition which has all but disappeared elsewhere. "As long as there are *Krisztus-katonák*, there will be faith in Hajdúdorog, and conversely, as long as there is faith in Hajdúdorog, there will be *Krisztus-katonák* as well," declared Kocsis Fülöp, Greek Catholic Metropolitan-Archbishop.

**Pászka is a special bread made only for the Easter meal. It is baked with one dozen eggs - since these are forbidden during the Lenten season traditionally - and given an elaborate top. Usually there is a braided cross, surrounded by a raised rim. It is the center of the meal on Pascha/ Easter Sunday. (Information provided by a Byzantine rite priest, Fr. Chris Zuger of Albuquerque, NM).*



Left: Greek Catholic cathedral of Hajdudorog, dedicated to the Presentation of Mary in the Temple; right, top: Krisztus-katonák guarding Christ's tomb; bottom: the entire group practicing their routine (source: Hajdu-Bihar megyei értéktár)

The Hungarian Operetta

Olga Vállay Szokolay

In the long list of Hungaricums, in the company of Tokaji aszú and Goulash, is Hungarian Operetta. Musicologically, the operetta occupies a hazy spot between opera, light opera, opera buffa and the musical. At the head of the impressive line of Magyar operetta composers is Lehár Ferenc, best known to the world as Franz Lehar, whose 150th birthday we'll celebrate this April. Next in the line is Huszka Jenő, who would be 145 years old this April. They were followed by a respectable number of other composers. Here, however, we wish to throw a party for these two "birthday boys" only.

It is perhaps more difficult to describe *music* than fine arts or performance on stage. The best way of reading this article would be by simultaneously listening to some CDs of songs by our composers, melodies that have been popular from the time of their appearance to the present day. People humming them may not even know their source, let alone the composer's name. Hopefully, reading this will ameliorate this shortcoming.

Lehár Ferenc was born on April 30th, 1870 in Komárom,

Kingdom of Hungary (now Komarno, Slovakia), the eldest son of Franz Lehar senior, an Austrian bandmaster of the Austro-Hungarian Army, and Christine Neubrandt, a Hungarian woman from a family of German descent. Until the age of 12, Ferenc spoke only Hungarian. To indicate the correct vowel in the Magyar orthography, he later put an acute accent above the "a" of his father's surname to read as "Lehár".

His younger brother Anton was to become a professional officer and entered cadet school in Vienna. Ferenc, at the same time studied violin at the Prague Conservatory, but was advised by Antonin Dvorák to focus on composition.

The school's rules did not allow students to study both at the same time, and the boy was strongly pressured to concentrate on violin as a practical matter, reasoning that he could study composition later, on his own.

He obeyed but, aside from some clandestine lessons with Zdeněk Fibich, as a composer he was self-taught. After graduation in 1888, he joined his father's band in Vienna, as assistant bandmaster. Within two years he became bandmaster at Losonc (now Lucenec, Slovakia), as the youngest bandmaster in the Austro-Hungarian Army at that time. He later left the Army and joined the Navy. At

Pola (Pula), he was First Kappelmeister from 1894 to 1896.

Then he rejoined the Army, serving in the garrisons at Trieste, Budapest and Vienna until, in 1902, he became conductor at the historic *Vienna Theater an der Wien*.

While Lehár is most famous for his operettas, he also wrote sonatas, symphonic poems and marches, as well as a number of waltzes such as *Gold and Silver* for a special event in 1902. After several unsuccessful theatrical attempts, he arrived at the probably most significant milestone of his life: *The Merry Widow*, in 1905. It was an instant success, with melodic songs such as *Vilja*.

This operetta may also have later played a lifesaving role for him and his wife.

His 1910 work *Zigeunerliebe* (Gypsy Love) was revived in 1920 with operatic tenor Richard Tauber, who later sang in many of Lehár's operettas, such as *Frasquita*, in 1922. Between 1925 and 1934, he wrote six – lesser known – operettas specifically for Tauber's voice. The next overwhelming success came in 1929 with *The Land of Smiles* (performed in Shanghai for the first time in 2018), with the ever-popular song *Dein ist mein ganzes Herz* ("You Are My Heart's Delight"). His most ambitious work, *juditta* in 1934 is closer to opera than to operetta, with the melodic *Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiss* ("On my lips every kiss is like wine").

The later 1930's and the rapid spread of Nazism brought uneasy times for Lehár. Not only were most of his librettists from the cultural milieu of Vienna Jewish, so was the family of his wife, *Sophie Paschkis*. She her-



Lehár Ferenc and Huszka Jenő

self had converted to Catholicism upon their marriage in 1924 with the Roman Catholic Ferenc. Yet her origins generated increasing hostility towards them, personally and professionally. Fortunately for them, since Hitler was a great fan of Lehár's music and "The Merry Widow" being his favorite, *Sophie Lehár* was given the status of "Ehrenarierin" (honorary Aryan by marriage) that saved her from being deported. Understandably, Lehár cultivated his connection to Hitler during WW2. In 1939 and 1940, he personally received awards from him in Berlin and Vienna, including the Goethe Medal.

Franz Lehár died in 1948 in Bad Ischl, Austria at age 78. The popularity of his music was promoted by his younger brother Anton, the administrator of the estate. Perennial enjoyment was bequeathed to the worldwide audience which has faithfully guarded Lehár's memory ever since.

Huszka Jenő, oldest child of Judge Huszka Ödön (de pusztaferencszállás!...) and Burger Etelka was born on April 24th, 1875 at Szeged.

The father often played the flute at home and he first taught his son to play the violin. At age five, Jenő was considered a child prodigy, playing the violin at a benefit concert. He

also learned to play the piano, on his own.

He was still in high school when he audaciously sent a copy of a comedy he had written to famous actor Paulay Ede at the Nemzeti Színház (National Theatre). Though it was rejected, the young Huszka meticulously studied and copied the list of mistakes, learning important information.

After graduation, he went to Budapest in 1893 to study law as per his parents' wishes.

But following his own desires, he also registered at the Music Academy. His first published

opus was the song *Jogász csárdás* (Jurist csárdás). In addition to his studies, he also organized concerts where *Dohnányi Ernő*, then 18 years old, also debuted.

In 1896, Huszka finished both his legal and musical studies. Though he was hired for a non-paying introductory job at the Ministry of Education, he asked for a year's vacation to travel to Paris. There he played as first violinist with the Lamoureux orchestra, participating even in their London guest performance.

He returned to Hungary and started working at the Ministry. There he met Martos Ferenc who later became his librettist. In 1898, his first theatrical work, the musical comedy *Tilos a bemenet!* (No Entry!) opened.

Although the manager did not expect any success, he was pleasantly surprised by the 100+ performances. Huszka became acquainted with *Fedák Sári*, the yet unknown diva, for whom he wrote his next opus, *Bob herceg* (Prince Bob). It was a resounding success and the first Hungarian operetta to be performed abroad as well.

Huszka's subsequent operettas that best survived were *Gül Baba* in 1905, *Lili bárónő* (Baroness Lily) in 1919, and *Mária főhadnagy* (Lieutenant Maria), 1942.

Many of his operettas, especially the ones with the most popular songs*, were also made into movies.

His marriage to Lippich Leona in 1906 produced two daughters but ended in divorce in 1921. He remarried in 1928, tying the knot with Arányi Mária. Their son, Jenő Jr., if still alive, would be celebrating his 90th birthday on April 4th – another Birthday Boy!

Huszka Jenő died of pneumonia at 2:00 a.m. on February 2nd, 1960, in his beloved wife's arms. He is buried with her at the Farkasrét Cemetery in Budapest.

*The popular songs in the source are listed only in Hungarian, and they are as follows:

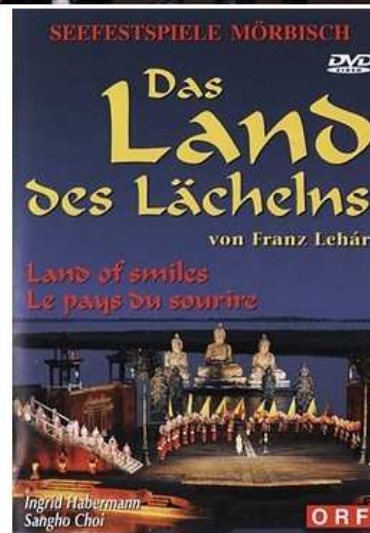
Londonban, hej, van számos utca; and *Dal az első szerelmes csókról* from *Bob herceg*.

Ott túl a rácson; Leila keringője; and *Darumadár fenn az égen* from *Gül Baba*.

Szellők szárnyán; Egy kis cigaretta, valódi finom; and *Tündérr királynő, légy a párom* from *Lili bárónő*.

Én mától kezdve mind csak rólad álmodom; Nagy árat kér a sors a boldogságért, from *Mária főhadnagy*.

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.



Top : Scene from *The Merry Widow*. Middle: Szelezcky Zita as Lieutenant Maria; Cover of Album “Land of Smiles” Bottom: Scene from *Prince Bob*.

Cream of Asparagus Soup

1 lb. asparagus
 1 medium onion, chopped fine
 2 medium new potatoes, peeled and cut into small cubes
 1 egg yolk
 3 Tbsp butter
 8 oz sour cream
 3 cups chicken or beef broth
 ½ tsp of salt

¼ tsp white pepper
 Pinch of sugar (optional)

Cut off the woody end of the asparagus, discard. Wash it well under running hot water. Snip off the tips, and set aside. Cut up rest into rings. Sauté onion in butter with salt, until glassy. Add potato and asparagus. Simmer for a few minutes. Add broth, salt and pepper. Cook

until vegetables are soft. Remove from stove and mix in a blender until smooth and creamy.

In a small bowl, mix sour cream and egg yolk. Add to asparagus and mix it a bit longer.

Place all back into the pot, add asparagus tips and cook a few minutes more. If too thick, add a few tablespoons of water and boil again. Add sugar if desired.

Kőbányai Víztorló / Water “Cathedral” Underground

Karolina Tima Szabo

An acquaintance of mine shared a photo recently on Facebook, of a tiny elegant house that would be fitting for fairies. But, as you go in and down the stairs, you are in another magical world.

I learned about the 35 km cellar system in Kőbánya, Hungary years ago. I actually visited the Törley (Pezsgő) Champagne Cellar Ltd. The limestone of Kőbánya was excellent material for carving out wells, tunnels and wine cellars.

On the eastern side of the Danube River, the city of Pest had drainage for rain water, but not for sewage. Each house had a septic tank in the backyard. The water well was usually nearby, contaminated by the sewage, and illness was frequent. In 1866, there was a cholera epidemic, and many people died. The government of Pest saw that a solution was needed, and fast.

An engineer, William Lindley from London, was hired to solve the bad situation, with one condition, that it had to be done in one year.

Work started in 1868, and the *Pesti Vízművek* or *Fővárosi Vízművek* (Water-works) were done the following year. (At the time, Budapest was not yet united, with Pest, Buda and Óbuda as separate municipalities). On the Pest side, near the Duna (currently Kossuth tér), three wells were dug and a pumping station was built. The pumps were run by steam engines. To provide counterpressure for the wells, a water holding reservoir was necessary. The perfect location was found at Ihász utca 29, in Kőbánya.

The subterranean cistern was built between 1869 and 1871 by Italian master stoneworkers. Hungarian bricks were used, from the *Tatai Uradalmi Téglagyár*. You can still see the name of the brick factory on some of the bricks. The bricks were of many different colors; one might think the ½ m thick walls were made of mosaics. The cistern is 8 stories deep, the longest part 66 m (about 200 ft) long, widest part 24 m (c. 72 ft) wide, 10.8 m (some 32 ft) high; maximum water level is 8 m (24 ft), and can contain 10,800 m³ water. The water comes from nearby wells dug for that purpose, through openings that remind you of water fountains.

Twice each year, in the spring and fall, the water is totally drained from the cistern, for cleaning and checking whether maintenance is required. Before the reservoir is filled, it is opened to the public, free of charge. These days are usually held on *Víz Világnap* (International Water Day), or *Föld Nap* (Earth Day). Registration is required, and there are a few other requirements for safety reasons: maximum 150 persons at a time, minimum height requirement is 130 cm. The tour lasts half an hour. The building is considered a masterpiece – the arches, the size, the brickwork remind you of a medieval cathedral.

After visitors' day, the reservoir is filled to one third, stands a day, and then the water is tested. If the quality is good, it is filled to capacity. Usually it takes one day to fill it to maximum height.

The Pest water wells were used only for 15 years. At the time that the Parliament was built, the *Pesti Vízművek* was closed down. After 150 years, the Kőbánya Víztorló in Budapest's tenth District (X. Ker.) still supplies water for more than 2 million people.

Entrance is at Ihász utca 29, Kőbánya - that tiny elegant house that would be fitting for fairies.

Just in: Due to the corona virus, the *Vízművek* cancelled this spring's visiting days. But when the opportunity arises, please visit the reservoir. Besides seeing the fascinating and captivating masterpiece, special programs are also provided.

From TM.hu, szeretlekmagyarorszag.hu

Karolina Tima Szabo is a retired Systems Analyst of the Connecticut Post newspaper and Webmaster of Magyar News Online. She is the proud grandmother of two.



Entrance to the cistern

It Was Worse!

Olga Vállay Szokolay

Are you feeling helpless, hopeless, not seeing the end of the quarantines, the social distancing, the limitations, the shortages and other interruptions of your daily life? You are not alone, especially if you never lived through wars and other disasters. Here I wish to put it all in perspective, hoping that by comparison you'll appreciate your present discomfort. This too shall pass!

This too shall pass!

It shall pass, as did our six-week captivity in the basement of the apartment house 75 years ago, almost to the day, from Christmas Eve, 1944 to early February, 1945, during the *siege of Budapest*.

We needed no government regulation for quarantine. We would worry for our lives day and night. Amidst the shooting and bombing, the basement offered the only shelter. The 150 inhabitants of the building had to share space about the equivalent of one apartment. No social distancing was possible or necessary.

Five years ago I wrote about it for *magyarnews.org*, for the anniversary in great detail. Quoting from myself does not constitute plagiarism. Thus, I'll reiterate a few paragraphs from my article of five years ago, for the sole purpose of comparing our present situation to that one which - believe me - *Was Much Worse!*

“The Spirit of Christmases Past changed in December 1944.

“The Russians were all around the City; the Germans were fighting to their last men and ours. It was

about life and death and we had no idea which one our destiny would be.

“We had been already well trained to rush to the air-raid shelter when necessary. But on Christmas Eve it was different ... As the evening progressed, the shooting became so intense that we all had to move down to the shelter in the cellar of the apartment building for overnight. That turned out to be our residence for six weeks, co-habiting with some 150 other tenants.

“As per government orders, every residential structure had to have a commander to direct air raid defense drills and shelters. In our apartment house, my father was the one in charge. Proactively, he had bunk beds built in the cellar to accommodate the occupants of the eight-story building, should the need arise to spend nights in the shelter. There was only one bunk bed that had three stories, with just enough room to squiggle in. Being small and skinny, that was my special nest on the ‘third floor’, with my parents on the ‘second floor’ and an elderly couple on its bottom level. My space was cozy and private but very scary when an explo-

sion startled me out of my sleep, and I hit my head in the ceiling.

“Christmas Day passed and so did the day after and the days after. We became underground dwellers. For a few days there was still electricity. Then it turned as dark as it can be inside a cellar. With flashlights, the kerosene supply was located, lanterns lit, then candles, more and more sparingly. We used water from the central heat boiler of the building, rationed for drinking, cooking and minimal hygiene. There was one stove to cook on for 150 people. My father worked out a 24-hour schedule to give everyone a chance to cook whatever meals they could. Initially, the menus were more diversified, despite the food stamps that had rationed certain food staples for several months before. In the apartments’ pantries, where one could sneak up during occasional quiet times, there were some reserves of sausage, bacon, potatoes, carrots, pasta, rice, flour and lard as well as home preserved fruit, jams and vegetables, even eggs to create satisfying dishes. After a few weeks this dwindled down to mostly beans, split peas and lentils.



Lánchíd (Chain Bridge) blown up at end of WWII, photo by id. Takács István

“The fighting got closer. The Germans broke up the pavement across our street to blast a ditch deep enough to provide passage without being seen. It was unsuccessful. But the broken granite pavers were utilized to build a makeshift barricade around the corner. One day a desperate soldier barged in, looking for his lost horse. Not a soul dared to tell him that his poor equine had been found, slaughtered and carved up by the deaf tobacconist. A long queue had quickly formed in our gateway for the meat being sold at the butcher shop across the street. My mother and her friends employed all their culinary magic to cook up horse bouillon and venison-style horsemeat with dumplings that remains one of the best meals of my life. The horse’s head was displayed on top of the barricade like a trophy.

“One of the tenants, a journalist and his wife lost their baby when she didn’t have enough breast milk to feed it. They improvised a small grave for the tiny body in the yard.

“Our bodies emitted enough heat to keep us warm. In the corner of each room or compartment of the shelter was a ‘Porta-Potty’, constructed similarly to an outhouse but with a bucket under the seat. Its contents were most likely dumped daily into the catch basin by the curb in the street.

“Having no radio transmission, vague rumors were the only source of information we had about the world near and far. That Pest had fallen, that all the bridges across the Danube were blown up and in ruins, that it would only be days before we would also fall, and it would all end. That a projectile killed my dimpled heartthrob, the 14-year-old Z.Z, only child of his older parents, as he was walking in the street for water with a bucket.

“...a small number of Hungarian soldiers appeared, in need to be accommodated and we complied ... Their unit was captured a few days later and was forced to surrender their weapons in the gateway. They were taken as prisoners of war to the Soviet Union.

Watching that disarmament was one of the saddest moments of my life that still brings tears to my eyes after all those years.

“By then it was all over, and we had been ‘liberated’. Constant visits by the ‘liberators’, the typical byproduct of war and uncontrolled occupying forces, necessitated young women to hide, camouflage themselves as old hags and do whatever possible to avoid being raped by the raging herds.

“But gradually we dared to go outside, to the street, up to the apartments, to clean up all the debris and at least pretend to resume life where it had been interrupted.

“Incredible amounts of ruins and debris had to be cleaned up before re-building could take place. Law and order, thus public safety was non-existent. For months it was not advisable to go outside after dark, since pedestrians were stripped in the streets either by Russians or by local goons. People who had lost their dwelling to bombs and other war destruction (one famous example was a small aircraft wedged into the middle of a multi-story residential building!) had to move to wherever they found a vacancy. Some families who had escaped to the West left their apartments, even villas abandoned. The ones left homeless soon occupied those.”

Here I tried to give you some excerpts from my original writing, to help you realize that it was much worse, much more dangerous and much more defenseless. In addition,

when it was over it wasn’t over. But we survived and came out of it stronger, more resilient: qualities that were much needed in the years to come.

So, cheer up and be tolerant. This too shall pass!

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

Hungarian Coronavirus Defense

Olga Vállay Szokolay

A Hungarian invention that has been used there in mass transportation and in some country hospitals for a few years, may curtail the rapid spread of the Coronavirus. Even other countries are interested in the special coating, while physicians relentlessly emphasize the utmost importance of frequent and thorough hand washing.

A Hungarian invention that has been used in Hungary for years may help to impede the rapid spread of the pandemic Coronavirus. The invention of Resysten Hungary Kft. (Ltd) is a special protective coating that can *prevent the adhesion of pathogens to various surfaces.*

The information manual of the firm explains that the coating is *not a disinfectant* and does not claim to be a substitute for that. It is a resolution without chemicals, which effectively *supports the cleaning protocol.* One of the owners of Resysten, Lehoczky Péter reported that three years of their hard work produced a coating that can treat any surface from upholstery to metals, from plastics to rubber and glass. It will prevent, for a whole year, adhesion of any fungus, bacterium and

virus, including the new Coronavirus. The coating contains *natural ingredients only*, is colorless, odorless, penetrates into the treated surface on a molecular level, can protect for a year under natural or artificial light and is not removable. Lehoczky added that the compound contains no chemical or allergenic material, thus is harmless to pregnant women and babies as well.

The company offers technical spray service to industrial clients with a lot of people traffic or *touchable surfaces*. The latter is important because most infections are contracted by *touching* surfaces at busy places such as mass transportation, public areas, hospitals, universities, offices, restaurants etc.

Resysten Hungary Kft. was founded in 2014, but research had started much earlier. The momentous photo-catalytic coating system appeared on the market in 2015.

What exactly is this innovation? The special coating contains titanium dioxide that, reacting to light, neutralizes pathogens. The Japanese first experimented with that compound beginning in the 1960's (Honda-Fujima effect). In the presence of light, the strong oxidizing power of the photo-catalyst decomposes contaminants of biological origin into harmless materials, such as water and carbon dioxide. The substance has a long life and comes with a one-year guarantee. It is applicable to any surface, including electrical equipment.

In addition to being eco-friendly and preventing adherence of biological contaminants, it improves air quality and neutralizes odors. The unique coating is applicable to virtually any surface, and is especially important in hospitals, where it can be applied from beds to stethoscopes and EKG equipment, promising suppression of infection on all levels.

Resysten coating has to be applied to the given surface with a special spray technology, which secures lasting adherence. Application is done in multiple coats; treatment of a 1,000 sq meter (nearly 10,800 sq.ft) surface takes 5-8 hours, while drying time is only a few minutes.

Due to the global appearance of the Coronavirus, news of the nanotechnology-based coating system developed by a group of Hungarian scientists is creating international interest. Companies from several countries have contacted Resysten about distributorship and the United States already has a representative. Although export often presents challenges due to different regulations and special requirements, the company's plans include increasing production to satisfy export needs.

We wish more power and success to them!

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

Did you know ...

... **that** Hungarians won six gold medals at the 11th World Transplant Winter Games held in Banff, Canada in February? They were among the 100 organ recipient athletes from 17 countries, who competed in downhill and cross-country skiing, curling and snowboarding.

The seven-member Hungarian team was led by Berente Judit, who received a kidney transplant 25 years ago. She won 3 gold medals: in the one-hour ski run, a 5-kilometer ski run and a biathlon.

Szervánszky Zsolt, recipient of a kidney transplant from his father, won two gold medals in snowboarding.

14-year old Végh Ágota, who also had received a kidney, won a gold medal in Alpine parallel ski slalom, and two silver.

Mátyás László, who had had a heart transplant, came in second in the parallel slalom, and won a bronze in the giant slalom.

Kőműves Luca, who had a liver transplant, won 4 silver medals in Alpine events.

Gelencsér Róbert won a bronze medal in snowshoeing.

To be eligible to enter, competitors must have been transplanted for at least 1 year, have stable graft function, be medically fit and have trained at the events in which they have entered.

The event is meant to demonstrate the value of organ transplants and to encourage people to register as donors.

... **that** April 29th marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sávoly Ferenc, founder of Hungarian agro-meteorology? Born in Alsóelemér in 1870, he initiated the establishment, within the Meteorological Institute, of the agro-meteorological department, of which he became the director.

Beginning in 1925, he taught climate science at the József Technical University. In 1927, he became Assistant Director of the Hungarian Agricultural Museum, advancing to Director in 1936.

His interest extended to the connection of meteorology with the sickness of plants, and his research in this field brought him recognition and awards. He studied the problems of forestation, and the wind patterns of the Alföld. He became a regular contributor to the journal "Az Időjárás" (The Weather), for which he prepared the monthly report on Hungarian meteorology. He died on May 16th, 1938.