

vitész Gyula László Detre

HISTORY FIRST HAND



*Published by Antológia
Lakitelek, 2007*

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To my family, friends and historians as an eye witness account
of the stormy historical events of 1944-45

“I always fought for a good cause
I never strayed from the chosen path
I always stayed true to my faith and pledges
May God be with me, always.”

vitéz Gyula László Detre

HISTORY FIRST HAND

*The Memoirs of vitéz Gyula László Detre
Leader emeritus, division of the Hungarian Veterans Association of
Canada (MHBK),
Member emeritus of the Council of the Knightly Order of Vitéz*

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THIS EXTENDED REVISION WAS MADE ON THE BASIS OF
THE BOOKS PUBLISHED IN CANADA BETWEEN 2001–2005

Under the editorship of:
Sándor Agócs

Text edited and translated by Galántha H. Judit

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tel.: 06 (20) 99-14-286, e-mail: hatters@ezaz.hu

INTRODUCTION

Now, at age 83 as I look back on my life, the good and the bad, I can clearly see two character-forming forces: my devotion to the military and my affection toward the “fairer sex”. There are only few live witnesses left to the events I describe on the following pages. Perhaps part of my life-story has the feel of a Hollywood movie and some of you could not even imagine such incidents but this was reality and that is how it all happened.

As you read on you will become acquainted with the story of our family, our roots, where we are hailed from. My long years of service to the “Hungarian cause” also compel me to write down my experiences. My observations could be important facts to Hungarian historians since as a soldier I was a close witness to a particular time period of World War II hushed up for so many years. Also, the activities and experiences of my fifty years in exile will contribute to another aspects of history writing related to Hungarian survival in foreign lands.

I feel that I have to verbalize my experiences associated with a little known time period related to my years in the Hungarian military services to complement the existing Hungarian history books. Perhaps I could round out some fragmentary information I am indebted with to “Hungarian history writing” – as the late writer Aaron Gábor suggested it. His request was published in the Hungarians in California (No. 29, July 20, 1979).

THE EARLY YEARS

My earliest memories are going back to 1920-1921 when I was about two-three years old. Following the Trianon peace treaty when my father was supposed to take an oath to the Serbs he refused. As a consequence they ordered us out from Zombor-Monostorszeg where I was born. From here we went to Baja at first but when the Serbs came we fled to Tótmajor-Soltvadkert where my father was employed as a teacher at the local elementary school. Following the Serb withdrawal we were transferred back to Baja in 1922 and moved in with my paternal grandparents. My father continued teaching in the elementary school of Fölvég while I went to the local kindergarten and later attended to the same elementary school. Those times aroused new feelings in me. Like I only went to the nursery school if Mauzi Hódsághy was already there. She was the daughter of my parents' friends and at my age. She was my first love.

I was in grade one when I wrote my very first love letter to Mauzi, my "first love". Her mother was my class teacher in grade one and two. They had an apartment at the school. I "appointed" one of my classmates to deliver and slip my love note under their door. Next day when Mauzi's mother, my teacher came to class it was just like a bomb explosion. She scolded and appropriately punished me. This was the very first unforgettable childhood memory related to the gentle sex that is still vivid and so dear to me! It was a delightful experience when 56 years later I met Mauzi again while visiting Budapest.

Alas, nothing lasts forever and my emotional attachment to Mauzi ended after the first year at the Cistercian upper high school called Béla III. Only a close friendship remained between her parents, Iduci Balogh's family and us.

In fourth grade my father was my teacher. He was very strict with me; I have to say that he did not favor me at all. If I did not pay attention or busied myself with something else under the desk he just motioned and the boy sitting right behind smacked me right away. My parents were very strict with me but I needed that; I just loved to play, to climb trees, to skate and to play soccer. In short I was much more interested in everything else but my studies. Well, my superficial, kind of a "will do it later" type attitude together with all the unrestrained excesses took away my attention from studying. Naturally my parents wanted the best for me and used discipline and consistent strictness with me. I am still grateful to them for that.

In 1928 following secondary school I went to the Béla III. Cistercian senior high school to study modern languages and sciences. These were very difficult years since I didn't have the knack for languages except for French. Here I studied Latin and German from grade one to eight, then at grade four French was added to the curriculum. I confess that I failed the Latin and German at grade seven and had to finish my last two years in Szekszárd's János Garay senior high school. In spite of the obstacles I fondly remember those years. It must have been due to the unexpected influence of the "fair sex" at the impressionable age of 15-16 years.

I loved sports so besides studying I participated in many of them. I swam and played water polo at the school's pool. One of my favorite sports was rowing (sculler/sciffel and double) and I was also part of the school's soccer team. At the KISOK swimming and water polo events as a member of the Baja Sport Club I participated at championships at Kalocsa, Kunszentmiklós, Halas, Szeged and Pécs with my good friends S. Hernády, D. Doszpoly, and H. Rácz. These memories are tied to Baja. Later, between 1936 and 1938 as a member of the János Garay upper high school fencing team I placed first at several fencing event in Baja and Szekszárd.

During World War I at first my father was serving in the 6th (honvéd) infantry regiment of Szabadka, then he was transferred to the 4th infantry regiment of Nagyvárád. From here he went with the 308th regiment to the Russian front. He served 36 months in a commando brigade. He came home with decorations and several medals of bravery. Years later he told me about his personal experiences with the communist revolution in 1919 and what he had seen in the Soviet Union during World War II as a reservist first lieutenant. Because of his experiences my anticommunist feelings grew much stronger.

My father grew up in a family of craftsmen. His stepfather György Dittrich was a boot maker and employed 18 apprentices. 12 Florián Street in Baja was our house. Besides my grandfather's shoe and boot maker shop there was a huge barn where the cows and horses were kept. It was a big deal at that time, a sign of affluence and prosperity. We also had a vineyard where I went to on a horse-drawn cart. Here, I met the workers, coachmen, servants; people I could have not seen otherwise. These circumstances and such meetings left long lasting impressions in me.

My grandfather, as I already mentioned, was my father's stepfather. My real grandfather, György Tsötöny left his wife and family quite early. Since he wasn't found until 1906 my grandmother married György Dittrich. That is how our name was changed from Tsötöny to Dittrich due to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' specific order of adoption. Later, that was "Hungarianized" to Detre in 1931 due to another governmental decree.

Dittrich grandfather took care of my father's schooling and wanted him to become more than just a simple schoolteacher; he wanted him to teach at a specialized craftsmen school also. My father's brother István went to high school and eventually became an accounting adviser at first in Baja, later in Szeged. Another brother, János worked at a weaving mill as a craftsman while their sister Ilonka married Sándor Bácskai, owner of an alcohol distillery.

I was brought up in an anti-communist, Christian, nationalist and right-wing household. Due to my mother's political taste we mostly subscribed to right-wing newspapers in spite of my father who never dabbled in politics but was very much interested in social and society related problems. I remember he helped so many in Baja, no wonder he was loved and so highly regarded. Among the contemporary papers we read the Új Magyarország (New Hungarians) and subscribed to the Összetartás (Solidarity). The latter one was an extreme right-wing paper but I rarely read it because in 1938 – after finishing senior high school in Szekszárd – I voluntarily enlisted in the army.

As I already mentioned my father was a very busy man; he didn't dabble in politics and he didn't have much time to read the newspapers. Being the provider, earning money was his most important pre-occupation. He wanted his family to upkeep a middle-class position and to educate his children properly. He wanted to provide a teacher's training school education for my sister and military schooling for me. My mother's name was Flóra Tessényi of Pásztó. Her task was to look after the household, and besides cooking and doing the laundry her most important business was to deal with my homework. She regularly went over my lessons and often repeated with me the Latin, German and French words.

There was no electricity yet I studied well into the night beside a kerosene lamp. After school I usually played away my afternoons and I did my daily homework for hours into the night. When my father came home from work he always went over with me all the algebra, geometry, mathematics and the integral-differential calculations. This one was my father's favorite subject. Besides teaching at the elementary school my father also taught at the high school and at the local crafts school in the evenings. There, he was teaching drawing and cutting related to shoe and boot making. We needed money that much. At weekends, he directed the Choir of Baja; he was head instructor of the "Levente" youth organization and was very much involved with the 5th Army corps counter-intelligence unit. He was mum about his involvements with them until his death.

My Cistercian teachers, at the Béla III. upper high school for modern languages and sciences, gave me a strong nationalist education. My

favorite teachers were Boldizsár Bándi history, Konrád Csaplár, math and also my class teacher in the first year, Remig Fekete religion and Ányos Torday, Hungarian literature teachers.

They often came to our house, and were always there on my father's name day. Often times I went to their priory at 6 in the morning to serve at the mass. My French teacher Lénárd Bartha was also director of the water sports complex and my Scout commander. We went rowing on the Danube and I am still thankful for all the fun we had the double and single sculler rowing outings.

My Cistercian religion teacher held strong right-wing beliefs and was the one to awaken my interests in politics and the right-wing party platforms. By choosing the army life right after finishing upper high school I could not participate actively in any political party's program and didn't have the chance to get really acquainted with any of them.

My student years in Szekszárd were memorable. It was due perhaps to my considerable interest in girls at grade 7 and 8 especially that I attended a mixed school. Considered a "grown-up", I went to tea parties and often visited the local vineries. All this was part of life at that time. With my friend Suci Horváth and his sister Babus we always had good times together.

In August 1992, while visiting Hungary with my wife, we went to the National Gallery housed at the Royal Castle. We were buying our ticket when the cashier suddenly cried out my name, hurriedly left the booth and embraced me: "Is it you, Gyuszi"? That's how I met Babus Horváth again after 54 years. We raked over the ashes of the past, and there was no end to remembering the so-called good old times.

IN THE ARMY

I always wanted to be a soldier and dreamed about it constantly. As soon as I finished senior high school I applied to the Military Real often called “cőgerei” among the people but I was refused entry. My second attempt was more successful in 1938 when I voluntarily enlisted in the 20th infantry regiment of Baja. I ended up with the 3rd battalion where my commander was Captain Ede Gött.

My years as a voluntary soldier were memorable. At first I was an officer candidate at the officers school of Berettyóújfalu. I took a course in Kecskemét to become a cadet sergeant selected for promotion to lieutenantancy under the guidance of Staff Captain László Duska in charge of our education in affairs of honor and integrity. In 1939 Lieutenant General vitéz László Gusztáv Jány made a promise to my father that he will help me to get into the Royal Hungarian Ludovika Military Academy, popularly called Ludovika. He was my father's commander on the Russian front during World War I.

After two years of voluntary military service I reached the rank of Flag Officer and in 1940 I was called to Budapest to take the entrance exam at the Ludovika Military Academy. Accepted, I renounced my rank of Flag Officer and began with the basic training again. I will never forget the moment of my arrival to the Ludovika when I presented myself to the academic officer on duty. He looked at me and said “Flag Officer, don't you know how to wear your hat”? This unexpected reprimand discouraged me so much that I put down my belongings fast and went for a walk. I got back quite late as I felt that my life at the Academy didn't really begin the right way.

In spite of the difficult beginning I had a wonderful life in Budapest, at the Academy as I went through some memorable training experiences. I will never forget the “hungry eyes” following us on our leaves from the Academy at the girl school. Or, when we went from the Üllői Street to Eger with Lieutenant vitéz László Berthóti, our class officer. When we went to four-five “request concerts” at the City Theatre with Dr. Károly Mathya, the director of the Ludovika choir.

With the “aksok” – as the academists were called affectionately – I went to the theatre to see Katalin Karády, the famous Hungarian actress/singer. I had the chance to meet her personally during intermission. She wanted to sign autographs but she couldn't find a pen so she asked for one from us. I

happily volunteered my brand new golden pen, a recent birthday present from one of my girlfriends. The bell rang at the end of intermission, we hurriedly went back to our seats and having no choice I left my pen with the actress. Now what? How will I get back my beautiful pen, one of my dearest possessions?

Well, the situation resolved itself unexpectedly. A few days later, there was an announcement through the loudspeaker in the Academy's dining room that Katalin Karády is at the main gate with a pen to be picked up by its rightful owner! In the midst of laughing I bashfully went for my pen to the entrance door.

I remember when we went to Leányfalu for a few days to do some survey training. We finished our "investigative" adventure with an evening of dance and lots of interesting memories. The live battle-practice at Várpalota was also followed by a dance. On my first leave in formal "aksi" uniform I went home to Baja. When I got back to Budapest I heard that my mother was suspected of having an affair with a young officer following our walk on the promenade. Everyone knew that my father was away on the Russian front as a voluntary reservist lieutenant and I very much looked like him. Fortunately he survived the infamous Don River retreat.

There was a law at that time; if a family had someone serving at the frontline another member could not be sent to the frontlines. Knowing this my brave and valiant father volunteered by going to war to save me. He commandeered a working company made up of prisoners volunteered for this kind of services from the Csillag prison. At first they were used for forced labor in the Ukraine. Later, all those who volunteered for rear-guard duty in exchange of their prison terms were armed to secure the retreat. In 1943 my father came back to Szeged with more horses and carriages than he went away with.

I volunteered to join the army in 1938. After a period of two years I succeeded to the rank of Ensign. Then I entered the Ludovika Military Academy in 1940. I graduated December 6, 1942 with the rank promotion of 1941 as second lieutenant due to my previous two years of voluntary service in the army. The moments of graduation were unforgettable. In front of the Military Academy's main gate General vitéz Ferenc Szombathelyi was the main speaker in place of vitéz Miklós Horthy of Nagybánya, Regent of Hungary. Unfortunately he finished his speech with a disastrous remark that still rings in my ears "perhaps you all will die in the war..."! Thank God he was wrong, many of us survived the war. I saw the signs of war in 1938, right after my high school graduation, at the beginning of my voluntary service. In the early 1940s while I was still at the Ludovika Academy the war was already on.

During my stay at the Ludovika Military Academy I used up all my leaves. I went to concerts, to balls at the Hungaria and Vigado, to the ball of the law students and so on. I took the girls from the Margitsziget to the Gellért-mountain, and to the restaurant Búsuló Juhász but my all-time favorite was the Gellért-bath. Late nights, when the tramways already stopped, I was often running from Buda to the Ludovika, on the Üllői Street to be there before the midnight curfew. Another noteworthy period of my Ludovika years is when I regularly went rowing with my girlfriend Edit Posgai from the boathouse of Magasház to Szentendre.

My mother, my sister and my sister's two childhood friends Adrien Szigethi and Márta Fraknói attended my graduation. After graduation I had three choices so as a Second Lieutenant, I joined the 4th rifle company of the 2nd battalion of the 9th infantry regiment of the 5th army corps of Szeged stationed in Szabadka. György Lajos commissioned officer was my company commander. A few months later – if I remember correctly – in April 1943, I was promoted to company commander when my commander was transferred to a position of Levente district commander. I immediately reorganized my company and thus we moved to first from the last position in the area.

I served at the battalion with Lieutenants Béla Péntek and Ottó Szegedi. I have previously served with them in the same battalion at the Ludovika. From 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Zoltay was my commanding officer of the battalion, later Lieutenant Colonel István Mészáros, counter-intelligence officer of the 5th army corps took over the command of the battalion. My promotion to Lieutenant took place in January 1944. On Sundays I proudly lead my company on a horseback to church through the main street of Szabadka, in front of the Kosztolányi Theater. In the middle of a war all these somehow brought the ambiance of peacetime.

While in Szabadka I tried to enlist many times for front service; later I was almost sent to Gyimesfelsőlok for ski training but my battalion commander didn't let me go neither to the front nor to ski training. When I tried the third time my commander sent the machine-gun company commander instead of me.

NEVER COMPROMISING

There is no doubt in my mind that I was serving my country and my people during the most difficult of times. I already firmly and unfalteringly believed that in no circumstances could I accept Communism! It came to my attention, that while I was serving at the 9/II. battalion., Lieutenant Colonel István Mészáros got his appointment with the greatest consent of the right-wing general staff.

On several occasions at the officers meetings István Mészáros ordered the company commanders to make sure that their rank and file adopt a strong, non-compromising anti-communist view. In the fall of 1943 lieutenant colonel István Mészáros disclosed that our battalion would have a special role in the upkeep of national security in the future. Since 1944, parallel with our military training, we had Special Forces exercises while all the untrustworthy elements from simple soldier to sub-officers were transferred to other units. I still firmly believe that I was posted from the Ludovika Academy to Szabadka due to my strong right-wing beliefs and because the Joint Chiefs of Staff already knew what was our battalion's future role.

As I already mentioned that my strong nationalist, Christian right-wing attitude reaches back to my high school years and even earlier due to my parents' views. The right-wing trend grew stronger between 1936 and 1942 all over Europe by giving way to the proliferation of all kinds of political "isms". Unquestionably my Cistercian teachers of Baja and my lay teachers of Szekszárd were the ones who awakened and shaped my right-wing beliefs.

I was always very concerned about other people's lives and their destiny. In my student years but mostly during my military career at the trainings and quartering I got ample experiences from my troops of the social strata's great differences. My company of 145 men was made up mostly of simple and decent peasants, laborers, craftsmen, and farm hands. Thanks to them I heard and experienced a lot about the social conditions of my countrymen.

There were also a few aristocrats among the men in my battalion. In spite of being in the minority I often experienced the ruling elite's conceited behavior and I heartily disliked it. To illustrate what I mean here is a typical example: a medical doctor never invited his teacher relative when a member of a higher social strata was present at his social flinction. Instead the teacher relative was always invited with a group of friends

more to his social standing. In short, the social classes didn't mix at that period. I always disliked this kind of snobbism, I felt it is humiliating and insulting. I was not alone with this, lots of other people felt the same way. Nevertheless my right-wing beliefs were growing leaps and bounds during my military career.

At the beginning of 1944 I often noticed a professional signalman, either a captain or lieutenant – I don't really remember his rank – coming from the city of Szeged to hold confidential meetings with Mészáros battalion commander. About a month or two later I was also invited to these meetings by Lieutenant Adjutant Béla Mecsér on the order of Mészáros. External and internal political information were discussed at these meetings. My battalion commander regularly held political information sessions about the military's left and right-wing standing, the possibility of being caught between two "fires", he touched upon the German-Soviet problems, a truce and a separate peace agreement, and also about the possibility of a German occupation of Hungary.

I had an impression that the military high command had split in two although this tug-of-war wasn't exactly clear yet. In short, the question was should we give into Communism or continue to fight for our right-wing beliefs? That created a great dilemma; I felt that a professional soldier even in critical moments had to choose the way of honesty. I listened to my innate sense of duty and discipline, also to the guidance of the military service regulations and I chose the fight against Communism.

I came to the conclusion that in the long run it was absolutely irrelevant who was at the helm of the country. It was well known that everyone was scared of a Soviet occupation, of captivity and a probable Communist reign of terror; and all these had to be prevented. Being a Special Forces battalion we were trained to deal with such problems and it was our duty to prevent a rule of a Communist mob.

On the other hand no one was happy with the German Army especially when they started the occupation of Szabadka on March 19, 1943. At an officers' meeting Mészáros battalion commander ordered a curfew and a general alert at the barracks. It was necessary to head off a possible disarmament of the Hungarian Army and possible brutality by the Germans. Naturally all these events undermined our previous moral beliefs and the often-declared friendships in arms with the Germans. The "slogan", the common goal remained exactly the same as before, that we didn't want a German occupation but in the fight against Communism we were allies in an independent Hungary.

Following the arrival of the first German armored train to Szabadka the German officer's patrol visited only the battalion office. After they left, we

got an unloading of arms command by phone from our battalion commander. The Germans left towards Bácska and Yugoslavia. At this time I asked for a transfer to field service again but my battalion commander refused by saying that I should stay in my present position, I was needed for a mission in the home territory.

IN THE SPIRIT OF MY OATH, UNDAUNTED

The events on the international political stage were boiling over like a witches' cauldron. Due to the great metamorphose of Europe the Hungarian government were also obliged to adopt a right-wing position although many Hungarians was hoping for the upkeep of the old blueprint.

The left wing also knew that there was a need to channel all the accumulated bitterness and despair. That is one reason why we became a special battalion. At the same time the higher military directorate: K. Beregfi, D. László, M. Bán, E. Sáska, S. Szávay, L. Nádas, J. Andreánszky, Gy. Porzezinszky together with the right-wing politicians tried to set up a new Hungary entrenched in national and social objectives. I heard this on the day of change over at the Sacristy of the Városmajor Church. I felt that I judged the given situation undoubtedly right.

Again in the spirit of my oath I remained faithful to my country and did not betray it; I did not change sides and did not go over to the resistance. I am still proud that Communism was not just an enemy at the time but it is an enemy even now. As a military officer graduated from the Hungarian Royal Ludovika Military Academy I never belonged to any political party during my military career and even today all my decisions are influenced only by the love toward my country and my people.

I noticed the first signs of the impending faith of our battalion in July 1944, the day my battalion was mobilized. I received the mobilization order from the battalion messenger at the Hotel Bárány's restaurant where I was having dinner with my fiancé Katalin Endrényi and her father.

We were told at the officers meeting of the divisional headquarters of Szabadka that the staff officers of the 9th Infantry Regiment were placed under the command of the Fifth Army Corps and ordered to reinforce immediately the Regent's guard. Our battalion was transferred to Gödöllő and I was given a leave to visit my parents in Baja. While there I was ordered to go back to my battalion but instead of Gödöllő to Fót where it was

transferred to and was commissioned by the General Staff to serve as a Special Armed Forces unit. I was due back to Fót at July 18, 1944.

I had a feeling that the General Staff was playing with us because their two distinct political attitudes. I already had some inkling, that this was just an excuse from either side. They wanted us to be ready and close to Budapest in case of a possible right-wing switchover, to be used against the Germans or to stand by the left wing sympathizers (Communists, Socialist Democrats). Here again I was guided by my undaunted anti-communist feelings and the military service code. I have to add, that Hungary had always been in an unfortunate situation, between “two fires”.

Following our battalion's arrival to Fót we were outfitted with the latest, modern arms. Everyone got a Király submachine gun, bazookas, light-and heavy machine-guns. To ensure our mobility large, modern busses were at our disposal at the barracks. At the Somlyó-mountain near Fót besides the Special Armed Forces training we had ethical and moral education, equivalent to modern day political education. We discussed among others how to put down a Communist resurgence.

We exercised near the Kisfaludy estate's Károlyi vineyard. During August and September we noticed movements in parallel with some events related to the German withdrawal. As a result the whole left wing, mostly the Communists mobilized. Understandably the Germans did not view this as a positive course of action. Following the Romanian betrayal, their pulling out of the Alliance made the Germans much more cautious with Hungary. They not only paid close attention but also were also actively keeping in touch with our battalion especially after they realized the political game our higher military command and the government played with us.

At one point there was a rumor that the Germans want to arrest the officers of our battalion because they thought that our move to Fót was against them. This was also discussed and confirmed by the former leader of the MHBK, General András Zákó's book published in 1991 (*Őszi Harcok* 1944, IV. A.d., *Segéderők* 1944. okt. 15 körül) also mentioning that Lieutenant-General of the Palace Guards Lázár promised to arm 15 thousand Communists, Social Democrats and inmates of forced labor camps. When we got wind of this, sergeant Antal Horváth organized a special commando to defend me in case of a German effort to take me into custody.

It was so typical of the times when around the end of September Lieutenant-general Szilárd Bakay, the commander of the Special Military Forces of Budapest came to Fót to hold an open-air officers meeting. We did not have an inkling about his real intentions so all the officers were present. At first Lieutenant-general Bakay spoke about how bad the Ger-

mans behaved on the Russian front with the Hungarian soldiers and there are problems with them even on Hungarian territory and that we cannot tolerate anymore.

He said that our battalion had a double duty. We had to protect the Regent of Hungary and to drive out the Germans from Budapest. The left wing Communists, Social Democrats and inmates of forced labor camps were standing by and ready to help us, but they had to be armed. The labor unions were also sympathizing with us and would help with our fight of "liberation".

We were especially surprised when he asked Ensign Nyiri standing at the end of the officer's line that which paragraph of the Code of Regulations dealt with chasing away the Germans from the capital and the country? Without waiting for the answer, he continued, "A soldier is obliged to fight against internal or external enemy equally. In this instance the Germans are the external while the right wing is the internal enemy! But the left wing also made up of decent men ready to drive out the Germans from Budapest and the country with us".

Imagine the state of shock! We felt his comments were immoral and highly treasonous, a Lieutenant general speaking this way while Hungarian soldiers together with their German allies were fighting and getting slaughtered on the Russian front. To stir our feelings so disgracefully, to stab our ally in the back instead of preaching about our soldiers recall to guard our country's thousand year old borders. Having no other choice we listened reluctantly his openly inflammatory speech while our thoughts were with our comrades in arms fighting and bleeding in foreign lands. Following the disgraceful meeting we all went back to our posts.

Although the Germans didn't know the real reason of our battalion's alert, that it was related to a very real possibility of a right wing take-over, the rumors that they want to take us into custody persisted. The battalion commander gave an order to resist and Sergeant Horváth was again ready for action on my behalf.

Just an example about how Palace Guard Lieutenant General Lázár, the leader of the planned resistance against the Germans felt about the volatility of the situation. Once, during a moral education session on the top of Somlyó-mountain near Fót, Commander Lázár's Hussar Lieutenant son appeared unexpectedly. By the way, he was my classmate at the Ludovika Academy.

While stepping out of his hiding place in the forest he innocently asked where was the Headquarter located? It was a strange question since everyone knew that the Headquarters were in the village, down the valley so why did he come up to ask for its whereabouts? Probably he was liste-

ning for quite a long time before stepping out; obviously he wanted to know what we were doing and talking about. I found out later that in front of our soldiers he lashed out at the Germans for their behavior with our soldiers at the front.

There was another strange event during our stay in Fót. It happened when Miklós Horthy junior, who got his reserve officer's training at my company and three days later his Second-lieutenant rank at a gala dinner in Szabadka, came to review our battalion. Instead of a parade review order he wanted just a simple inspection of the troops. He wasn't really popular among the soldiers.

There were discussions between the right wing politicians and the German Embassy at the house of Viktor Ferber, the manager of the count Károlyi estate sometimes in the middle of September. I didn't know the details of these meetings shrouded in secrecy. I was only ordered to take care of the security around Viktor Ferber's house.

Veesenmayer German ambassador, who was working to establish a German-sympathizer, strongly anti-communist Hungarian government, asked for the participation of different right-wing politicians and highly placed people at these clandestine meetings. They all had a common motive for such a Hungarian government for their own sake. That's all I heard from the insiders. As much as I know they were Imrédy, General Rác, Sztójay, Lajos Reményi-Schneller and some others. The guards inside and at the outside perimeter were my officers and non-commissioned officers.

I felt the very first time here that unwittingly I became part of a political game that could be "lethal" not only for myself but also for the country. In spite of this, then and there it didn't even come to my mind that when a government got nowhere in politics it always used the military to further its political ambitions. Now I clearly see that a war is nothing else but the "continuation of politics by other means".

I have heard that the German envoy didn't even want to know about Ferenc Szálasi, a former Staff Captain and also stayed away from the Hungarian Movement. He believed that they didn't sympathize enough with Germany. At the end of the long negotiations he accepted Ferenc Szálasi although the Germans wanted to impose their own national socialist order on the Hungarian people.

One evening someone shot at me through the window when I just got home but he missed. We were looking for the perpetrators; we even talked to some Communists in custody but to no avail. About this time we experienced several bombardments with chained bombs preceded by the parachute flares called "Stalin candles" but the battalion did not suffer any loss. It seemed that the Soviet knew too much about us.

The Gestapo was also watching our battalion. Suddenly the 9th Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Battalion was put on alert on October 6th or 7th. That happened about 3-4 days after the visit (Oct. 3.) of Lieutenant-General Szilárd Bakay. We boarded the busses and headed to Budapest's Werbőczy senior high school near the Horváth Garden. Under the command of Palace Guard Commander Lázár we were ready to reinforce the security around vitéz Horthy Miklós of Nagybánya, Regent of Hungary. Katalin Endrényi (of 9. Rákóczi Street, Budapest) was already my fiancé. We met at Palics, near Szabadka during the summer of 1943. She was there on holiday with her father. It was her cousin, Béla Péntek, my classmate and roommate in Szabadka, who introduced us on the shore of Lake Palics.

These were beautiful moments in the middle of the tragic war. I often went to Budapest from Szabadka. We held our engagement party in the presence of my future father-in-law at Baja during the Easter holiday of 1944. Following my transfer to Fót and its proximity to Budapest it was much easier to meet and we got together more often. We were regulars at Viktor Ferber's garden parties. Everything would have been wonderful if "history" didn't meddle and I have to admit a soldier's life is always more sad than happy.

While at the Werbőczy besides our Special Forces training we were in charge of the guarding of the bridges of Budapest. Our duty was to supervise the secondary reservists who were looking after the bridges. In my opinion it was evident that our duty was just an illusory solution for the two "sides" of the General Staff.

Besides my own observations I also know from Guard Commander Major Ernő Bangha's written account how fast the events of 1944 developed. Major Bangha was close to Lieutenant General Lázár and vitéz Miklós Horthy of Nagybánya. He wrote that while the armistice negotiations with the Soviet Union were under way the government put up all kinds of obstacles to sabotage it. This is why the Regent formed his own inner circle on September 11 and conducted future negotiations with their help. His inner circle was made up by Gyula Ambrózy, the head of the Cabinet Office, Lieutenant-General Antal Vattay, the head of the Military Office, Adjutant General; Lieutenant-General Szilárd Bakay, Commander of the First Army Corps and the military Special Forces; Gyula Tóst, Air Force Lieutenant-Colonel, Adjutant; Miklós Horthy, Jr., Royal Hungarian Ambassador; Mrs Miklós Horthy, the Regent's wife and Mrs István Horthy, the widowed daughter-in-law of the Regent.

From September 11 on Regent Horthy could rely only on the advice of these people, so they took care of the nation's businesses. Bakay and Lázár were involved in the organization of the immediate military defense and

the planned action against the Germans. This caused Lieutenant-General Bakay's visit at the battalion in Fót and Lázár's negotiation with the left wing and the Communist representatives, his offer to arm them but this didn't happen. Somehow the Germans got wind of all this and kidnapped Lieutenant-General Bakay on October 10 in front of the Ritz Hotel.

The other camp, the General Staff's right wing was made up of Lieutenant-General Dezső László, General Staff Colonels Bán and Száva. They gave superficial duties to our battalion. Lieutenant-General Lázár wanted to deceive the Germans and at the same time to cover himself by ordering our battalion to the Werbőczy, so close to the Royal Palace.

It seems that the Regent's entourage had specific plans for us. Our presence without military purpose was only pretence. While we were in constant communication with the Royal Palace and Lieutenant-General Lázár I was supervising the safety of Budapest's bridges. At one of my visits I found a flyer on the bridge. It showed the silhouette of a new Europe following the peace agreement where Hungary was put in the zone of Soviet interests. At first, I thought about it as German propaganda but unfortunately it was a sign of Yalta's reality.

About this time, October 7-8 we were marked for deployment due to the Soviet advances (in V formation) to Soroksár but luckily they were pushed back and so retreated. In view of this, my fiancé Katalin Endrényi and I made a decision that we will not wait longer and we had our civil wedding on October 10th and on the next day we held our church wedding.

After the civil ceremony we went back to the Werbőczy for a hearty bean soup because we knew the next day I could be sent into action at Soroksár. Fortunately it didn't happen so we had our Church wedding the next day. After the ceremony we walked down the steps of Christ, the King Chapel under the raised sabers of my six fellow soldiers standing guard. We held our wedding supper with a small group of invited guests at the Hotel Pannonia.

Our honeymoon was only one memorable night – at the bomb-shelter. On October 11, following the supper, we went to the Grand Hotel on Margit-island and stayed all night in the bunker. Today I am still amazed how could we, together with many others, even think about such formalities as getting married in such dangerous times.

On October 15th, about 1 PM following a check of the train bridge on the Buda side I met with some old, reservist soldiers who were approaching me sobbing. They told me that they just have heard the Regent's proclamation on the radio; that he asked the Soviets for truce and it seems that we will lay down the arms before them. The large group of these reservists rightly questioned this is why their sons had to die? Or their

relatives wounded in Russia? They asked this is why their sons had to get crippled for life so that we just lay down our arms?

Soon after, while I was still at the Buda end of the bridge, I got an urgent phone call from the battalion's adjutant that I should immediately go back to the Werbőczy, our battalion's headquarters. When I arrived we were already on alert and had to stay together. Then the order came that we have to march fully equipped with a helmet, and a Király submachine-gun around 5-6 PM to the area behind the church of the Városmajor Park. We had to wait there for subsequent orders.

Later I heard that Lieutenant-Colonel Jenő Andreánszky personally came to the Werbőczy and delivered the order of Staff Colonel Lajos Nádas, departmental head at the General Staff to Lieutenant-Colonel István Mészáros, commander of the 2nd Battalion. At the officers meeting I clearly felt that we are facing our battalion's destiny exactly as designed by the right wing military command.

The right wing military leadership, the General Staff clearly felt that it was not only immoral but also deeply dishonorable to backstab a bleeding ally. What else could we have expected of General Géza Lakatos, Prime Minister, recipient of Hitler's Knight Cross, who, together with his cabinet held the same views that the nation's real enemy, is the Hungarian extreme right wing and not the Communists?

While 200 000 Hungarian soldiers were fighting at the River Don the Anglo-Saxons and Soviet sympathizers declared that we don't have to be scared, the Russian bolshevism is already corrupted by the bourgeoisie. They painted bolshevism as friendly and wanted us to believe in this although everyone knew that this was not the case.

Again, the Hungarian soldier's tragic dilemma swelled up in me and I had to deal with it. I asked myself should I give up all my beliefs, all my ideals? I realized again that I was incapable of compromising, doing anything against my convictions and I didn't want to lose my self-respect. I felt that I have to continue the same way no matter how I got there.

Behind the Church at the Városmajor Park on the night of October 15, 1944 I got an order to close the roads between the Városmajor and the Institute of Cartography. From Buda there was only one way out towards Vienna, but only the German soldiers were allowed on it. Well, the Germans didn't show up at all that night.

In the meantime I heard from the Officers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff present at the Sacristy that the new General Staff occupied the Hungarian Radio and a platoon was sent to keep the building secure. Sometimes in the evening Ferenc Szálasi's military order was read that said the fight should continue against the Bolshevism on all fronts.

The Germans were approaching the Royal Palace with their Tiger tanks from midnight on. On the order of battalion commander István Mészáros I went to the Sacristy of the Városmajor Church after midnight to get new orders from Staff Officers Nádas-Bán-Szávai. The room was full of Staff Officers mostly on the phone. I presented myself to Staff Colonel Nádas who sent me back with a written order to Battalion Commander Mészáros. Before going back I had the chance to call my wife around 2 AM to set her mind at ease.

The next day, on October 16, 1944 at 4 AM my battalion commander briefed the officers, explained the situation that Ferenc Szálasi temporarily took over the government and became the new head of the country. The Germans occupied the Royal Palace without much resistance. My commander told me that he wanted to know what happened with the rest of our battalion and will go back to the Werbőczy with his adjutant, Lieutenant Béla Mecsér.

He handed over the command to me with an order, that at 6 AM the battalion be fully equipped and ready to go to the palace of Archduke Joseph at the castle and wait for him at the corner of the Ministry of National Defense at 9 AM. In the meantime we heard explosions and machine-gun fire from the castle around 5-6 AM. After informing the soldiers we set out at 6 AM as ordered.

We safely marched through Ostrom Street, Bécsi kapu, Úri Street and Saint George Square to the corner of the Ministry of National Defense where we met battalion commander István Mészáros at 9 AM. While marching through the streets people welcomed us in tears, throwing flowers from the windows and loudly cheering the Hungarian soldiers. Seeing us must have been a wonderful feeling after a whole night of German tank deployment.

During this period of jubilation while I was waiting for my battalion commander Otto Skorzeny, commander of the German paratroopers with his soldiers came up to us and asked what we were doing? Why were we there? Fortunately we had our Árpád-striped identification armbands we were given just before leaving Városmajor to clearly show who we were.

This was the first time when I saw Skorzeny's paratroopers in their special rubber-soled boots as they were approaching from the palace court in battle formation. They already occupied the Royal Palace. I was in a strange mood; sad and proud at the same time while I was carrying out the orders. I was intrigued about what was behind our particular mission. In any case I was assured by my battalion commander's explanation that following the Germans' withdrawal it is our duty to keep the Royal Palace secure.

On October 16th between 10 and 11 AM my battalion commander gave an order that I must go and report to Artillery Captain vitéz Ernő Gömbös, Szálasi's adjutant at the Prime Minister's Office that the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Infantry Regiment is ready for Szálasi's review. Szálasi and vitéz Gömbös together with some high-ranking Staff Officers passed in front of our battalion standing in attention at the building of the Ministry of National Defense about 11 AM. While Szálasi was reviewing us Archduke Joseph waved to him from his balcony.

In a short speech Ferenc Szálasi thanked us for our participation then he commissioned us Guard Battalion. This was the beginning of a new life for me. I was to report to my battalion commander at the castle next day, on October 17th I received a new post; I was to organize the security watch with my company to secure the entire castle, the bomb-safe bunkers included.

The palace guards stayed, although many of the former guards, a warrant officer and sub-lieutenant together with two-three officers remained with the battalion. Captain Vámos originally attached to the Regent's Protocol Office also remained. My company's barrack was in the basement under the castle courtyard while me and my wife was allocated a room in one of the guard officers' apartment on the top floor. Our window opened on the Danube and the Parliament building and even if only for a short period of time we were living in the Royal Palace and there were not many who could say that.

Second-lieutenant János Tőkés, a former guard told me what a sad sight it was when the Regent of Hungary, vitéz Miklós Horthy of Nagybánya came down from his apartment for the last time on the early morning of October 16th and said "they will soon come to pick me up". Then he sat down on the lowest step of the main stairway. A sub-lieutenant guard invited him to a comfortable chair right beside the guardroom by saying; "Excellency, please sit-down here" but "this is good enough for a former governor" was his answer.

Guard-Major Ernő Bangha, commander of the royal Hungarian Halberdier Guard wrote about the event and said that Veessenmayer German ambassador drove up to the Regent's Palace front door just before 6 AM. In his company were Lieutenant-General Antal Vattay, head of the Military Office, Adjutant General, German Lieutenant-General Brunswik and Prime Minister Géza Lakatos. When Horthy came out they all got into the ambassador's car and drove off.

As a guard company-commander in the relatively intact buildings of the Royal Palace I saw and experienced a lot by serving beside Ferenc Szálasi. While going about the safety measures I had the chance to see the

bunker under the castle where the crown and crown jewels were kept in a metal box, the silver chamber and the emergency meeting-room that was used in case of air-raids. I saw for the first time the Hungarian royal crown when it was prepared and taken by the Halberdier Guard to the Royal Palace's great hall for Ferenc Szálasi's swearing-in ceremony.

I first organized a guard at the castle on October 17. It was just about a day after Horthy vacated his apartment when the Germans were already making trouble. When I stepped into the Regent's former bedroom I found a German soldier lying on the bed with his boots on. I immediately protested against this at the Military Office. Unfortunately, the Museum of Queen Elizabeth (affectionately known as Sissy) was already damaged; even the chairs were cut up. After two-three days I felt that the German presence was not needed and again, protested to my commanders. I told them that since we were there we could keep the palace safe without the Germans. I protested against any combined sentry-duty with them in the corridors and at the main gate.

The Árpád-striped armband given out at the Szálasi takeover was really unpopular among the soldiers and I also disliked it although it was a sign of distinction from the Germans. Two days later I protested to my battalion commander István Mészáros and asked him to order the removal of the armband by saying that we are not the army of the Nyilas (Arrowhead) party. My commander talked to Staff Colonel Imre Pogány, head of the Military Office who finally ordered the removal of the armbands a few days later.

My company was made up of simple soldiers with peasant and worker backgrounds. Understandably they were relieved when they were told to remove the armband and they could stand on guard without the Germans from the ornate main gate to the deepest bunkers. Most of my soldiers never even visited Budapest before. Perhaps they heard something about the Royal Palace and now they were on duty there to keep order and safety in the last horrible moments of the war.

The Hungarian soldiers on the front lines were defending the nation's reputation to the bitter end for posterity. The simple peasants, workers and laborers acted in the spirit of the "last order" even though they just fell into the Royal Palace's infantry guard by chance and were standing on guard instead of defecting all the while the Soviet forces were indeed very close at Soroksár, near Budapest. They should be greatly admired for their bravery! In any case removing the armband was a great relief not only for my soldiers but also to me in those dangerous and turbid times.

We stayed in the castle until the third week of November. That's when we were transferred to Kőszeg but I had to stay in Budapest for a while.

My company was put up at a children's holiday camp at Velem, near Kőszeg. Nevertheless I often thought about our battalion as my extended family. The Stirling Villa was in Velem. Its cellar cut into the mountainside became a bomb-shelter where the crown jewels were kept in their metal box. Together with the palace guards we were guarding the outer perimeter of the villa's garden. At the same time it was our duty to guard Prime Minister Szóllósi, his family, Ferenc Szálasi's mother and sister who were also living in the villa. The families of the military personnel were put up in Kőszeg. My pregnant wife, my mother and sister stayed at the officers' (holiday) hotel. During this time Szálasi often visited his mother and sister in Velem.

Meanwhile I stayed in Budapest with a few officers in the immediate entourage of the Leader of the nation, that is how Szálasi, the political leader of Hungary was called. Following his political takeover he didn't want to move to the castle hence we had to fetch him daily by car from Csobánka. At those moments I was on duty alongside him all day long and I being so close I witnessed some really fast paced events.

Traveling from Csobánka Szálasi's car was always sandwiched between two others and lead by a guard on motorcycle to the main lion's gate of the castle. There were always six of us with him. On arrival he accepted the salutation of the gendarmerie on mount guard in the palace court. The convoy always stopped in front of the castle's chapel where Szálasi prayed every morning.

I got to know him as a deeply religious and puritan person. Later in exile I heard from the very reverend Jesuit father, István Borbély, S. J. that Szálasi took a retreat yearly and Father Borbély was his confessor.

The members of the cabinet found Szálasi's daily trips too dangerous and they insisted on moving into the castle. Finally Szálasi gave in although he didn't want to occupy his predecessor's apartment. Instead, he took the Esterhazy apartment on the ground floor near the main door. Before he moved in I accompanied him as an adjutant on duty when he went to visit his fiancé Gizella Lutz who lived with her parents in Budapest. The former regency office became the Leader of the nation, Ferenc Szálasi's office and his adjutant Artillery Captain *vitéz* Ernő Gömbös occupied the anteroom. Being on duty in the service of Szálasi I witnessed a lot of comings and goings, among them ambassadors and accredited delegates.

Once, when the papal legate came to visit Szálasi I was on duty at the door and heard when the papal nuncio asked for the suspension of deportation 90 thousand Jews. Szálasi loudly answered that he will do everything in his power to do just that, and added "we also have a great need

for forced laborers at the frontlines”. I knew about Wallenberg’s action to save the Jews and that Gábor Kemény, Minister of External Affairs also suggested the suspension of the deportations to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Nonetheless the deportations continued behind the back of the government, without its sanctions and knowledge. The deportations continued with the help of German sympathizers. Most of them were former convicts and they, together with the elements of the underworld, used the panic due to the approach of the Soviet Army to depredate for their own good. This is what the worn-out Szálasi referred to one day in April 1945 on the shore of Lake Mattsee in Germany during one of his daily walks while I was going with him as his bodyguard. He said that his ministers and the representatives of the Hungarist Movement could only come to Mattsee with his permission then he bitterly added, “they deceived and swindled me, they disregarded my commands”. Before taking his walks he made it clear that he doesn’t want to see anyone from his entourage.

I was at Szálasi’s national swearing-in ceremony in November 1944. The most reverend István Uzdóczy Zadrawecz, bishop to the Honvéd Forces helped him in this solemn moment of his pledge on the Holy Crown. It is an interesting historical fact that among Hungary’s five non-crowned statesmen (János Hunyadi, Ferenc Rákóczi II., Lajos Kossuth, vitéz Miklós Horthy of Nagybánya) Szálasi was the only one to pledge his allegiance to the Holy Crown.

In November 1944 I went to the press conference where the Leader of the nation said that “he is not anti-Semitic, the Jews are exactly the same as we are, but there are certain people who cannot live with others hence they need – like the Jews – a separate state”. Szálasi refused many times to comply with the German wish of deportations.

Sometimes in November Szálasi gave a speech and I was there on duty as an adjutant. It was about general policy directives addressed to the military personnel and from colonels to generals and staff officers everyone was present at the gala hall of the Royal Palace where the speech was held. Strict security measures were implemented to head off any conspiracy or possible take-over attempt.

As a 26 years old officer I was moved by escorting Ferenc Szálasi together with vitéz Ernő Gömbös, his adjutant into the great hall as I stood in front of all these high ranking military officers. Together with vitéz Ernő Gömbös we had to keep an eye on the assembly and be ready to act in case of a disturbance or a possible attempt on Szálasi’s life.

Later I heard from Gendarmerie Captain vitéz Károly Szatmáry, that their detectives were also present in the assembly as observers. I met vitéz

Károly Szatmáry the first time in Szabadka when he brought my parent's message from Baja. Much later in Toronto we got very close. Once he mentioned in Toronto at the Gendarmerie Museum that he saw me right beside vitéz Ernő Gömbös and the Leader of the nation on the occasion of that famous speech at the gala hall of the Royal Palace.

At the beginning of November together with Lieutenant Ottó Szegedi I was sent to Veszprém to survey the palace of bishop Mindszenty as the future site of the Military Headquarters. This wasn't an appropriate place and we prepared the headquarters at Farkasgyepű. This was done on November 8th with the help of Captain József Hatz (Hátszegi), Olympic champion of fencing who was at that time a field company commander at the Ministry of Defense. We just called him by his nickname Sepi.

We became very good friends. We were together frequently and we talked a lot especially in the evenings. Once, during a card game the duty officer called me to the phone by saying that Károly Beregfy, the Minister of Defense wanted to talk to me. When I got the order that I have to arrest Captain József Hatz (Hátszegi), I was so surprised that I was speechless for a while then the minister asked for the reason of my silence. I don't understand – answered – why do I have to arrest him? Because – the minister said – Captain Hátszegi is unreliable since his brother, Staff General Ottó Hátszegi defected to the Soviets. Then he hung up the phone.

I thought it was a silly reason to arrest my friend for but it was an order and I had to accept that. Back at the table at first I didn't say anything but later at the end of the card game everyone saw that something was wrong. There was a great surprise when I said, "Szepe, I was ordered to arrest you immediately because your brother Ottó, the staff general defected to the Soviets".

Poor Szepe, he didn't want to believe his ears. Everyone thought it is unfair but that was the order. Then conforming to the military Code of Regulations I took Szepe to an empty room. He knew we didn't have a choice. I took away everything what was customary in such situation and left him with the thought that tomorrow we'll see him again.

Early morning the next day I heard that someone was loudly shouting my name. It was General Beregfy who chided me right a way by asking if I really knew what the procedure was when I arrest someone. My mistake was that I didn't remove the lace from Szepe's boots. On the order of Beregfy my friend Szepe ended up in a German prisoner's camp but later it became obvious that it was the right place for him.

A few days later, on December 3, 1944 I was ordered back to Budapest from Farkasgyepű in the Bakony-mountain near Veszprém. Then unexpectedly on December 4, 1944 I left for Berlin in the entourage of Ferenc

Szálasi as his bodyguard on duty together with battalion commander of the guards General István Mészáros, General Károly Beregfy, Minister of Defense, Baron Gábor Kemény, minister of External Affairs and a few others. Szálasi was going to see Hitler, for more soldiers and equipment for the defense of Budapest.

We went by car to Hegyeshalom because Szálasi wanted to review the ongoing fortification works at Győr. The Jewish inmates of forced labor camp and others were working hard on the ditches destined to hold up the enemy's vehicles. As security personnel we had tough regulations to observe during the trip. While he was talking to the Jewish inmates Szálasi strictly forbid all formalities hence most of them didn't know whom he was. Szálasi asked them about their provisions and sleeping arrangements. Following their satisfactory answers he revealed himself at the end of the visit to the greatest surprise of the Jewish inmates.

We boarded the governor's train "Turán" at Hegyeshalom. I was on duty all the time. In the given situation I didn't really feel safe, I thought it was a daring trip across Europe in view of possible air raids but fortunately it didn't come to that.

When we entered Germany the German officials gave a supper for the Leader of the nation. On the order of Guard Commander István Mészáros I delivered the invitation to Ferenc Szálasi but he sent a message back to Mészáros by saying that he is unable to attend, he is not only tired but he has to prepare for his next day meeting with Hitler. Then he said to me that "the supper I have here is fine, I don't feel like eating with the Germans".

On arrival to Berlin we were taken directly from the railway station to our sleeping quarters. I remember that I was seated with External Affairs Ministers Ribbentrop and Baron Gábor Kemény as the bodyguard on duty in the car following Szálasi's. Szálasi's entourage was put up at Hitler's Gasthouse.

We arrived in Berlin early afternoon and we were already feeling sorry for ourselves, that perhaps we came for nothing and will not see Hitler after all. But it happened otherwise, we were picked up by high-ranking officials after supper and went to the Reichkanzellaria.

In the dark we sped through Berlin to reach the Chancellery. At the cloakroom German staff officers helped us with our coats. At the same time they took away our pistols and checked us individually for other arms. Being allies we were surprised but understood the importance of security following the attack on Hitler. While going towards our appointed place we went by a large open hall full of high-ranking German officers. This is when I saw General Guderian, Keitel, and Dönitz among the officers.

We stayed together while waiting at the reception room. Szálasi, Beregfy and Kemény came out from the Führer's office with Hitler, External Affairs Minister Ribbentrop and some high-ranking German soldiers at the end of the meeting. They all came towards us.

Hitler and his men stopped at some distance in front of us. He welcomed us and addressed himself to Captain Vámos whom he recognized from an earlier visit. "Mr. Vámos, I am happy to see you again". Captain Vámos was part of the delegation when the Regent of Hungary, *vitész* Miklós Horthy of Nagybánya visited Hitler. At that time he was member of the external protocol services.

The injury sustained during the attempt on his life was still visible on Hitler's hand but his eyes were friendly and suggestive. The official welcome ended with a picture taking session by the photo-reporters. Later, I lost the group picture together with all my belongings to the Czech Communists when they captured the train Turán near Böhmerwald.

We got back to Budapest on December 8, 1944. Being a young officer on duty I wasn't exactly familiar with politics, hence I didn't really know the members of the delegation I accompanied on the train. Just before reaching the Hungarian border our people of External Affairs gave a courtesy dinner to the German officials travelling with us.

As adjutant on duty I reported the invitation for supper to the Leader of the nation. Again, he asked me to report back that being otherwise engaged he can't participate, then he added that he was not in the mood in the given situation, of such great danger to Hungary. "I did everything possible to get more armed forces from Hitler but I don't believe that he will deliver". These were memorable moments for me. I never dreamed about playing such an interesting and unique role in the war.

After our arrival on December 8 I went back to my quarters in the castle and fell into a deep sleep in spite of all the bombardment during the night and I didn't realize that the Soviets were that close. The next day, on December 9, 1944 I joined my company in Velem, not so far from Kőszeg, where much remained to be done. I had to oversee some security matters not only in the village but at Kőszeg also.

As I have already mentioned my wife arrived there much earlier. We were allocated an apartment in Velem where we stayed until March 25, 1945. During this time my mother and sister were in Kőszeg, at the officer's holiday hotel. We knew that if the Soviet troops push forward relentlessly we have to move to Austria perhaps even to Germany. Velem's commander was Artillery Captain, *vitész* Ernő Gömbös.

My company continued its field duty trainings in the mountains above Kőszeg, around the Hermann Spring and when the snow came we also had

some ski-trainings. Here is an example to illustrate the general mood: one day a member of a Fascist Party organization's shock troops came into my office. He entered by raising an arm and addressed me as his Lieutenant "brother". I immediately sent him out by telling him that this is not a party organization, here the regular military salute and the lieutenant address is in order. There was another incident but this was related to my soldiers. One day after getting back from their leave they told me that while they were on the sidewalk two Gendarmerie Captains came towards them and by chasing them off they said that the sidewalk is theirs. When I discovered their name I reported them. Following their discipline they came after me by saying that they will "fix me" in front of the "Calling to Account chair", but I couldn't care less about them.

Since the bomb shelter in Kőszeg wasn't ready the metal box with the holy crown and the crown jewels was taken to Velem and placed in the bunker at the Stirling Villa's garden. One early morning my soldiers on duty together with the Palace Guards awakened me, that there is trouble; the metal box is in danger in the bomb-shelter due to the rising ground water fed by the heavy rain. Around 3-4 AM I went to see the problem and saw that there is no real danger because the water didn't reach the box and actually was flowing away.

Due to the advancing Soviet troops my mother, my sister and my wife, family members of officers and lower ranking officers together with the Ministry of National Defense and the military Supreme Command boarded the former regency train "Turán" and left Hungary via Sopron. It was a dangerous and difficult ride due to the Anglo-Saxon bombardments and fighter planes' assaults but finally they arrived in Austria-Germany. From Sopron the train went to Hammer-Eisenstadt (former Czech protectorate Böhmerwald) where the family stayed until the end of the war.

In the morning of Wednesday, March 28, my company was deployed to defend the city of Kőszeg. The close roar of cannons during the night indicated that the Soviet troops were probably near. My batman János Gyulai packed all my personal belongings into a special trunk from Ludovika but unfortunately I lost everything at our breakout from the first Soviet ring.

When I was leaving my apartment in Velem, my second batman Pál Pusztai removed from the wall a small black cross left behind by my wife and gave it to me. He told me that my wife asked him to give it to me in the last minute, to keep it in my pocket until we'll meet again! I already knew then that those my last moments on Hungarian soil and there will be no return. Since then I often think about these seemingly hopeless times, the handful of soil I picked up that is still in my possession.

My company and our patrols arrived at Kőszeg after a night march in battle formation together with a cart train full of equipment. On the way some of my patrols were lost in the fight with the enemy. On arrival I positioned my company right beside the road to Szombathely in the Kőszeg-Szabóhegy sector on the order of Captain László Horkay, deputy battalion commander. One of my patrols got into a fight with Soviet armored cars on intelligence mission at Cák between Velem and Kőszeg but they successfully pushed the Soviets back with bazooka fire and they moved away in the direction of Kőszegszerdahely.

The temporary defense of Kőszeg until the evacuation was the responsibility of Staff Colonel Kázmér Kubicza, commander of the city and the county administration and Staff Captain Béla Király. For more details please refer to the ("Hadak Útján" XXX. vol. /341. 1978. nov.)

Colonel of the Guards and battalion commander István Mészáros moved to Mattsee with the Leader of the nation via Semmering and Salzburg, the Germans settled Szálasi there. Captain vitéz László Horkay became our battalion commander.

Following the departure of Gendarmerie Captain Malonyai's company from the defense position vitéz Horkay gave me green light as to what to do in case of a strong Soviet push. If I cannot withhold them then I should retreat in the direction of Hermann Spring – Irottkő towards the Király-mountain, to the battalion's meeting place.

I sent my patrols into different directions and they reported strong movements of Soviet armed vehicles and infantry units from the direction of Cák-Kőszegszerdahely. The vehicle units of the 9th Guard were approaching from Szakony while at Lukácsháza the enemy's infantry regiment was planning an attack.

There was no one south of Kőszeg. In the defensive position on my left there was Lieutenant Colonel Sándor Péterffy's three batteries of air-defense artillery. I was securing their right side. They destroyed many of the attacking Soviet vehicles. On the afternoon of March 28 we got a report that several hundred vehicles are pushing forward and they successfully annihilated the three batteries on my left. In a heroic fight Sándor Péterffy lost his life together with all his artillery rearguards. I was left alone; there was no one on either side anymore. I began withdrawing my company as I saw fit at the moment and we withdrew into the direction of Szabó Mountain to Király Mountain, the former location of the General Headquarters in the vicinity of Szálasi's bunker.

We hauled all the ammunition left behind by the fleeing Hungarian-German troops to the top of Király Mountain. To mislead the enemy and to facilitate our withdrawal we detonated this huge amount of ammunition. It

served its purpose well for the Soviets with their great ground superiority stopped their offensive and they only operated by patrols on the mountainous terrain until late evening.

I might add that the small German reconnaissance planes by seeing the great fireworks also thought that a heroic fight was going on with the Soviet forces. That is how we ended up helping not only the successful withdrawal of other units of the battalion but the escape of all those pregnant women and children from the area of Kőszeg who were already on the road to Austria.

Late evening on the Király Mountain I personally lead a patrol against a Russian that came to the barbed wire fence of the former G. H. Q. and were shouting in front of the concrete bunker that “Detre give yourself up, nobody will harm you”.

When I heard it I went with my patrol to the barbed wire fence. It was a ruse that I will give myself up but instead I ended up capturing the whole patrol of Ruthenian, and Hungarian soldiers speaking Hungarian so well. During the interrogation they told me that they got the order from a Russian general in the presence of Staff Captain Béla Király.

I got wind of Béla Király’s treason during the day while I was still in my defensive position. I heard that he went over to the Soviets with documents. We took the Ruthenian and Hungarian soldiers with us to the border. We used them to carry the baggage of the wounded and the ones unable to walk.

THE ROAD TO EXILE

Under the cover of the detonation’s loud noise my company pulled back and marched in the night to the Hermann Spring where the remainders of my battalion were assembling. In the dark lots of men escaped from my company. They didn’t want to leave the country, they just wanted to leave the war and go back to their own village, to their families and to their properties. During the night my squad and platoon-commanders told me that some of our men also disappeared in the forest. The squad-leaders spoke to those “escapees” and as I was told they wanted to hook-up with the troops of “free spearman” of Staff Captain Miklós Korponay and fight as partisans against the Communists.

Leaving Hermann Spring behind my company became an advance guard although the Soviet troops were already in front of us towards

Austria. On Thursday, March 29 around 3 AM on the road to Irottkő, just before Léka (Lockenhous) battalion commander Captain vitéz Horkay ordered that from then on there should be no more fleeing since it could endanger our withdrawal. He instructed that whoever doesn't want to go to Austria could go home but if someone escapes later and will be caught he will be treated as a prisoner.

I went back to my troops and told them the order. About 25-30 men got a bag full of daily rations from Sergeant Alajos Dabis and left for home with my permission. In exchange they had to drive back those officially requisitioned carriages and horses that we didn't need anymore.

To my great surprise in the summer of 1992 my former Sergeant Alajos Dabis organized a reunion with the second-officers and non commissioned officers at a restaurant in Hódmezővásárhely. Only then I heard that during the spring of 1945 everyone made it home safe.

After the repeated tragic "reorganization" on the road to Léka I destroyed everything that could be compromising in case of being surrounded and I volunteered for an officer's patrol. We descended on a steep road to the village of Léka to inquire about the whereabouts of the Soviet troops. At the edge of the forest, just before the village in the gorge, two of the accompanying officers, one a reservist Flag Officer, the other a re-enlisted probationer Captain, asked me not to go further because they have families. Since someone had to carry out the mission I continued alone on the road crossing the bridge to the village. The village was almost empty, I only saw a couple of old women who said that the Soviet mobilized troops left the village early morning and there was only one patrol at the other end of the village. That's how I carried out a successful scouting alone.

In an advance group position my company broke through the Soviet line early in the morning at Léka, chased away a vehicle patrol and continued to move across the mountain tops through Borostyánkő, Kirschlag, Aspang, Molzegg, Semmering, Mürzzuschlag, Mariazell to the railroad station of St. Pölten. We were surrounded four times (at Léka, Aspang, Molzegg, Semmering) before April 3 but luckily we always slipped through the enemy line.

At times we moved parallel with the Soviet troops. They always used the roads while we advanced in the ditches, over the hedge, on the top of the mountains under the protection of the forests. At Aspang, having no choice at few thousand-meter altitudes on the snowy mountaintop we made our beds of pine branches on the icy snow and slept on them. At this point of time I was so tired that I could care less if I was taken prisoner or not. We didn't have anything to eat; in the last days we only had some sugar in our flasks. At bedtime in Molzegg we saw the village burning and

that the Soviets were driving the people out. Then, being so tired, I was only interested about sleeping and the possibility of getting caught next day didn't even bother me. Fortunately the Soviet troops didn't see us.

The Soviets pushed forward in the morning, we also went on our way towards Semmering. The Germans didn't want to let us through the viaduct just before Semmering. They said that it was already mined and they wanted to blow it up right away. After some threatening on our part they finally let us pass to the other side. True to their words, soon after they detonated the viaduct to stop the Soviet advances.

At Semmering the Germans decorated our battalion for "the heroic resistance at Kőszeg" since they knew about our daylong resistance from their reconnaissance planes. Our great fireworks also deceived them; they really thought that we were fighting hard with the Soviet troops.

Leaving the enemy at Semmering we went much more calmly on our way to Mariazell on April 2 but just to be sure I posted patrols on the two sides of the road. I feared for our safety with reason, again. The approaching military vehicle was full of drunken German soldiers and women who jumped off the car and began taking the arms from our soldiers and the pistols from the officers.

I gestured to my patrols; they came out of the forest with their bazookas, surrounded the Germans and made them give back all our confiscated arms. My forceful behavior, the bazookas and machine-guns of my company on "German territory" neutralized this shameful action. They could not disarm and despoil us, not even there.

The battalion boarded a train at the railroad station in St. Pölten and we were on our way to Lower Bavaria's Elberg village, the new site of the Ministry of National Defense and the Military Headquarters in the Tann (Pharkirchen-Simbach) region. This is when I was transferred to Mattsee to serve the Leader of the nation and to reinforce the Palace Guards with about 15 from my company.

From April 6 to April 30, 1945 we were on guard duty in Mattsee. The metal box of the holy crown and the crown jewels was "hidden" on a battered Hangya truck under an old cover. We were guarding this truck without really knowing what we were guarding. Only Colonel Ernő Pajtás, commander of the Guards, Ferenc Szálasi, the Leader of the Nation and Prime Minister Jenő Szöllősi knew about the importance of the cargo.

In Mattsee I was on duty by guarding the Leader of the Nation every second day. At times I was standing in front of his office or close to his apartment, at other days I was with him during his walks on the shore of Lake Mattsee. The Gestapo was not only keeping an eye on these walks but followed us from a distance.

I think they also knew about some interests (perhaps the English Secret Service?) or maybe even the Germans wanted to get rid of him and send Szálasi to Spain. I knew about this because as I was in front of Szálasi's office when Kurt Haller, adviser to the German Embassy came for audience. Guard Colonel István Mészáros lead the German visitor into Szálasi's office. When the Leader of the Nation came to the door with the German diplomatic adviser I overheard when Szálasi repeatedly said to Kurt Haller that he would not escape.

After a while Kurt Haller, diplomatic adviser came to see Szálasi again. When Guard Colonel Mészáros told Szálasi of Haller's visit Szálasi answered in a sharp voice "I would not escape, if I am guilty I accept it". I know from Guard Colonel Mészáros that adviser Haller offered Szálasi a small plane for two to go to Spain. On his walks with me Szálasi repeatedly said in front of me that he takes responsibility for his action.

I was present at Ferenc Szálasi's wedding at the Catholic Church of Mattsee on April 18, 1945. To the greatest amazement of everyone present the parson gave the newly wed couple a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* after the ceremony.

On one of these walks there was a moment when the Leader of the Nation talked to me. He was disillusioned with the Hungarica Movement and some leaders of the Arrowhead Party; he felt that he was misled. Another occasion he said to me "Lieutenant Detre, if you go into exile tell my followers and party members that they should deny me, deny the party, the Nation's interests is first"!

Due to the fast approaching Americans on April 30, 1945 Szálasi immediately transferred his sentry and me, the commander of his bodyguards to the Ministry of National Defense and Military Headquarters' staff battalion to Eiberg, in the Lower Bavaria's Pharkirchen region where our family members stayed. Only a handful of voluntarily enlisted people stayed with Szálasi like Sergeant Antal Horváth who was one of the best, most disciplined man in my company. As far as I know he died much later in New York.

Ferenc Szálasi, the Leader of the Nation offered one of the cars of the Guard to bring my family from Hammar-Eisenstrasse before I went to Tann, to the remnants of my company and battalion. Szálasi didn't want anyone to become prisoner and fall into the hand of the American with him.

There was joy in Hammar-Eisenstrasse when we appeared. We already corresponded by dispatch messengers but that was no substitution for personal relations. On the way back we picked up Géza Alföldi around Sherding and took him to Poking. We had some problems with the Ger-

mans again when they wanted to disarm us. This was when Second-lieutenant József Zoltay's fully loaded pistol went off in his pocket and wounded him. Unfortunately we had to leave him behind at the local hospital. Later I heard that he moved to Brazil and died there.

At Tann Captain Sándor Olajos, dr. was my commander at the Staff-company of the Ministry of National Defense and Military Headquarters. Here, the military families were put up at local Bavarian peasants' houses while the soldiers were housed in a school. There was calm for a few months. The repatriation began at the end of the war but only for those who really wanted to go home.



The Author in Szabadka – 1944

AT THE END OF THE WAR

Our family, my pregnant wife, my mother, my sister and I lived about 3 km from Eiberg at a Bavarian peasant, Mr. Stalhoffer's house. We lived on food stamps while we slowly sold our possessions to supplement our staples. My wife's cousin Lieutenant Béla Péntek who introduced us in Palics was housed with Lieutenant Ottó Szegedi in the village of Tann. I knew them from Szabadka. At the Academy I was in the same battalion with Szegedi but he graduated in June ahead of me because he started earlier at the Ludovika.

Anticipating the arrival of the American troops I buried my service revolver in the forest where we picked mushrooms. My mother and sister stuffed their dresses to look pregnant like my wife, who was then expecting our first child, László: They did it just in case, since there were all kinds of hearsays about the occupying American forces.

We didn't know anything about them, not even how they would behave with their former enemy. So, my landlord hid me in the barn, under the hay of the manger. I stayed there until the first Americans left. Although they came into the house and were looking for alcohol and girls but they didn't bully anyone. In the village they took away my officer friends' boots and their decorations but they brought a requisitioned old Mercedes for them.

A few days later Peace "broke out" when the commander of the occupying forces ordered the surrender of all arms and they interrogated all the officers. A Jewish Lieutenant who spoke Hungarian conducted the interrogation. He began by saying that we shouldn't deny anything since they already know everything about us!

There were some amusing moments also. One was when the military Bishop Dr. István Hász celebrated a mess at the village. In his sermon he accidentally said, "When Jesus was caught by the pagan Americans... err, I wanted to say Roman soldiers". This was a simple slip of the tongue but since we all smiled, the Americans thought he must have been funny for reason unknown to them.

The second wave of the occupying American Forces was much better. There was only one incident when my soldiers were shaving at the window. Some of the Americans hunting in the forest unintentionally shot and wounded one of my men with a sub-machine gun. Fortunately that was the worst incident.

My son László was born there on August 17, 1945. Bishop Dr. István Hász christened him. This event didn't go off as smoothly as expected. During the ceremony the Bishop asked the name of the baby; we said Csaba. Then Father Hász said it is a pagan name so there will be no christening today and took off his stole. He suggested that the baby should be István like him or there would be no christening. I respectfully told him that we already had an István in the family; László would be better. That's how Csaba became László but we later got our Csaba anyway.

Army chaplain Bishop Dr. István Hász was our guest frequently. Since the parson of the village had a close-fisted reputation I gave to Father Hász some shirts and other clothing. Germany was very poor then and the people didn't have enough to eat. We often picked sorrel in the fields and ate lots of it. To supplement our meager diet we had to sell off our personal belongings slowly but surely. We always followed the horse carts to pick up some potatoes that fell off to eat a bit more. Well, we suffered a lot then and there. But life continued in spite of some forced repatriation of the Hungarians here and there.

One day I got a message from the village that Signalman Captain Bakos would like to see me. To my greatest surprise I spotted my friend Szepi (Hatz) Hátszegi as soon as I entered. Right away Szepi told me that "now I am the boss"! He was the one whom I had to take into custody at Farkasgyepű as ordered by General Beregfy, Minister of National Defense.

Szepi told me at once that due to the detention he got the better end of everything because he was well taken care of at the Mauthausen detention camp where he was with other high ranking Hungarians such as Miklós Horthy junior, former ambassador. Following the American occupation he was transferred to the Island of Capri in Italy where he even had a better time.

He was very grateful for I saved him from the dangers of the war so now he was heading back to Hungary. I asked him not to make such a stupid mistake for he will run into great problems with the Communists. In any case he went home and a few months later he was arrested. I heard later that he was freed after about a year and a half of detention and even then he was let go only on the request of the Hungarian Fencing Association. He became the coach of the Hungarian fencing team. Later my friend Szepi became an Olympic fencing champion in Australia.

The next time we met was in 1967, at the World Fencing Championships in Montreal. I will never forget that meeting. I was a side-referee at the saber competition at the great Sport Stadium of the Université de Montreal. Hungary's best fencers were at this championship. During one of the competition as I was going to the other side I heard someone calling

me, “Hello Gyula”. I turned and I saw my friend Szepe approaching, the coach of the women fencing team, the former Olympic champion.

I told him right a way that he should rejoice somewhat more quietly for I am an undesired person, black-listed in Hungary due to my anti-Communist activities, because of several demonstrations organized by me. It was an open secret and everyone knew that party informers were integral part of the Hungarian team. They had to keep an eye on all team members to neutralize any attempt of leaving the “socialist simplicity” for the deceptive abundance of the capitalist regime.

I warned Szepe that he should behave more carefully around me and he could easily have problems on his return to Hungary, but he indignantly protested, “...I don’t care, hm..., hmm, hmmm”. We were so happy to see each other again that I immediately invited him to my house but he said that he could only come with an escort. Then he added that he very much would like to see the world fare Expo-67 and he will find an escort so he could come. Next day Szepe asked would I mind if he brought the Deputy Sports Minister as his escort. I told him right a way that I will be happy to meet him. All the while I was just hoping that it would not backfire on him later when his host’s identity will be known. So we went to Expo-67.

Soon it was evident, that Szepe’s escort was a staunch communist. After the Expo I took them to the Our Lady of Hungary Church and explained that the local Hungarian community built it. The deputy minister’s first question was “is it paid for?” Yes, I told him proudly although at that time there was still some money owed on it. Then he asked if I owned my car, the Super Sport Impala?

We also went to the First Hungarian United Church where the Deputy Sports Minister was visibly surprised. Then I invited them to my apartment but the escort refused by saying that they have something important to do and instead would like to invite me to their hotel where they will give me some Hungarian souvenirs as a token of their appreciation.

I immediately accepted the invitation because I didn’t want to cause any problem for Szepe. Again, I might add that my instincts didn’t let me down, the deputy Sport Minister lost his position soon after his return to Hungary. Later, while visiting Hungary I renewed my friendship with Szepe and we kept in touch until his death.

Now, back to the village of Eiberg in Lower Bavaria, where the remnants of the battalion and my company were put up after our long trip full of adversities and trials and tribulations of the war. The high ranking staff officers, the civil servants of the Ministry of National Defense and the Military Headquarters and their families were settled in 1945 at Pharkirchen-Tann region in Lower Bavaria.

Szálasi's family was made up of his mother, his sister Vilma, and two of his younger brothers Károly and Rudolf, professional soldiers. The American military headquarters allocated a house to them and took care of their bills. In September 15, 1944 Szálasi's third brother Béla, a colonel and professional soldier met a hero's end in Transylvania.

We lived there as I have already mentioned, in a peasant's house. It was until the voluntary return to Hungary began at the Ministry of National Defense and the Military Headquarters temporary seat Parkirchen-Eggenfelden in the fall of 1945. My mother and my sister Ildikó decided to go home with the remnant of my unit taking back all the unnecessary military equipment, horses and carts. Naturally only those who volunteered went home. I put my mother and sister in charge of my footman and those who volunteered that they will look after them on the long, arduous road and in case of need will help them until they arrive at Baja. My sister Ildikó was a very able girl and they survived the trip relatively well.

Eventually the remnant of the battalion under the command of reenlisted, probationer Captain Vajda safely got to the Hungarian screening camp and my mother to Baja where they found their apartment totally ransacked. That was the beginning of their real ordeal and the first step was to find and recuperate their furniture. Naturally all this was expected but they wanted to go home no matter the cost, the long road on a horse drawn cart and the hardship, rather than to stay in foreign land.

Meanwhile our small family of three decided to move to the British zone's displaced person's camp at Feistritz-Kellerberg in Austria's Karinthia region. My father, a former border guard and some of the reservist units already lived there. At the time we had to apply to the American Headquarters for a permit to leave and they only gave it to us when we said that we are from Austria. Well, what wouldn't we have done to go from a bad situation to a seemingly better?

LIFE AT THE KELLERBERG D. P. CAMP

We went to Munich in the summer of 1946 to get the permit and the Americans put us on a freight train. When the freight car was sealed we kept watch over the baby's stroller where Lacika was sleeping. Passed Rosenheim we finally crossed the Austrian border at Salzburg and into the British zone. We anxiously looked ahead to an unknown future at Bad Gastein. We got off the train after Spital at Feistritz where my father was waiting for us with the camp headquarters' official British truck. Its driver was former gendarmerie Colonel Kálmán Kontra, who was already working for the British.

From the railway station we first went to the camp at Feistritz but a few days later we moved to the Hungarian Camp at Kellerberg. We had to make our Spartan living quarter for three with cardboards and some wooden planks and stuffed our mattresses with hay. There was a wood stove in the middle of the barrack to heat it in the winter when and if we had enough wood and coal. We were allocated a minimum amount of fuel but usually this wasn't enough.

Wintertime we had to steal wood from the forest. Naturally this was forbidden and once the Austrian gendarmeries shot at us but luckily they missed. Since one morning one of Lacika's hand had frostbites we just continued to steal wood from the forest. Our meals came from a common kitchen. We used empty cans to carry the food every morning, noon and evening back to our barrack. The camp was fenced in with barbed wire during the first two years and we needed day passes to leave. No wonder we were desperate especially in view of the relative freedom of Bavaria for a life in a camp. We decided to look for some solution and fast.

We felt like living in a prisoner's camp so my father and I made a decision together with Captain Zoltán Tantó, that we'll try our luck in merchandising. By having no other choice at the moment it had to be black-market style. By then the general situation was already somewhat less severe at the camp. We were tired of eating nothing else but cornmeal, of the meal stamps, the brown water called coffee. Being fed up with hunger so we sold our remaining personal belongings in the "exchange store". With the money we paid off the driver of the British Red Cross' car and went out to shop at the Austrian market, brought the merchandise back to camp where we sold all of it.

Since we were in good standing with the British camp commander he provisioned us with a barrack made of sheet metal. This became our fruit and vegetable warehouse. Naturally all this had a price, and we had to pay our camp commander to keep his eyes closed. It was interesting that he held a rank of deputy Lieutenant Colonel although in reality he was only a sergeant. The rank came with his camp commander position by the British regulations.

Thanks to the Red Cross car and later to a British military truck our life was better by the end of 1947. The Austrian Police never inspected them and that enabled us to bring back other items to the camp, hence we made more money. Besides potato, cabbage and fruits we brought in alcohol, and in our small store we also sold lard, meat, sugar and flour. The women made and sold their own pastries and they also made some money.

Once we bought Saint John's bread from the British, they used it as fodder for their horses. We successfully sold it back to the British. The British Military Police thought that we could have got it only from their men so they summoned my father to the camp's police station and he was detained during the investigation of the "Saint John's bread affair".

There was a Hungarian school and a theatre at the camp. We needed them since there were about 15-18 thousand Hungarians in the two camps. My wife frequently appeared on stage and she often recited poetry on national day celebrations. She was quite popular. At the height of her success following a performance she asked the camp commander on the spot for my father's freedom. It was granted and this was also the real end of the "Saint John's bread affair".

At the end of 1947 my father decided to go back to Hungary and join the family. Thank God, he didn't have any problem although at the screening camp they thought that it was I who came back. His students always liked my father as a teacher. He helped a lot of people before 1945 and even the members of the new Communist regime did not forget that so they overlooked his outspoken nature. My sister and her family had a much rougher time under the new rule because of my former military career. Instead of putting up with anything in Baja they moved away to Budapest to somewhat "disappear" in the crowd.

We were expecting our second son Csaba when my father moved back to Hungary so he couldn't see him. In the meantime we were also thinking about moving to some place else since I couldn't go home due to my political "past". Being a former war-ally of Germany complicated our immigration even more. Former Hungarian military officers were accepted only by some Latin-American countries and by Australia but we wanted to go to the US or Canada.

Chile accepted us but I didn't really wanted to go there. It was pure luck that at the time a visiting Canadian committee came to the camp. They were recraiting people for the needle-trade business. My wife applied as a hat maker immediately. Since she studied sewing at the Teacher School she successfullly passed the exam in Salzburg. Meanwhile I studied upper leather shoe making at the camp so we all got the permit to settle in Canada and that's how we ended up in Montreal.

Permission granted we had to travel to Salzburg for our medical check-up first from the Kellerberg D. P. Camp. From Salzburg we ended up at the reception camp of Bremenhafen. Here, my son Csaba got really sick with bronchitis but we kept this a secret to get on the ship. Finally we boarded the former American military ship, the WSAT. GEN. J. H. McRae.

After a terribly stormy voyage we arrived to Canada's eastern port city of Halifax on July 3, 1949. We were asked where are we heading, Toronto or Montreal? We chose the latter one. We took the train to the reception camp of St. Paul l'Ermit. There we heard that at the Hungarian Catholic Church of Montreal everyone was praying for our ship's safe arrival.

On behalf of Montreal's Hungarian Catholic and Protestant community Miklós Horváth, the Franciscan parish priest and Dr. Mihály Fehér, pastor of the first Hungarian United Church of Montreal visited us at the camp. We stayed at the camp for three weeks due to Csaba's pneumonia, a souvenir from Europe. In the meantime I was inquiring all over town at the Hungarian associations about possible housing and some work.

My wife began working in the autumn of 1949 at a millinery shop on the corner of Saint Laurent Boulevard and Pine Avenue. We rented a furnished room on Colonial Avenue. I was washing dishes at the Redling Restaurant that was right beside the Hungarian Club on Saint Laurent where I was working as a bouncer on Saturday evenings.

Later I found another work with a higher salary. I was washing huge oil containers and the oil tankers' interior with benzene at the Texaco Oil Refinery. It was such a dangerous work that we had to stop after every hour. Then unexpectedly I was "promoted". They gave me a compressor and told me to clear away the concrete remains of a burned down building.

During the winter I was defrosting the refinery's towers with hot steam and since I didn't have any experience with the Canadian winter, I got my ears frozen. So they let me go before the expiry of my six months contract.

After this, one work came after the other. I needed them for the money although none was to my liking. I was a paint sprayer at a garage, later at the millinery. At first I was coating truck undercarriages, later painting straw hats at the millinery. During the summer I was working hard on a

construction project. Finally in 1951 I was employed as a furniture mover at the Eaton's warehouse and that almost felt like a promotion.

THE NEW WORLD

I decided that it couldn't go on like this anymore. I had to find something more serious since we were expecting our third child. I went to look for a job at Canadair. At that time it was manufacturing all kinds of objects related to the military, later it became a small airplane manufacturer. They are probably still laughing at Canadair about my hiring. At my retirement in my farewell speech I mentioned that in 1950 and 1951 I visited the personnel office six times to get a job but I was constantly refused on the basis of my higher education. At the sixth time I only wrote down four grades as my education, then I was hired.

I didn't say anything about my original profession instead I wrote that I was a plastic worker at the Weiss Manfred plant in Hungary. I don't have to tell you that the particular plastic they were working with at Canadair didn't exist before 1945 but luckily no one thought about it then.

After the sixth try Canadair finally hired me on May 1, 1951 as a day laborer. During the first 10 years I was working with plastics, later I became a jig-maker, toolmaker and ended up as a lead hand at the airplane parts-assembly line. From there I moved to the department of contract estimation and price analysis and eventually retired as a senior contract estimator and price analyst.

All my thanks and gratitude goes to Canada. I owe Canada big time for all the opportunities and good life that it gave to a basically unskilled former military officer and his family. The same goes to Canadair where I was given the benefit of doubt that I reciprocated with continuous efforts of technical expertise.

Besides my regular job I volunteered and did a lot of community work at different Hungarian associations in the last 50 years. Once I organized our national day festivities and invited the Postmaster General, Hon. W. Hamilton, who accepted my invitation. Back stage after his speech he asked that besides organizing such events where was I working? I told him that I was working as a day laborer for Canadair. He told me then to send him my CV and added that he had good relations with the president of Canadair and perhaps he could help me into a better position. That's how I was appointed to a higher position after ten years of hard labor and became a contract estimator and price analyst at the Contract Estimating department.

In my new position – to leave up to the expectations – I had to open my eyes and ears. I had to pick-up not only some very specific knowledge but a special technical vocabulary too. In short I needed to know everything fast that my colleagues already knew from the university. It wasn't easy but I managed everything in a relatively short time and soon I found myself sitting beside my supervisors at the price estimating meetings related to military airplane part orders; and at the yearly pricing proposal meetings with the representatives of the government and the Ministry of National Defense.

Following the privatizing of Canadair I managed all this alone for Bombardier until my retirement in 1988. In the last eight years I negotiated for 24-26 million dollars worth of spare parts with the representatives of the Canadian Department of Supply and Services. Sometimes these meetings were in Ottawa, and then I had to go there, at other times they came to Montreal. I retired after 37 long years full of sweating and some real hardships.

I proudly look back at my office career and my supervisors must have appreciated my efforts since they even overlooked my private, community affairs during office hours. In my last years there I had two desks with two separate phone lines. I did my regular business for Canadair at one and all my community related Hungarian matters on the other.

At the time of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 I worked for the Hungarian Relief Committee for three full weeks. Canadair generously paid my salary for that period. In the last two years before my retirement instead of the office I often worked at my summerhouse on the shore of the beautiful Lake Bethlen. This wasn't fashionable yet but it wasn't unknown either.

I also fondly remember my supervisors, Mr. Ben Lock, director of the Contract Estimating Department and my immediate supervisor Mr. Don Dineen who happily said at my retirement party “finally, I can speak proper English again...”!

A HUNGARIAN ACHIEVEMENT IN CANADA

In the first 10 years following our arrival we tried hard to hang on to our European lifestyle. We always loved swimming, kayaking, hiking and doing all kinds of family outings in nature but especially between 1956 and 1960 there was not one public place to do that in and around Montreal. There was all this water and no place to enjoy it. On weekends we longed to splash, swim or paddle but that was simply impossible, every such place was “private property”. In 1955-1956 we used to go to Lac Saint Louis, a large open portion of the Saint Lawrence River at the western part of Montreal Island but soon the Police booted us from there too saying that we were not citizens of Beaconsfield.

Finally Zoltán Tantó, a former captain with the corps of engineers and I decided that we would find a property right on the water somewhere that we could enjoy all summer long. We looked everywhere from Lake Champlain through Rawdon, from Lachute and Saint André to Lake Evans and Sainte Agathe in the Lauxrentians but nothing available.

At the time dr. Mihály Fehér founder was the pastor at the First Hungarian United Church. This was where Endre Mécs established the Gábor Bethlen Brotherhood and Literary Circle. Zoltán Tantó headed its financial affairs. He was the one with whom I spent four years at the Kellerberg D. P. Camp after the war.

One day dr. Mihály Fehér called Zoltán Tantó about a property for sale up in the Laurentians near Mt. Tremblant, about 160 km north of Montreal. The estate was roughly 320 acres with two lakes. The Bethlen Circle immediately announced this to its membership. After some wrangling and delay prof. dr. Ernő Joós, gendarmerie Colonel Kálmán Kontra and Zoltán Tantó with István Joó gave the down payment in 1960. That was how 32 local Hungarians bought the property.

It was total wilderness. First we had to survey, measure the land; then we had to divide it equally among the new owners. The Horseshoe Lake as it was called then was divided in a way that every subdivision had the same, length of shoreline. To head off any future bickering everyone pulled a property number from a hat. Since some people bought more than one lot later they swapped some of it among themselves. Finally everyone had all the lots they wanted.

Since the estate was much more than the shoreline of the larger lake we

formed an administrative body and called it Hargita Ltd. For all intent and purposes this is our lake association and all the owners are still represented by the Hargita Ltd. at governmental offices. Some time ago we officially changed the name of the larger lake from Horseshoe to Lac Bethlen and since 1977 it appears by that name on all the maps.

Today there are 16 houses around the pristine and picturesque Lake Bethlen where everyone can fully enjoy the peace and quiet and the beauty of nature far away from the everyday noise and pollution.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MY COMMUNITY WORK

“Faithfulness to my nation, devotion to my military career” was my oath at the Ludovika Academy. I always lived by my pledge. All my involvements in my new country were fuelled by this eternal Hungarian military ideal: the love of one’s country and the service to one’s countrymen. All my successes at Canadair were also rooted in the same aspirations. East or west, no matter if the Royal Hungarian Honvéds were disarmed, its professional officers and its troops wrongfully dismissed at the end of World War II., their spirit, comradeship and sense of vocation remained, and could not be broken.

Although our arrival to Canada was followed by a period of hardship I quickly became active in ethnic Hungarian affairs. At the New Year’s Eve party of December 31, 1949 I began organizing the MHBK’s (Hungarian Veterans Association Canada) Montreal chapter among my friends and former military personnel. I invited the military commander of Montreal who came to our very first Hero’s Day remembrance held in front of the Unknown Soldier’s monument on Dominion Square in 1951.

In 1950 I was active in the Canadian-Hungarian Federation and in the Grand Committee of the Hungarian Churches and Societies of Montreal, later called Hungarian Committee of Montreal. At first I was just an organizer, later I became its secretary and eventually its president for seven years.

I organized all kinds of anti-communist protests and demonstrations in Montreal and Ottawa. I handed over a petition concerning the unfair forced relocations within Hungary in 1950-1951 to the representatives of the Canadian government. I tried to direct the attention of the Canadians to the unfair consequences of the Trianon peace treaty signed by the great political powers.

In 1951, I helped organize the Hungarian Boy Scouts troop together with scout leaders Zoltán Szalay and Magda Pattantyús.

I became member of the Association of Hungarians in Canada in 1951 and for quite long time I was its vice president and was on the board until 2000. Until 1983 I instigated and led many pro-democratic actions related to Hungarians and Hungary. Between 1950 and 1965 with the help of young people, male and female comrades we, my wife and I, organized countless dance parties in Montreal. In January 1952 I organized a blood donation clinic destined for the Canadian troops fighting against the Communists in Korea.

I organized and led protests in Ottawa, in front of the Communist Hungarian and Soviet Embassies and to the Soviet Consulate in Montreal on several occasions. We protested against the antidemocratic measures introduced by the puppet government in Hungary. We also demanded the removal of the Soviet occupational forces from Hungary. Following the Hungarian revolution of 1956 I was helping the Hungarian refugees through the Hungarian Relief Committee with their job search and to settle down.

Together with my comrade István Pántis we established the Hungarian Choir of Montreal in 1960. They were often singing on local radio programs and concerts, and at the local Hungarian community events. Through the MHBK I set up the Zrínyi Fencing Club the same year. It was popular for a time since many young and old Hungarians and non-Hungarians got acquainted with this noble sport and through our club eventually participated in championships in different Canadian cities and military schools. Until 1972 Pál Zuna was the head coach. At that time I also participated in many fencing tournaments in Québec and I might add, with good results.

During my 50 years of community works I had the chance to form a large circle of friends and to build good relationship with many Canadian and Québec politicians, and representatives of other oppressed nations, such as Poland. In January 1963 I organized a rally to the US Consulate and handed a memorandum to the American consul general regarding the UN decision to strike off the agenda the so-called "Hungarian affair".

The Hungarian Hero's Monument in the garden of the Our Lady of Hungary Church of Montreal was erected in 1964. It came to existence as a combined effort of my comrade Ferenc Pápay, the president of MHBK at that time and me. Since then we always held our remembrance ceremonies of the Hungarian heroes and martyrs at this monument. Since then many Canadian and local politicians, military officers, the Mayor of Montreal, and Veteran representatives participated in these ceremonies.

I often invited Canadian dignitaries as guest speakers to see the lifestyle the customs and history of the local Hungarians in Montreal up-close and through this get their support for the “Hungarian cause”. Our most productive connection was with the Canadian Prime Minister, the Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker. When Tibor Tollas, the editor of the *Nemzetőr* was visiting Canada I took him to the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada.

We thanked the Prime Minister for helping thousands of Hungarian escapees of 1956 by giving them refuge in Canada. As a token of our appreciation Tibor Tollas gave the Canadian Prime Minister the rank of “Honorary Hungarian Freedom Fighter”, Diefenbaker was visibly moved.

In 1974 I was one of the organizers of Archbishop Cardinal József Mindszenty’s visit to Montreal. I was with Cardinal Mindszenty together with comrades István Tamas and Ferenc Pápay as he was laying the wreath on the Hero’s monument at the garden of Our Lady of Hungary Church.

As the head of the MHBK I had an audience with the Archbishop Cardinal at the church rectory. He sent a message by me to all our comrades in arm that we should always nurture and upkeep the Hungarian military spirit and never give up the fight for the liberty of our orphaned country. During Cardinal Mindszenty’s visit at the main altar of the Saint Joseph Oratory I was a standard-bearer behind Mindszenty’s throne.

Mindszenty blessed the members of the Traveling Flag Committee and I was working hard as the leader of the MHBK that the flag visits everywhere Hungarians live all over the world. Its intended purpose was to reinforce our beliefs in Jesus Christ, to bring veneration to Mary and to strengthen our belief in our nation. Mindszenty sent the flag on its way with these thoughts. Today the flag is kept in the Mindszenty Museum. In 1976 I organized another blood donor clinic to honor Canada’s generosity by sending blood, medicine and aid packages to Hungary in 1956.

1981 was the year when I became member of the Knightly Order of Vitéz, a registered member of the International Commission for the Order of Chivalry (I.C.O.C.). Since 1983 I was very active in different capacities until I became member of the Council of the Order of Vitéz. It was a great honor when in September 2, 2000 I was awarded the highest decoration, the golden ring of the Order bearing the coat-of-arms of Hungary.

Due to my advancing age I handed over first the leadership of the Hungarian Veterans Association Canada (MHBK) in 1999 and the Canadian commandership of the Knightly Order of Vitéz in 2001 to my younger comrades.

It was so typical of the communist regime that it designated me “persona non grata” in Hungary until the early 1980s hence my entry requests to visit were repeatedly refused. 1983 was the first time I visited

Hungary since the war. It was incredibly wonderful and exhilarating to set foot on Hungarian land again. The authorities kept a close eye on me but that was more annoying to my sister who had to come with me everywhere while she was also working.

Besides all those sentimental feelings my impressions were quite bitter in 1983 by seeing the dirty streets, the cities in disarray and the people's indifferent and neglectful ways. At the same time I have to congratulate my people that in spite of the difficulties they managed to build up everything from the ruins of the war since then. The Royal Palace is especially an impressive site in Buda, but there are other locations in Pest and all over the country. Hungary developed in leaps and bounds since the war, especially after the fall of Communism and that feels good.

My desire to visit Hungary was like a special lottery. My entry request in 1985 was refused; again I was a "persona non grata" in Hungary. It was illogical especially that in 1986 I got my entry visa again but when my mother died a year later I was given a special visa for 3 days only to go to her funeral but I refused that. Finally I went back to Hungary without any restriction the first time in 1989 and that was our first time in Hungary with my second wife, Mária Aparvály. This visit was unforgettable for the two of us. We participated in the first free Remembrance ceremony of October 23 (1956) in front of the Technical University in Budapest, the march from the Bem statue to the Parliament building... I still get very emotional whenever I think about it. In 1993 I got a flattering request from the Hungarian ambassador, dr. Kálmán Kulcsár to send him my detailed CV. He told me that General Kálmán Kéry, the Hungarian Parliament's chairman by seniority asked for it since he wants to promote me to the rank of Colonel as recognition of my activities in exile.

In spite of this great privilege I wrote back to His Excellency that I would like to keep my original rank of Royal Hungarian Lieutenant to head off any finger pointing and sayings that "...Detre also gave in...".

Dr. Kálmán Kulcsár's answer was written by hand, "My dear friend, Gyula! I thank you for your letter and its attachments. I can only say that you selflessly worked for your country through war and peace... Naturally, I had to act on instruction and submit your personal data together with your wish although I did it regretfully. While I understand you through and through I trust that back home they will do everything based on your wishes as I suggested. As the official representative of Hungary I would like to thank you for your selfless works in Canada and let me wish you in my official capacity and as a private person to my friend all the best, health, happiness and lots of future ambitions in your lifetime. If we will not meet, I say good-bye with the wish: God bless you".

The reason I quoted the important parts of the Ambassador's letter because I sent basically the same story in a shorter version as you are reading here. This is why I found his handwritten letter so interesting and its tone of voice so surprising. Especially if I take into account his Communist past and that before 1990 he was Minister of Justice and integral part of the government. "*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis!*"

In October 1999 Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary came on an official visit to Canada. In his official retinue – among others – were General Lajos Fodor, the Commander and Chief of Staff of the Hungarian Armed Forces. The Canadian government gave a banquet to the high-ranking Hungarian government delegation at the Windsor Court in Montreal. To my great surprise I was also invited to this reception and found myself on the list among such dignitaries as provincial ministers, the mayor of Montreal and prominent business people. Two days before the event I got a phone-call from Ottawa, the Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State. Naturally I was happy to accept such an invitation and next day a special dispatch brought the official written request addressed to the Canadian head of MHBK, member of the Council of the Order of the Vitéz, to me.

The seating arrangement was favorable; at the banquet I was seated at the table with General Fodor and dr. Gábor Borókai, government spokesman. At first I didn't know that while I was waiting at the designated table where my seat was when suddenly a general in Hungarian military uniform came towards me. We shook hands and only by reading his nametag I realized who this high-ranking officer was. I apologized for not recognizing him but I didn't have the slightest idea that besides the Prime Minister who made up the Hungarian delegation.

During the evening we had about 2 and half hours to talk. I told them about our work in exile, the organizations under my direction, the highlights of my 50 years of involvements. General Fodor and I exchanged our life story and we ascertained that we always acted conforming to our military mission.

At the end of the supper General Fodor suddenly said, "Gyula please come up to my hotel room, I would like to give you a token of appreciation". We decided to walk over to his nearby hotel on a busy street full of policemen and plain-clothes detectives. While we were walking I modestly said that in the mirror of the past it is an unforgettable moment that now I, the former royal military lieutenant is walking with a relatively young Hungarian general, the Chief of Staff and commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces. What an exceptional moment in one's life!

At the hotel General Fodor gave me a small green velvet box. It con-

tained the Hungarian Armed Forces' colored coat of arms on a white enameled base with an inscription underneath on a copper plate, "Awarded by General Lajos Fodor, commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, Chief of Staff."

His gesture and our open discussion will always remain a unique and unforgettable highlight of my career and I will always think about it as a reward for my 50 years of services rendered to the Hungarian community abroad. I tend to think it is a tribute to the Knight Order of Vitéz, the MHBK and to the good reputation of the Hungarian community in Canada.

I was present at the 50th anniversary of my graduation at the Ludovika Academy in 1992. The ceremony was held in the garden of the Ludovika Academy. Besides my wife and sister there were some of my old classmates and former comrades, what an emotional day it was! Following the ceremony we took a cruise on the Danube. Again, the whole experience was just unforgettable.

The same is true of a meeting after 47 years with my former sergeant of the Szabadka's battalion, Alajos Dabis and his family in Hódmezővásárhely. My wife and I was their guest of honor at a gala lunch in Hódmezővásárhely. My old, former staff sergeant Sándor Ambrus who went home with my permission together with Alajos Dabis and all those non-commissioned officers from Léka. It was so good to see them.

The still vivid wartime memories made us feel part of an imaginary family. With my comrades in arm we went through a lot of hardships from Szabadka, Fót, the Royal Palace, through Kőszeg, Velem, Léka to Semmering, Mattsee, Eiberg and Tann, in short during World War II. and these events marked all of us deeply.

As I look back on my life I suspect that in spite of my best intentions and efforts probably my profound involvement in the community life was partly responsible why I couldn't fulfill all my obligations as a husband and father, and why nothing really happened the way as it should have been. While there are no children from my second marriage I have two sons and a daughter by my first wife. And I already have seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

My intense involvement in the community life took up most of my time and away from my family; it also put strain on our lives and resulted the break down of my first marriage. My marriage to Katalin Endrényi ended in 1971. I married my second wife Mária Aparvály in 1974.

My first son László's first marriage to Karyna Swinarszka produced a son, Sándor. He is married now, his wife Grace Dutta is from the Fiji Islands. They have two sons Mason and Caleb. László has two other children: Sarah and Miklós from his second wife Sasha von Hausen.

László and his wife are in Ottawa and they work in the Canadian civil service.

My second son, Csaba also married twice. His first marriage to Ágnes Vermes was childless, while he has two sons Gyula and Adam by his American wife Wendy Vidovich. Csaba voluntarily enlisted in the US Marine's Infantry in the mid 60s. From 1966 he was in the Vietnam War fighting for 13 months. He was discharged from the US Marine after 13 years of service. Presently he is working for a private security company in California.

My third child a daughter Kati was born in Montreal. She married an Irish man, Ron Baker and moved to Vancouver, B. C. She has two children, a daughter called Melanie and a boy, Ryan. Kati also divorced her husband but later married again and moved to California. Unfortunately that wedlock was also unsuccessful. At the moment she lives close to San Diego, works and teaches naturopathy in Escondido, California.

Away from my native country, in a far away and, among unfamiliar people and in the middle of indifference, my life can even be deemed successful: I am indeed very grateful for all these to the Almighty. Looking back at my life I feel fortunate and really lucky that I lived through all that in relative good health. I strongly believe that I served to the best of my abilities not only my former calling but also my new life in Canada.

I honestly feel that I “changed country but not my heart”!

Montreal, 2001–2007



*In
front of the monument on the Heroes' Day – vitéz Gyula László Detre
Montreal, 2006*

PERSONAL DATA

Name: vitéz Gyula László Detre (née Dittrich until official name change in September 19, 1931)

Date of birth: March 19, 1918

Place of birth: Monostorszeg, county of Bács-Bodrog, Hungary

Religion: Roman Catholic

Father's name: Gyula Detre (originally Tsötöny, following adoption he took the name Dittrich until the official name change)

Mother's name: Flóra Tessényi of Pásztó

Profession: professional officer (Royal Hungarian Ludovika Military [Honvéd] Academy, graduated December 6, 1942.)
Upper leather shoe making (Kellerberg D. P. Camp)
Economist (Canada)

Military rank, branch of service: Royal Hungarian professional First Lieutenant, Infantry

Spouses: 1st wife: Katalin Endrényi – divorced, date of marriage: October 11, 1944.
2nd wife: Mária Aparvály – date of marriage: July 4, 1974.

Children: László Detre (born 1945)
Csaba Detre (born 1947)
Katalin Detre (born 1951)

Membership in Orders and Associations:

Hungarian Knightly Order of Vitéz
Sovereign Order of Saint László
Knight of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem (USA)
Canadian-Hungarian Federation
Hungarian Veterans Association of Canada
Hungarian Committee of Montreal
Hungarian Saint István Club
Gábor Bethlen Literary and Friendship Circle
Hargita Ltd, Lake Bethlen's Owners Association
Rákóczi Foundation Hungarian
Social Club

Distinctions, Decorations:

Hungarian Knight Cross of Merit
Hungarian Silver Medal of Merit – Signum Laudis with
word & War Trophy
Hungarian Medal of War Cross, I. C.
Canadian Silver Jubilee Medal of Queen Elizabeth
Polish Golden Cross of Merit
Hungarian Commemorative Medal of Transylvania
European War Veterans' Cross
Commemorative Cross and Great Cross of MHBK
Jubilee Medal – silver, bronze
Bronze Cross of Merit Hungarian Knightly
Order of Vitéz
Golden Cross of Merit, Hungarian Knightly Order
of Vitéz
Golden ring, with the coat of arms of the Hungarian
Knightly Order of Vitéz
Order of Rákóczi

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