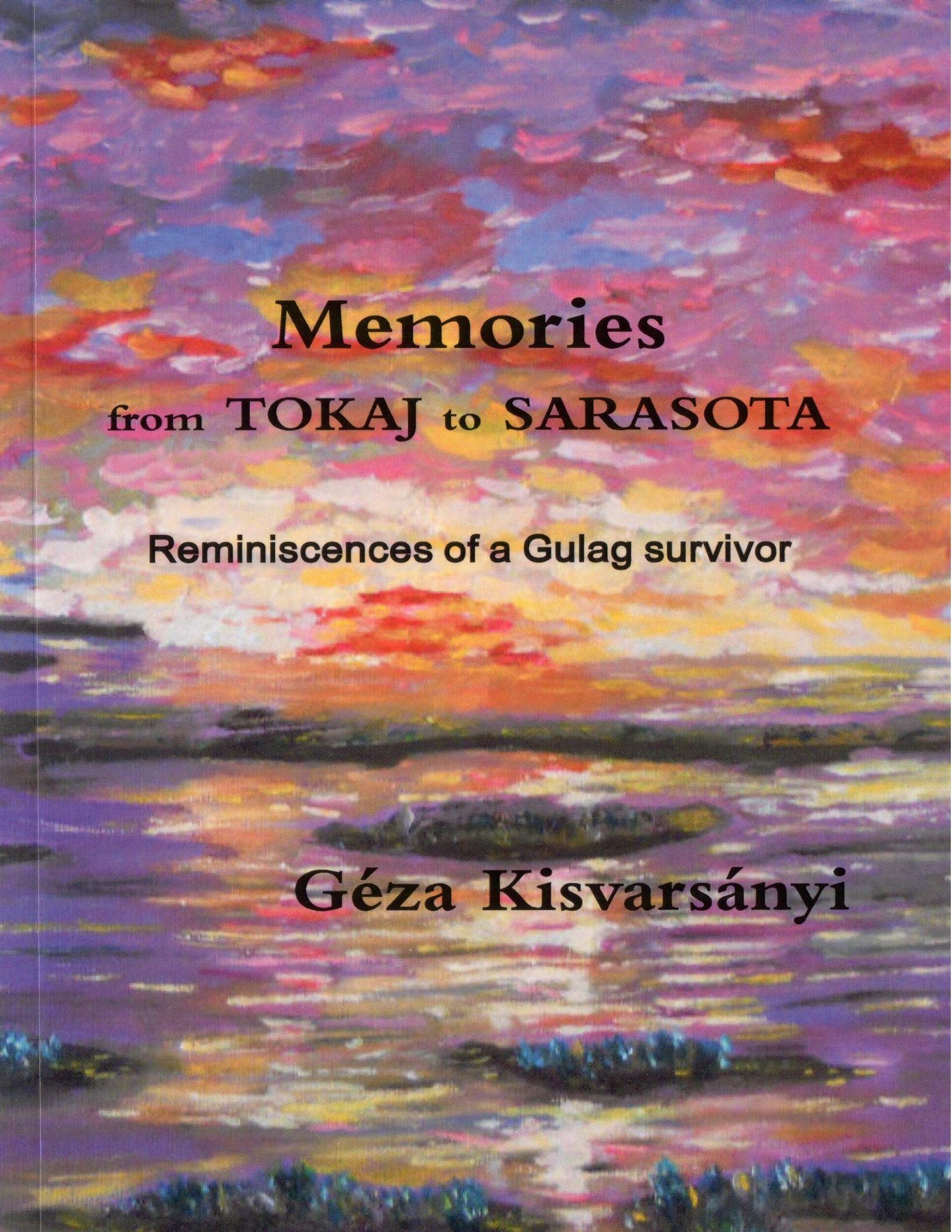

Memories

from TOKAJ to SARASOTA

Reminiscences of a Gulag survivor

Géza Kisvarsányi

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Reminiscences of a Gulag survivor

Sarasota, 2013

Géza in 1952, university student

Géza Kisvarsányi was born in 1926 in Tokaj, Hungary. As an 18-year-old student he was drafted into the Hungarian army and survived the last stages of the Second World War but was captured by the conquering Soviet army as a prisoner of war. His harrowing experiences of there years in the Gulag are recounted in this volume. As a witness of untold atrocities and cruelty, his recollections may serve future generations and historians.

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Contents

During our fifty-six years of marriage I heard many details from my husband's reminiscences. Yet it was deeply moving for me to edit and prepare his manuscript for publication and to read his story continuously straight through. There are three outstanding factors in his writing: his love and devotion for his native land, his admiration of the secrets of nature and his commitment to our vocation, geology.

His most detailed description is of the Second World War and its aftermath that he spent in the slave labor camps of the Soviet Gulag. This is not accidental because in those years, as an 18- to 20-year-old youth, he lived through the most inhumane atrocities. Only decades later did the Nobel laureate Imre Kertėsz write about the Nazi death camps he endured as a teenager. István Nemeskürty paid homage to the members of the Hungarian army who perished on the eastern front during the war. Until the witnesses, the contemporaries and the survivors are among us, their stories have to be told to serve as a warning sign for future generations.

This memoir is intended primarily for those who are still nostalgic for communism. It should also be educational reading for young people who grew up amid the bounty of material goods. Finally, but not in the least, we dedicate this book to historians so that they should study in depth the secret and obscure details of recent Hungarian history.

Ėva B. Kisvarsányi

Deputy Director, Missouri Geological Survey (retired)

Sarasota, Florida, June 2011.

Caveat to the English edition

The translation of text from one language to another presents many

problems. Word for word translations usually sounds awkward in the new language. The translator tries to preserve the original meaning, style, and intention of the author without rewriting the work. When the original is written in Hungarian, several considerations have to be borne in mind.

Hungarian is an ancient language, distinctly different from the Indo-European languages that dominate in the Western world. The recorded history of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin goes back more than 1100 years and contains a series of ups and downs, occupation, revolution, aggression and suffering. Only the mention of "Trianon," for instance, evokes instant recognition in Hungarians of this historical tragedy. Non-Hungarians comprehend the meaning of this treaty better when it is referred to as the "Peace Treaty of Versailles".

In order to facilitate understanding of this terrible tragedy for the Hungarian nation, a glossary is attached wherein a brief explanation and definitions are provided for certain historical references as well as typical Hungarian expressions.

Foreword

I am eighty-five years old, the last messenger of times long gone. I recount what I've seen and heard for my descendants, for my contemporaries, and for historians.

I never wrote a diary and cannot give a detailed account of every day, but perhaps my perspective is all the more interesting and important. I remember what's significant and interesting. My view is personal but rooted in reality. I don't cover up anything, and I don't alter events. Events and thoughts go together like an old man and his cane.

Why do I write then? I write because I am a witness of 20th century history, a player in this huge human tragedy. I write because the 20th century is the greatest tragedy of the culture of the white man and of the great European civilization. This century is the greatest and most fateful graveyard of this world-conquering culture. Multitudes planned imperial futures, conquests, wrote directives and reordered the fate of the world. Many wrote history and explained their report cards. In the end, everybody wanted to do good, and everyone

considered himself innocent. The writings of great men have all been published. I just wrote down what it meant for me when, at the age of 13, World War II broke out and robbed me of the best years of my youth.

If I had been writing a diary, it would have been lost long ago in one of the Russian prison camps. The purpose of frequent night alarms and searches was to confiscate all pencils and papers. The circumstances were the most severe because we were building a strategic road through the Caucasus Mountains for the Soviet army. Afterwards, in Hungary, during the years of communist rule, it was not advisable to remember, or keep such documents at home. Later, after the 1956 anti-communist revolution, we were on the run without any documents, paper, or pencil. Possessing written documents meant severe imprisonment everywhere. Those who wrote diaries could find themselves in trouble. Paper and pencil were always great enemies of dictatorships and the information revolution was instrumental in their overthrow. All my life, even in the worst circumstances, I concentrated on excluding from my brain everything bad, to concentrate on the future and to forget and exclude every bad experience from my life. This is the philosophy of the American Marine Corps: don't worry about what you don't have but concentrate on what you have. Quite by accident, my worldview is similar to that of the Marines. The completion of high school and university studies with excellent results, the attainment of an American Ph. D., the search and discovery of useful ore, were all built on this philosophy. Geologic discoveries in America and Hungary and finding art in science gave me spiritual rejuvenation and mental concentration. That is how I lived through the greatest ordeals of my life physically, psychologically, and spiritually. I survived the bombings, seven months of service in the war, World War II itself, being dragged away as a prisoner of war, and the death camps in the Gulag, the most extensive mechanized massacre in world history, the outright lies, famines, prisons and torture chambers operated by the political dictatorships.

Sarasota 2011

Geza Kisvarsányi

Professor Emeritus

Part 1. Growing up in Hungary

The Beginning

My destiny was not accidental. I was born in Tokaj. This little, innocent sentence contains our nation's greatest tragedy, the "Peace Treaty" of Trianon. My mother and her older sister lived in Kassa (Kosice), Tiszolc and, later, in Gõmõrvėg, where they planned their futures as young married couples do. But the Czechs did not want Hungarian employees and threw out 120 thousand ethnic Hungarians from their newly formed democracy. The one-thousand-year-old Hungarian Uplands, and the Austrian Bohemia and Moravia became Czechoslovakia. The Czechs took everything that was possible to take away from the Hungarians, without compensation on the basis of democracy and international right. They deployed Slovaks and Czechs in place of the expelled Hungarians. Unfortunately the same thing happened in Sub-Carpathia, Transylvania and the Southland, where two million Hungarians remained immediately along the new state boundaries and were forced to live in a "foreign" land. This was justice according to Versailles. Furthermore, about one and one-half million Hungarians lived in Szėkelyland and dispersed throughout the newly created states. If there ever was a political genocide in history, it was the political massacre of Hungary. The victorious nations of the west condemned the Hungarian people to everlasting misery and poverty.

In my childhood, I only heard about the wondrous Uplands, the pine forests, the bear- and deer-hunts, and the mines of the Hungarian and Szepes-Gõmõr Ore Mountains from fairytales and recollections of the grownups. My uncle was a particularly passionate hunter and has been through the wondrous mountains and forests of the wilderness. The mountains and forests of the beautiful countryside extend from the continental divide of the Carpathian mountain peaks to Selmecbánya. Hunting for bear, wolf, wild boar and deer was an exciting experience for the participants.

Later, as a schoolboy, I often accompanied my uncle on different hunts. He was an excellent hunter, a favorite of the hunter societies because he needed only one shot to down a prey. I followed a few steps behind him with a small Flaubert gun I my hands that would not have saved me from any wild beast, but with my uncle I felt safe. The day-long hunting trips provided opportunities to study nature, to

recognize and wonder about its beauty, to learn the nooks and corners of the ground and to acquire stealthy movements, mimicking those of the American Indians. I used and further developed these skills in the boy scouts and the paramilitary youth group the *levente* that was compulsory for all high school boys during the war, and later as a soldier.

Hungary practiced environmental protection as early as 1932, when we observed the "day of the birds and the trees" and the protection of nature to the extent that even a piece of paper could not be dropped in the forests. As a grade school student in Tokaj, I especially enjoyed these early May celebrations. In the afternoon everybody received a cup of freshly brewed cocoa. The cocoa was every kid's favorite.

Perhaps the general public, the young people and readers of today, do not know anything about the Hungarian ore mines in the Uplands. These mines played an important role in Hungarian history. Fortunately, neither the Mongol invasion nor the 150-year-long Turkish occupation reached these mines. In certain times, these mines and ore deposits produced thirty to forty percent of the income for the royal treasury. During the First World War the production of metals increased five-to-tenfold from the district. Even the industrial revolution in England started with steam engines and underground transport produced by the mining industry. The Selmec School of Mines and the Uplands mining district played significant roles in the development of mining technology and in Hungarian industrialization. From 1716, the developments of the steam engine and the industrial revolution in Hungary resulted in the founding of mining schools. The first steam engine was used in 1722 in Újbánya. The 3-year Selmecbánya School was founded in 1735. It was followed by the Sopron School (1919) and Miskolc (1949). The Hungarian State Geological Survey was founded in 1869. With the Peace Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost 98.3 percent of her ore resources and reserves. The first blossoming of Hungarian ore mining took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the country's only important industry was mining and metallurgy. In 1772, thirty percent of the national income came from mining; from Transylvania the figure was fifty percent. It is an interesting family reference that one of my wife's ancestors, Christophorus Aigner, received nobility in 1693 as a mining expert. Aigner came to Hungary with mining know-how obtained in Freiberg

in order to develop Hungarian mining. It is worthwhile to mention the historically important mines of the Uplands:

Selmecbánya
Korpona
Körmöcbánya
Kapnikbánya
Óradna
Rézbánya
Besztercebánya
Szomolnok
Aranyida
Újbánya
Pelsőcardó
Jolsva
Gölnicbánya
Láposbánya
Rimabánya
Fernezely
Bélabánya
Libetbánya
Bakabánya
Szinobánya
Rudabánya
Brezno
Dobsina
Ida
Igló
Mecenzéf
Rozsnyó
Csetnek
Betlér
Vörösvágás
Jászó
Úrvölgy
Radna
Rózsahegy

Let us read these names slowly, one by one. How much work, danger, struggle and knowledge they mean in Hungary's industrial development!

Tokaj: a Poem of Nature, Land of the Hungarians

Tokaj is famous. People have heard about it even here, in Florida. At least, the physicians, lawyers and professors in my local history club have. One nice member topped his dinner invitation by serving a

bottle of 5-puttonyos Tokaj Aszu wine.

To me, Tokaj is the place where I was born, where I was a small child and learned to read and write, but unfortunately where I had to leave at the age of nine for Mezőtárkány and then Eger. But whenever I could, as a soldier, as a university student, even from America, I returned to my parental home.

After the hardships of the First World War, my parents took refuge with my grandmother, who had been a widow since 1900. All her children flew the nest and she was left alone. She had a big house, a garden, vineyards and fields. My parents with their three children lived there with her. The land, the garden, the vineyards, and the poultry and stock kept the entire family well fed. Even during the Great Depression in the 1930's, we had everything a family needed. The garden was tilled, the fruit was picked, preserves were prepared for the winter, and the bread was baked. The fields were harvested, the wheat milled, stacks of flour stockpiled, hams, sausages, bacon stored in the pantry, jars of preserves and baskets of apples on the shelves. Bunches of grapes were hung on strings in the attic even at Christmastime. The fields, the trees, the household animals and the forest exuded earthly prosperity. Hired hands were cheap and they could do all the fieldwork. I only found out later that at the same time the whole world lived in squalor. Unemployment in the United States was 25 percent, in Germany 50 percent; people stood in long lines for a bowl of soup. No doubt that this economic situation contributed to the development of dictatorships and to the outbreak of the Second World War

This is why I believe that Hungarians can only be revived if they own land, good fertile land, fruit orchards, and household- and flower-gardens. These give greater life security than banks, real estate, apartments, or gold. The land keeps one from roving around, from escaping abroad, even if conditions are tight. Unfortunately, the only exception was communism, when landowners became enemies of the "people" and all our lands were expropriated.

That is how Tokaj became the great sustainer of the family, a life-giving town with its village section, called little Tokaj, where we lived.

Tokaj was built where the mountains, the Great Plains, and the rivers Tisza and Bodrog encounter each other. The Tisza starts in the

Carpathians and winds its way until it abuts against Mount Tokaj. After its meanderings, the Tisza bumps into Mount Tokaj. The mountain has proven to be stronger, and the river was forced to turn at a right angle. At the foot of the mountain, on the Tokaj side of the bridge across the Tisza, its andesite lava flow is exposed as strong and solid volcanic bedrock. The lava solidified about 16 to 20 million years ago from its red, incandescent state, and its texture is clearly visible at the base of the long concrete steps. The river Bodrog also bumps into the mountain and was forced to turn and join the Tisza at the bridge.

Eleven hundred years ago, Chief Tarcal galloped atop Mount Tokaj and, seeing as far as the Carpathians with a broad gesture of his arms, expropriated the land as far away as the distant, purplish and snowcapped Máramaros Mountains. This is Hungarian land to the Carpathian ridge from as far back as 896. There was no doubt about this even to the late-migrant Ruthenians, whom I talked with as a child as they rafted and piloted logs of timber down from Tiszaborkút to Tokaj, where horses pulled out the logs, one by one, from the river and carted them to the sawmill.

It made no difference who was the ruler, the monarch of Transylvania, or Prince Rákóczi, or the crowned king, this land where the horsemen of Árpád and the carts of the people came across the Carpathians is the property of the crown and of the Hungarians. On a Sunday afternoon in Paris, on the Champs Elysee, I only saw Arabs. How come then that the French do not give the middle of Paris to the Algerians? On another Sunday afternoon in Texas, in the middle of El Paso, near the alligator-filled giant fountain, I saw only Spanish speaking Mexicans. Why then does America not give away south Texas to Mexico? And if the Ukrainians claim that in the distant past Sub-Carpathia was Ukrainian, then I say that when the Hungarians lived in Levédia and Etelköz, then the entire Ukraine was Hungarian. Well, I will not continue this argument in prose, but perhaps the poem I wrote about Tokaj in 2000, illustrates the landscape to the reader.

When you see Mount Tokaj
As the infinite plains encounter the mountains,
When you observe the air lit up by
The sumptuous sparkle of a spring morning,
The outlandish vibration of summer,
The mysterious embrace of the rivers,

The bluish hue of the distant mountains,
The uniqueness of the landscape touches you.
The river's pilgrimage on the plains
Its meanderings that disappear in the distance.
When you feel the silvery vibration of the aspens,
The exuberantly phosphorescent plants
Greenly rising from the volcanic soil,
The uniquely special taste and the invigorating juice
Of grape and fruits grown in the foothills
The buzz of the long autumn sunlight
The peach fuzz girlish faces on the skin of grapes at dawn,
Their shiny glitter in the afternoon,
The golden smile of the *aszu* wine,
The comings and goings of the seasons,
The fragrant strokes of summer evenings,
When the silenced word of the lyre beckons,
When you remember the impulse of heroic times
The utterance of a taciturn man,
When you feel the mountain, the river,
The land, the trees, and the magic of the landscape,
The vineyards and the graveyards in the lowlands
Then you have a soul and a heart.

The natural beauty of Tokaj was determined by the fortunate conjoining of the volcanic mountains, the rivers and the infinite expanse of the Great Hungarian Plain. Perhaps the most beautiful part of town was the promenade fringed by century-old aspens along the Tisza shore, where an entire, concentric panorama of unmatched beauty and singular reality opened up before our eyes. Myriads of yellowing leaves glittered in the sunlight in the autumn wind blowing from the great eastern arc of the Carpathians. There was no other place like this in Hungary.

The salt depot (with salt transported from Máramaros), wine commerce and timber rafting constituted commercial ties with the Carpathians, and beyond that with Lvov. Even if this ceased after the Second World War, economic advancement could be created from developing sightseeing river cruises between Tokaj, Sárospatak and Sub-Carpathia, as well as historic tourism. The spirit of Rákóczi and his personality is poised above in the light between Munkács, Sárospatak, Tokaj and Kassa. This land is historic.

Eger

In 1936 when I walked in from the Csákó on Apponyi Street to the Dobó High School, Eger was a city aiming at the heavens, full with church steeples. The road ran along Eger Creek through Bishop Garden in the shade of huge sycamore trees. The park's name indicates that the town was built, beautified and ruled by the bishop of Eger. The church benefited from a generous land grant by our first king, Saint Steven, and used all its income to maintain the schools, parks and buildings. All the municipal institutions operated through the goodwill of the bishops of Eger. The town was true to its motto: Eger prays and studies.

It would be too long to even list the wonders of Eger. Natural hot springs feed the winter and summer baths. The warm waters in and around the town originate along a major fault zone and constitute a tourist treasure. Above Dobó Square rises the castle defended by István Dobó against the Turks in 1552. The Turkish War was actually a Moslem-Christian war. The Moslems attacked Christian Europe - not the other way around. Before and after the fall of Constantinople and Belgrade, for 333 years, from 1366 to 1699, until the peace treaty of Karloca, Hungary fought against the Ottoman Turks. According to the most reliable historic data, during the Turkish wars and occupation, the Hungarian population decreased from 3 to 2 million. This was an early form of genocide. Earlier, in 1241 the Mongols ravished our people and killed off one third of the Hungarian population. It was fortunate for us that because of domestic struggles and hopes of other conquests, the Mongols soon left the country.

The Jesuit school, later to become the István Dobó public school where I was a student for eight years, was built and opened its doors in 1754. By the time I as a late-comer, little Hungarian arrived there, the Hungarian people had suffered and survived two holocausts. Trianon was behind us as well. In spite of everything, Eger was wonderful for me.

One of the greatest natural beauties of the city is provided by its location at the foothills of the Bükk Mountains and its proximity to the mountain peaks of the Mátra and Bükk with their clean air and calming-breeze effect. It is not as windy and stormy as the neighborhood of Lake Balaton, or as the shores of the Danube in

Budapest. Geologically, the Mátra and the Bükk are different. The Bükk is distinguished by its metamorphic rocks and, at Szarvaskő, it has outcrops of a rare amphibole diallág peridotite called wehrlite that contains titanium-rich ore. Given the picturesque beauty of the countryside, the historic ruins of ancient castles, the nearby valley of Szalajka Creek with its waterfalls, and the rare titanium ore, it would be high time to create a tourist paradise here. Eger is one of the most ideal places on earth to grow up, to live, study and create.

Even during the horrible World War, Eger was not a target for air raids, and it was a safe place to study the classics and the natural sciences, to go hiking, to develop an understanding and love of nature, and to enjoy the baths during the summer and skiing in the winter. The students valued the confectionaries and ice cream parlors as well as the vendors roasting chestnuts in front of the Lyceum. During the darkest period of European civilization, Eger was the most perfect counterpoint to the slaughter and devastation, the ravages of air raids caused by the war.

Eger tourism has many special endowments (such as Szépasszonyvölgy, and warm mineral springs). Yet, one of its greatest potentials remains unexploited. A few kilometers from Eger next to Felsőtárkány, if we pass the Barátrét and Oldalvölgy, after the cliffs immediately on the right there is a small wooded hilltop: the Szuszékkő, the Körtvélyes moor, then the 531-meter-high Bocfatető. One of Hungary's most beautiful panoramic views is here. The white limestone cliffs of the Tarkő, the Háromkő, the Cserepeskő, the Peskő kő and the Őrkő rise high with incomparable beauty. There could be a rustic but first class hotel and restaurant built here, something like El Tovar in the Grand Canyon National Park, or in the Yellowstone Park, albeit smaller, to supplement Eger's intrinsic values with the mesmerizing beauty of the Bükk Mountains. Instead of in Brazil or South Africa, Hungarian millionaires, as well as the city of Eger and the Eger Forest Service, should invest here. If there can be a small airstrip on Pipis Mount, there could be one in Felsőtárkány. Just stepping into one of these log cabins makes one feel two years younger. Warming up and sitting next to the huge fireplace with cast iron grates, all care and trouble is forgotten. This healing, wondrous romanticism can only be found in America but could be realized in Hungary, too.

Eger was and is today a city of schools. My Alma Mater was the

Dobó István School that I attended from 1936 to 1944. It was an excellent school. Among my teachers my favorite was our homeroom teacher, Dr. András Eorsi, who taught Hungarian and Latin languages. The faculty and the entire society greeted the outbreak of the war with shocked disbelief. The general opinion was that it will come to no good and that sooner or later Hungary will get mixed up in it. We, the high school students, also felt the winds of change. The levente drill, the civil defense service and the Boy Scout activities weighed heavily on our shoulders. We were obliged to serve three or four times a week in the afternoons, and at night we had to observe from the church steeple the possible approach of enemy aircraft, so to sound the alarm. This essentially robbed us of our youth and of all our free time. In spite of this, I finished high school and matriculated as valedictorian of my class. I applied to the mechanical engineering department of the József Nádor Technical University in Budapest and was accepted. By the time we graduated from high school we were completely trained soldiers; within a few months, this proved to have a huge impact on my life.

As the valedictorian and the president of my class and of the student body, I was the keynote speaker at the commencement ceremony. Under the flags of the Virgin Mary and the Hungarian national flag adorned with the royal crown of Saint Steven, I emphasized the tragic outcome of the war in my speech; by that time, in May 1944, the Russian army was before the Carpathians and was approaching the thousand-year border. I predicted that if the Russians occupied Hungary, our nation and our society would undergo a huge transformation that would be a great ordeal for the country and the people. Several people noted afterward that I saw the future too darkly. Unfortunately, the storm clouds of the future were already on the horizon. My history teacher, Dr. Béla Király, congratulated me, saying that he could not have given a better speech. I was happy to hear this because I thought long and hard about the approaching storm that the radio, the press and the newsreels never mentioned. The Hungarian people were ill-prepared for the cross-fire of the war; the propaganda machine forever promised that the German "miracle weapons" would assure victory and that from the "flexible retreat" there would be a sweeping counteroffensive. There would be a breakthrough at Gorlice, and the Russian front would be rolled back. All this, of course, was only an opiate for the populace.

As a Boy Scout in high school, I explored the returned territories. I devoted three months during the summer holidays to visiting our cities from Kassa to Marosvásárhely (Tirgu Mures), the villages, the resorts and the mountain ranges on foot. I just happened to be in Szováta when Archduke József arrived on his private airplane to review his forestry estate in Maros-Torda. He was very friendly and had a kind word to all the foresters and every lumberjack. At one of the forest clearings, twenty horses pulled the huge logs to the little forest train that transported them to the saw mill.

I always loved and admired pine forests. As I walked about the mountains, sometimes I saw bears and deer. There were wolves, too, and I chose my night quarters carefully on cliffs that animals could not reach. This of course was not without some danger, but I was not afraid of anything when I was 16 and 17 years old.

In spite of the war, Hungary started an unbelievable economic upturn with the returned territories. It was an enormous detriment for the world that Hitler was not satisfied with the occupation of Austria and the Czech basin. During the first years of the war Hitler was so encouraged by his early victories that even against the advice of his generals he declared war against three world powers. With this he sealed the destiny of Hungary which became forever dependent on others, an economically ruined country. Of the thirteen-hundred-kilometer-long Carpathian mountain chain, not a single kilometer remained Hungarian. We lost ninety nine percent of our ore deposits and mines. As far as Hungary was concerned, the Versailles peace treaty created a new international legal concept, "political genocide." It would be good if this entirely new peacemaking concept would be recognized by international jurists. The Russian invasion of Hungary ranks equal to the Mongol and Turkish invasion.

A little summer labor camp

The final examinations in 1944 took place in April because of the war. I passed all my exams with excellent results and received a straight-A report card. Six of my 33 classmates were good students, but I was the only valedictorian. My favorite subjects were calculus and Hungarian literature.

As of the first of May, by the order of the Germans, the auxiliary command of the 7th Miskolc Corps conscripted 300 students from

Eger for a work detail. Under the guard of the royal Hungarian gendarmerie and the army, we were transported to Szirmabesenyő near Miskolc. For the lack of an airport we were assigned to the building of a new airstrip. From the middle of May to the middle of August, we lived in the Szirmabesenyő camp, and I worked with a hacker and a wheelbarrow in the grading of the airfield. This was actually a Jewish labor camp but without the yellow Star of David.

We worked as pick and shovel men. We hacked and shoveled, and shifted tons of dirt with a wheelbarrow. It was strenuous work. The engineers were measuring where and how much needed to be shaved off from the hills in order to lengthen and widen the runways. We lived in village schools and in private homes where five or six students slept on the floor in the same room. We had to go to the camp kitchen for our food and take it back to our roommates.

One Sunday morning, the alarm was sounded. We had to line up and march to a corner of the air field, but nobody knew why. When we got there, we saw a group of enlisted soldiers, forming a quadrangle, execute a man of about 40 or 50 by the order of the military tribunal. For us, this was gruesome and foreboding of worse things to come. Afterwards, we knew that we were no longer children, or students of Eger. The winds of war reached us and our goal was survival. Suddenly the laughter and easygoing, youthful behavior left our consciousness, and we felt the seriousness and gravity of our situation. Eventually, we found out that the unfortunate, executed man had committed sabotage by stealing some military stuff. I thought that for this he should have received maybe three years imprisonment, but there was a war on and martial law applied to everybody tenfold. To this day, I condemn this execution.

Budapest, 1944

As of the 1st of September I was accepted into the mechanical engineering department of the József Nádor Technical University. I arrived in Budapest as a freshman with an automobile. Although in the late August heat we had to make a stop near Hatvan and pour cold water on the wheels because the quality of the rubber was so poor that it started to smoke en route. Finally we arrived, and I moved into my student quarters in the home of a friend from Tokaj at 44 Damjanich Street. It was a large apartment on the second floor with four rooms, a bathroom and a servant room looking out on the

backyard.

The Technical University does not need compliments. It is one of the oldest technologic schools in the world. The gigantic block of the main building faced the Danube on the Buda side. From the main entrance my classes were in the right wing of the building. If not for that cursed war, everything would have been fine. As we were sitting in class and listening to Dr. Pattantyús lecture on general mechanics, the air raid alarm sounded. We went to the basement and worked on math problems while bombs exploded above. Okay, so we could bear this once. However, the war and the bombings continued. Rumor had it that the sixth German army suffered heavy losses and was retreating from Bukovina and Besszarabia towards Bucharest. Soon after Romania jumped from the German alliance, the status of Hungary became impossible.

The university closed its doors on October 1 because of the bombings and the general military situation. We had no other choice but to pack up and go home to Eger with my sister, who was attending an economic school on the outskirts of Pest. We were already sitting on the 8'oclock train that stood on the first track in the Eastern Railroad Station when the air raid alarm sounded—bombing! There was panic on the train because we were in the worst possible place. In panic, people wanted to escape from the wagon with their suitcases and bundles, but on the corridor they got stuck, they fell, their packs fell apart. In the blink of an eye, I saw that we could not get through the long corridor. I pulled and forced down the window of the coupe and jumped through it onto the platform. I told my sister to jump as well. She did, but, unfortunately, so badly that she hit her chin on the concrete platform and nearly fainted from the concussion. I pulled her through the ticket office to the air raid shelter on the Thököly Street side of the railroad station. The shelter did not provide safe haven from the bombs because it was just barely under the platform and the waiting halls. The bombs fell on the residential area between the Western and Eastern Railroad Stations where many civilians were killed. Not a single bomb fell on the Eastern Station. In an hour, we were on our way back home to Eger.

Peace and War

The First World War was the greatest tragedy of European civilization because it started the downturn of Europe that sped up with the

Second World War and continues to this day. The central powers did not suffer military defeat. Their economies were exhausted, and they could not continue the fight after America entered the war. They believed in the promises made by President Wilson that there would be a just peace based on the right of nations to self determination.

The reality was different. The European politicians tricked President Wilson, and the decisions were made according to their own wishes. Clemenceau hated the "bosch" and even more the "Asian mongols," the Hungarians. The French knew well that immediately along the newly-drawn borders lived two million Hungarians who were brutally annexed by the newly-created states. The French were led by the wish for revenge and to destroy the military power of the central powers. Real democratic, popular vote was not permitted anywhere. They made a big deal out of Alsace Lorraine in spite of the fact that its population was two-thirds German and that for centuries it was part of the German-Roman Empire. It is comparable to the „what if" situation had Hungary lost only Burgenland, and from then on had its return as her primary goal. During the peace treaties in 1920, French hatred was limitless. This was partly the reason for the appearance of Hitler and the Second World War. England's main goal was to destroy the industrially-strengthening Germany.

At the time when the Second World War broke out, I was only 13 years old. It is not likely that as a high school student I was a war criminal, or responsible for the atrocities of war. Hitler was not satisfied with annexing Austria and the Czech basin. He is directly responsible for the war, but he would never have become chancellor of Germany if it had not been for Versailles. With the war, the destruction of the European civilization continued. The concept of the great „national army" cooked up by Napoleon, where every citizen is armed, came to fruition in the total war.

When the war broke out in 1939, we, the students in Eger, continued to attend school and study diligently, as if nothing had happened. By the order of the Eger garrison, a machine gun was set up on the flat roof of the electric plant on Sas Avenue. The local kids admired it, but within two or three months it disappeared. I think that maybe an outstanding military commander thought that a First World War-vintage machine gun would protect the railroad station and the electric plant. It was later proved that no machine gun would have reached enemy aircraft and that they would have needed at least 8.8-

cm guns for that. Well, it seems that nobody knew this in Eger, or in Tokaj, because the defense of the bridges at Tokaj was left to four 40-mm machine guns.

The first great tragedy in Eger happened years later when in the greatest battle of our history, at the Don Bend, 100,000 Hungarian soldiers lost their lives. When the returning soldiers of the infantry regiment from Eger marched in front of the monument by the theatre, the injured and crippled among them were more than the unhurt. That was when I first realized that this war was not a game and perhaps we might not escape it whole.

In 1943 I was seventeen, and more and more time was wasted with civil defense, levente and Boy Scout practice that in time deteriorated to basic military training. Besides, I was elected class president. All this handicapped my studies, and I had a hard time keeping my straight *"A"* record. I was deeply saddened by the news that my fourth grade teacher from Mezőtárkány, first lieutenant László Kiss in the reserves, fell in the battle of the Don. His face was reminiscent of Petőfi, and when he was my teacher he was about 24-25 years old. He gave me an assignment once to draw a map of Lake Balaton and its environs, the Bakony Mountains. I worked on it for days, and it was splendid when I finished. The lake was blue and the mountains appeared as yellowish-brown lines, all the resort towns named along the lakeshore. I received great praise for the map. Next day, the cleaning lady hung it on the wall upside down because she could not read. I could see from this that it is a privilege to go to school, and we have to appreciate it by studying hard.

After all the work, I needed some rest. I went to Transylvania and, after touring the forests and the mountains, ended up in Szováta. I lived in the environs of Lake Medve and received a handsome brown horse from the Maros-Torda Forest Service. I rode around the countryside, up on the Mezőhavas and into the peaks of the snowy Görgényi Mountains. At the 1,777-meter-high peak, there were no more pine forests, only junipers. I rowed a raft across Lake Saint Anna. Full of the wondrous scenery of Transylvania, in the total silence, the clean air, in the lap of nature. I felt totally at peace, and the distant thunder of the war did not touch me. Even if the Russians reach the Carpathians, I mused, on the roads protected by the mountain passes and the steep cliffs, they will not be able to pass through. I believed that six-hundred-thousand Hungarian soldiers,

two armies from the Forested Carpathians to the Snowy Háromszék, would be able to defend the country. The Russians would never come across here. It never occurred to me that scarcely a year later, I would defend the Borgó Pass with ten scouts, if only for a day, until the battalion and artillery behind us were wiped out by Russian tanks and attacking aircraft coming from the south.

The day after I returned to Eger from Budapest in the fall of 1944, the radio blasted, and newspapers and posters announced that every young man 18 years of age should immediately report to the City Hall on Dobó Square. I did not report. I was thinking what to do. The radio also announced, however, that those who refuse to report will be declared deserters. On one of the squares, two men were hanging from two acacia trees with a sign underneath: „This is the fate of treasonous deserters." This was a weighty argument. I dressed up in my field clothes, put on my hiking boots and started slowly toward City Hall. I thought I would look around, see what the situation is. I entered the massive building through a side door to take my bearings. As soon as I entered through the gateway, two soldiers grabbed me and pulled me into the courtyard where some 200 boys stood in line. They pushed me into the line, and then a captain named Simon yanked out his pistol and yelled at me: „If you step out of the line, I'll shoot!" Well, I did not step out of the line. From the courtyard of the City Hall, we filed in a long line to the barracks of the garrison's 60th infantry regiment, where our personal data was immediately recorded and, as per military orders, we became Hungarian royal privates. We had to retain our military papers. Those who left the barracks without orders would be apprehended as deserters. Needless to say, nobody tried to escape. Through an iron grill, I secretly passed a piece of paper to a passerby to inform my parents as to my whereabouts. They immediately contacted a lieutenant acquaintance who helped me receive the role of a go-between, a courier to the command, and a pass. For three days, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., we had military training. Then an order came to immediately send 300 to 400 people to Marosvásárhely to supplement the Székely Division.

We left Eger on an unheated train at night, dressed as soldiers, everybody supplied with a Mauser infantry gun and 48 cartridges. The lager gendarmes, the battalion commander, officers and sergeants traveled with us. At dawn we were already in Déva and we disembarked at Beszterce. We were informed there that we could not

proceed any further because the Russians already had seized the Székelyland and Marosvásárhely. We converged in a schoolyard in Beszterce where a staff captain briefed us. As his reconnoiter battalion was in a battle somewhere, he urgently needed scouts. This was a very important task because a retreating battalion that occasionally engages in counterattacks can only function well if it has accurate information. As I was familiar inside-out with scouting, I volunteered. The captain immediately appointed me squad corporal and assigned ten young Székely soldiers to me. Thus, I started my active duties in the Second World War.

Small country, big war

Why did such a small and strategically insignificant country like Hungary ever enter a war against world powers? If I stood on the peaks of the Eastern Carpathians, there was only one country eastward to America: the Soviet Union, that is, the Russian Empire. For one thousand years, the Hungarian people had fought for freedom and independence. The life and death struggle with the Moslem Turks lasted for 333 years, from 1366 to 1699. One third of the Hungarian population was lost in that war. Therefore, we had something to fear from war. But we were even more afraid of Russian bolshevism that promised to exterminate our middle- and upper classes. The Hungarian people were continually frightened by the domestic and Russian communists and believed that Germany would save the suffering peoples of Russia, who were constantly subjected to mass murder. It will have to be explained by historians why Hitler became a conquistador and murderer, the same as Stalin, and why a war of liberation turned into a campaign of murderous destruction. When Hungary entered the war, she believed that she was acting nobly. At first, I witnessed this as the Ukrainian people greeted the liberators with jubilation and delight. The soldiers themselves saw how happy the Ukrainians were about their liberation.

It does not really matter who explains history. As an 18 year old, I could not avoid my destiny. The last year of the war caught me like a yoke and I got into the greatest raging madness of the world. On top of it all, in this last phase, there was no mercy. Death ruled. The new law of mathematics was: one bullet, one life.

Reconnaissance and action

During the first days of October 1944, Marosvásárhely was already in Russian hands. The battalion was in disarray due to the retreat and large losses. They were trying to organize new fighting units. A staff captain and a lieutenant briefed us about the situation, armed us, and mixed us with the local Székely soldiers. My comrades and I had already received four years of basic training in the levente and Boy Scout corps including infantry, gunnery and tactical (attack and defense) drills in the Berva (Bükk Mountains) and Hárshegy scout camps, where non-commissioned officers and officers of the Royal Hungarian Armed Forces prepared us. The captain asked us who knew German and who could read a 1:25,000 scale map. I reported and was immediately promoted to the rank of corporal and soon after to buck sergeant and squad leader.

The stars were shining brightly on my epaulet. I was no longer a private but a squad leader. A reconnaissance squad had twelve men plus seven Mauser guns (7.65 mm), one heavy machine gun (20 mm) and one air cooled light machine gun. Sometimes they gave us light infantry guns too. Our assignment was active and passive reconnaissance.

We were reconnoitering near the Borgó Pass. We were taken by a truck for about 20 kilometers to within 2 to 3 kilometers of the sphere of danger, where we had to continue on foot. We had to stop the Russian reconnaissance and, in case of a larger unit, slow it down. It was most important that the hundred thousand soldiers of the division and other units dodge a tightening loop. We had to stop the Russians, or at least slow them down. The main force of the Russian army was already coming through the southern and southeastern passes. Russian troops coming from the direction of the Great Hungarian Plain could encircle and capture the entire second Hungarian army, about 300,000 men, as well as the remainder of the 6th German army. Therefore, the battle of Torda and the closing of the eastern passes were strategically important.

Such a small force can only accomplish one thing, military surprise. The Russians would come from the east, sitting in T-34 tanks which are the safest. We took a position in the bend of the valley where in the late afternoon sunlight we would spot the sides of the tanks. They would be blinded, we would fire and, even if for only a minute, we would try to stop them. If the tanks had reserve fuel, we would aim to ignite it.

That is how it happened. We were excited but knew that the tanks would not be able to see us and that our transportation was waiting two kilometers behind us. The Russian tanks appeared and moved very slowly on the winding road of the mountain pass. We started to fire and the first tank went up in flames, and then turned sideways on the road. It wanted to turn around. The soldiers jumped out of the tank, but we did not shoot at them because it would have made no sense to kill them. For about one minute we were in a desperate firefight. Huge pieces of rock fell down from the cliff side and the Russians stopped. By the time they started to fire back at us, we were one kilometer away. An artillery observer remained behind and watched them with his telescope. I don't know what became of him because by the time we reached our truck it was nearly dark. The truck transported us without using its headlights for about 25 kilometers, where we continued with a forced march toward Szatmárnémeti. We tried to leave the Russians about 50 to 60 kilometers behind us.

The point was that the Székely division escaped from a tight spot and that the other Hungarian units also avoided encirclement. For some reason, the Russians renewed their advancement only two days later. That was what reconnaissance aircraft reported to the staff of the division. The retreat was dangerous because Russian fighter planes constantly bothered us, firing at the marching infantry on the roads. We always had casualties and injuries.

Rumor had it that from somewhere in the direction of the Great Plains, German tank units fought a great battle and defeated the Russians near Debrecen. This proved to have been vital for the Transylvanian troops. It made possible our complete retreat to the Tisza. The Germans did not like the Hungarian retreat. The commander of our army was arrested and taken away. This contributed greatly to the loss of military zest in the Transylvanian division. We heard only much later about Regent Horthy's proclamation and his last-ditch effort to extricate Hungary from the German alliance. By that time we had a new leadership and seemingly everything continued as before. However, our commander and staff officers tried to avoid direct military engagement as far as it was possible.

At the end of October 1944 units of the Transylvanian division, along with a newly arrived gendarmerie company from Sub-Carpathia (by

that time the gendarmes were also a fighting unit) participated in the recapture of Nyiregyháza. Our scout squad received orders to accompany eighty Russian prisoners of war toward Szerencs-Miskolc. The trip lasted nearly three days. The Russians did not want to walk; they sat down on the roadside, and we their guards threatened them by shooting over their heads. They did not want to cross the bridge at Tokaj because they were afraid that the Germans would detonate it just at that time. Then came the Rata, the Russian fighter planes, and swept with bullets the highway, Tokaj and the bridge. Finally, after a lot of danger and with difficulty we surrendered the prisoners to a gendarmerie unit near Miskolc.

Meanwhile the Transylvanian division crossed the Tisza. On the Miskolc highway, my squad hitched a ride on a German truck and joined the division. We continued through Miskolc and Mezőkövesd to Eger. We set up anti-aircraft positions in the castle to protect against low-flying planes. From that vantage point we saw that in the vicinity of Nagytállya, Maklár and Füzesabony, a big artillery battle was going on. At night we saw muzzle fire and heard gunfire. As far as I know, this was the last artillery engagement of the division. The Russians broke through the Tisza and were approaching toward Eger-Gyöngyös.

From Eger we proceeded toward Pétervására, Fülek and Salgótarján, where I survived the bombings. In the Salgó castle, our position was attacked by an American heavy bomber that came out of the clouds from the northeast and machine-gun-strafed the squad just eating their lunch. The plane seemed to be so close that some of the soldiers tried to throw their hand grenades at its wing, but actually it was much too far to be hit. Our injuries, caused by rock chips splintered off the cliff, were treated more or less in the Salgótarján hospital, so that we could continue to walk to Fülek. In Fülek castle, we took up air defense positions. Between Fülek and Losonc, the signalmen's car was hit by a Russian bomb that killed, among others, my classmate from Eger, Pál Villányi. We proceeded to Losonc (by that time it was November), snow started to fall and we received skis. We continued to retreat under constant Russian air attacks, on foot at night, to Nagytapolcsány. That is where I heard that Dénes Monostori, another classmate of mine from Eger, was also killed in action.

Reconnaissance was constantly going on. In places there was a

danger of partisans. The guarding of the ammunition was strengthened. Night duty was especially hard in the biting cold. Finally, just before Christmas, we reached Nagytapolcsány, where we were ordered to reconnoiter because we were endangered by Slovak partisans. For a few weeks we investigated on skis along creeks and across forests. The biggest noise was made by the skis gliding on snow that squeaked under the skis. At one point in the mountains of the Great Fátra, the Slovak partisans attacked us causing several fatalities. It was already minus 20 degrees Celsius then. For several days, we guarded the supply train and the munitions.

The Slovak civilian population greeted the Hungarian soldiers in a friendly way. As far as they could, they helped with our feeding and accommodations. We felt pretty well in the old Hungarian Uplands.

The last offensive

During the long retreat, the Transylvanian division turned back again and again to counterattack the enemy. Our operational activities occurred along the line of Naszód-Szatmárnémeti-Nagykároly-Mátészalka-Nyíregyháza-Tokaj-Miskolc-Eger-Szarvaskő-Pétervására-Salgótarján-Fülek-Losonc-Nagytapolcsány-Párkánynána-Dunaszerdahely-Pozsony-Schwechat-Zistersdorf-Zwettl-Freiberg and ended in getting captured by the Americans.

After Nagytapolcsány and the "good days," a large military engagement began. We escorted German tanks toward Párkánynána. We approached the town from the north along the Garam River in March 1945. At that time the Russians were already in Párkány and Esztergom. The large German offensive came from the direction of Veszprém. Units of the Transylvanian division formed the left wing of the offensive. We followed about 30 or 40 German tanks. This was a battleground in motion. We succeeded in pushing the Russians back across the Danube to the east. The infantry could not keep up with the tanks and lagged behind.

By the time we reached the railroad tracks at Párkánynána, the German tanks were already returning full of heavy casualties. The Germans and the Transylvanian division recaptured Párkánynána, but both sides suffered heavy losses. Our platoon walked down to the Danube and kept firing on the Russians on the other side from machine gun positions on the shore. Of course, they were shooting

back at us. They started a big artillery attack. We jumped into a gully grown over with acacia shrubs and survived the Russian attack there. As the explosions' sound came closer and closer, in desperation we left the gully and escaped into the basement of a large building. For a few days we rested in Párkánynána and slept on the floor in a farmer's house.

The Garam-Párkánynána battle resulted in several hundred victims on both sides. The reconnaissance squad also had to fight. We were lucky that as infantrymen we could not keep up with the German tanks and lagged behind them 4 to 5 kilometers. We reached the Danube only after the heavy tank battle had ended. That is how I survived this several-days-long battle.

In March 1945 we were already approaching Dunaszerdahely (Dunajska Streda). Along the way, Russian fighter planes were attacking us. In a plum orchard near the railroad station, I was just trying out my new MG-42 machine gun, target practicing on empty cans, when a Russian SUKHOI two-engine fighter bomber started firing with both guns from a height of about 200 meters on the retreating Hungarian troops on the highway. I placed my gun on the branch of a plum tree and from shoulder height strafed the approaching plane. After a full round, the plane shook and started to smoke, circled back toward the east, constantly losing height, and disappeared beyond the horizon. On the highway there was great panic. The plane had caused a lot of fatalities and injuries.

After Dunaszerdahely, we again had to escort about 30 or 40 Russian prisoners who were received by the POW camp before Pozsony (Bratislava). By this time our reconnaissance work ceased completely.

Just before Pozsony our mutilated division received another major air raid. The Russian fighter bombers dropped several hundred bombs on us. I jumped into a concrete duct by the highway where I survived the bombs. After this, the orders came that we were not allowed to march during daylight hours, only under the cover of night. We marched fast through Pozsony at dawn's early light and saw a completely bombed out suburb. We turned in the direction of Malacka along the river Morva on the west side of the Little Carpathians, to the north.

On the east side of the river, many of the Transylvanian soldiers deserted, saying that "if we cross the river, it is no longer Hungary." Between Pozsony and the border, several hundred of them dwindled away and probably hid in the forest. Between Dunaszerdahely and Malacka, only about half of my reconnaissance unit remained. The division was exceptionally diminished by the time we crossed the river, the thousand-year border on the west. From there on, our main goals were to escape the Russians and to avoid the Germans, especially the units of the SS. By that time, the number of soldiers in the division was probably reduced by about fifty percent.

Border by the river Morva

Suddenly the river appeared. After the long walk west of Malacka we stopped on its shore. We lay down on the grass and rested a little. From the Eastern Carpathians, we had already marched one thousand kilometers in hard winter. We felt that time had flown away; the earth ran out from under our boots. We needed a strong spirit and serious thinking.

This river, the Morva, is the thousand-year Hungarian border. If we crossed it, we were no longer soldiers in defense of our homeland, only mercenaries. The riders of Chief Árpád stood here sometime and shot their arrows across the other side. They signified that this is the Hungary that we will defend with our lives and blood. We had to think hard. To escape was dangerous. In spite of this, many lagged behind, disappeared and we were less and less.

If we crossed the river, the land was foreign. In Hungary, we felt the breath of spring. In places, there were flowers and budding trees. But soon the order came, brought by a young lieutenant. We had to start over to the bridge and stop in Dürnkrut. We got up and crossed the river.

Across the river in Austrian territory, big black clouds chased each other in the wind, and snowflakes were falling as though they were crying for us. Suddenly it turned cold, as in the end of winter. This is a different country, different air, and different world. I thought it was all for the good; the sooner this farce ends the better. Dark pine forests appeared on the horizon, and from the snow covered peaks of the Alps, the end of winter winds blew across the Danube.

Where were the Americans? They would bring us Easter resurrection with hosanna and everlasting peace. Secretly I hoped that perhaps I would meet distant cousins of mine who lived in Yonkers and Perth Amboy and served in the American army. Our army chaplain, who was a Hungarian returnee from America, prepared to greet them in English. We received our last orders. If the Americans appear on the horizon, we don't shoot. We don't engage in any kind of altercation with them. We lay down our arms. The 27th Transylvanian division fought only against godless communism. The Hungarians had no problems with the Western powers. This was the division command.

After we struggled across the Morva, we arrived in Dürnkrut. After 50 kilometers of forced march, all of us could barely walk. My ankles hurt terribly. Trudging forward hungry and thirsty, we arrived in the little village. A few of us found quarters in a hayloft and fell immediately asleep without supper. It did not matter to us anymore where and why the crazy Germans were fighting.

At 6:00 a.m. the next morning, the trump alarm sounded: new orders were received. After breakfast, we had a forced march to Deutsch Wagram, where we had to defend the military airfield. We as the reconnaissance unit did not want to go, but we had no way out and were ordered to march with the company. We received ammunition and proceeded toward Vienna but not on the main highway. The side roads were safer. We wanted to avoid the attacking Russian planes and possible SS commandos. After a day's march, we reached the airfield that evening and saw about twenty brand new German fighter planes. The Luftwaffe captain announced that the planes could not take off because there was no fuel, whereupon our commander figured that we had no business there, and we retreated to a small forest nearby. The next day, we started back in circuitous roads, not to Dürnkrut, but to a little village west of Zistersdorf. This was the last deployment of the ragged, hungry and tired Transylvanian division that we managed to complete without firing a shot. Our situation was getting more and more dangerous, because we acted not only without but *against* orders. By that time, we envisioned the idea of refusal of orders, mutiny and decimation.

We turned west after Zistersdorf and left behind Vienna and the Hungarian border region, but the distant thunder of guns came from the Russian artillery, and American bombers bombed Vienna in front of our eyes. I started feeling strange after this.

We never saw our higher ranking officers anymore. They moved farther and farther west. Other officers, up to now in charge, also disappeared, and only an older, perhaps 50-year-old reservist officer, a music teacher in Eger, was still with us. The higher ups and the staff officers disappeared, the commanding captain and lieutenants as well. Already after the Garam-Párkány battle, oral orders were given to avoid the SS corps and to disobey German orders, because the Germans had already lost confidence in the Hungarian army. If they wanted to disarm us, we would have to resist. If there were munitions, we were supposed to expropriate all working guns that were left behind. In one of the villages, a retreating SS division left a stockpile of M-42 guns and an excellent, brand new antitank cannon that I admired. The cannon did not have munitions.

There no longer was any trust between the German and Hungarian troops; moreover, laxity of discipline and mutual distrust developed within the Hungarian units as well. Many of them had already disappeared in the forests of the Little Carpathians before the border. The feeling spread mostly among the Transylvanian soldiers that they would not fight outside Hungary and that they would not leave the country. It was understood that Hungary meant the country within the thousand-year-old borders where the relationships with the Slovaks was completely harmonic. This was a difficult time, these were difficult days. The life-danger, the uncertainty, the lack of food, supplies and clothing, caused a lot of distress for the soldiers. I bore silently things that others could not tolerate. They rioted and swore a lot.

Of course, for the officers everything was much better, especially their quarters and sustenance that a simple private did not receive. The mood and distrust deteriorated to the point that we had to carefully select the people to share quarters with, lest some crazed soldier shoot us at night. Desertion was dangerous; the choice was between Hungarian, German or Russian bullets. Single dawdlers were shot on sight by the Russians, saying that they could only be spies. This was the fate of many Jewish forced laborers and Hungarian soldiers, and nobody knew who, where and why they died. For my nineteen-year-old self, I did not have a good chance to make it

to the end of the war, to regain my freedom, and to transform into a simple civilian student. Anybody who could hide in a remote corner of the forest and the mountains was in luck. However, our food and water supply was not enough even for one day.

During the next days, therefore, the remainder of our division, perhaps three or four thousand people out of eight thousand, wandered for 200 kilometers on side roads across mountains, forests and creeks. The direction was to the west, where we were hoping for the American troops to show up. We reached the town of Freistadt and stopped northwest of there near a highway in a pine forest on the hillside. We set up camp in the dark forest. Rumor had it that the American soldiers would be there within minutes and that we were in a very good place. This region in the small northern corner of Austria was already partly occupied by the Americans. Well, the Americans did not come within minutes, but the next day at about 10 o'clock in the morning, two military vehicles appeared in the distance. About 200 of us stood on the edge of the forest and watched them as they slowly approached. We saw from rifle range that they were not Russians but Americans. When the cars were close, we stepped out of the forest and waved our hands. They stopped immediately next to us. Our army chaplain was already there and explained in English who we are. Everybody was happy; everybody was smiling. Finally, we had escaped from the Bolshevik hell. Whatever would happen, our fate would be better. Besides, the war was over. Spring was here, wonderful peace had arrived, and everything could only be better.

The American reconnaissance unit turned back and returned to their superiors, telling us that they would come back within a couple of hours and that we should stay where we were until then. Indeed, they soon returned. They read the orders in English, but they were translated to Hungarian. We were prisoners of war, P.O.W.s of the American Army. Within two or three weeks, the American Army would feed us. Until then we were supposed to stay in our camp in an orderly manner and not go anywhere. They did not want to see any dawdlers on the roads. If anybody left the camp, he would be punished. Our camp would not be guarded. We ourselves would have to maintain order and discipline, and organize our sustenance. Until further

instructions, we were to stay put. We were to give up our guns in front of them and throw them down the valley on the steep side of the road. We had to carefully collect all munitions, bullets and explosives and place them in special containers that they would carry away. We were prisoners of war of the American army and should not expect any further provisions, food, medical attention, first aid or emergency transport. This was a sealed document signed by an American colonel.

Our answer was: we will do everything as ordered. The 27th Transylvanian division lined up along the roadside, marched in front of the Americans as ordered and threw our guns into the abyss after carefully removing the slide and throwing it away separately. The artillerymen rolled the anti-aircraft and antitank guns down the deep slope. Our artillery lagged behind at Deutsch Wagram; I do not know what became of them.

For a week, nobody looked after us. The reconnaissance telescope remained in my tent. Sometimes I used it to observe the distant mountainside across the valley from us, where an Austrian family lived. I saw how they worked in the garden and shepherded their cows into the stable. It occurred to me sometimes that it would be good to skip off at night, change into civilian clothing and say that I am a refugee student. If there would be a check, I could nestle in a haystack, or hide in the forest. Unfortunately, self discipline held me back.

Rest and contemplation

This peculiar prisoner of war status, where nobody guarded us, was good for us to get a thorough rest. We ate twice a day. In the morning we got a piece of bread baked on the premises by the camp cook, and in the afternoon we got a bowl of goulash with potatoes and a few pieces of meat. The dense pine forest was quiet, cold and wind free. We were waiting for the future, full of hope and plans. The war was over. In a few weeks everything would be settled. The prisoners of war would be let home. In the previous seven months, I had never once slept in a bed. I had walked nearly fifteen hundred kilometers and had had to use my gun a few times. Sometimes we were obliged to fire upon the enemy to prevent being captured. We only fired back at them to escape in the major withdrawal. I was a reconnoiter scout in special, dangerous situations. I was enlisted as

a private and was now a buck sergeant. I survived everything and was now waiting for the great liberty. It is not good to be a soldier in war, but not even in peace and to be a loser is all the worse. We who were enlisted at the age of 18 did not understand the world. Never in my life had I heard that I had rights; I always just had duties.

Days passed and nothing happened. Evidently the Americans were not in the least interested in what we are doing. Thus, we had time to hope, to think and to try to understand our situation. Why and how did we get here? What was the main reason to tenaciously stick with Germany? As simple young soldiers we did not know the long history of complicated alliances but a few things were clear to us. Everybody was afraid of communism. From our history, we knew of the short-lived, 1919 communist rule, and the facts that the leaders Béla Kún, Szamuelly, Fürst, Sallai and their cohorts did not shrink from murdering innocent people. The leaders of Russian communism, Lenin, Stalin, Trockij, Zsinovjev, Szverdlov, Kaganovich, Yagoda and associates, hauled away millions, murdered and exterminated entire nations. The smaller nations in the vast Soviet Union were imprisoned in concentration camps. The communist leaders murdered their own peoples. The instinctive fear of the Hungarians from communism was real. In addition, we were not Slavs, like the Czechs or the Serbs who received more opportunities from their Russian brothers than the Hungarians. The fear of the Hungarians was based on concrete experiences, not on subjective opinions.

The victory of the Soviet army was possible because it did not matter how many millions were sacrificed. There never was an army like this in the world. The political commissars chased their soldiers forward with guns in their hands and shot those who backed down. Soviet society was in total mobilization from the 15- to the 70-year-old. Disobeying orders meant death to the civilians as well. We knew all this, but, unfortunately in our situation, it did not matter a hoot.

As the days passed, our mood improved daily. A few more weeks and everybody could go home, or wherever they wanted to go. The main thing was that the war had ended and we were in a free country. During the previous seven months of the war, I personally had not seen or heard of any atrocities, violence, or lawlessness affecting the civilian population. I had not heard any adverse propaganda about the Russian, the English, or the American nations. In contrast, there

was a lot of talk, newspaper articles and radio speeches about the German super weapons that in the end would win the war. After the Russians broke into the Carpathian basin everywhere from the Verecke to the Vöröstorony Passes and occupied Budapest, we no longer believed in the existence of super weapons. We knew that it was all propaganda.

Our thoughts were constantly at home. What had happened to our parents, siblings and families? We hoped that everybody was alive and past all dangers. We had no idea what the Russian occupation would be like. We did not expect much good.

Part 2. In the Soviet Gulag

Alarm at dawn

We had already spent ten days in the unguarded camp. We started to get used to our freedom. We made small walks in the dense pine forest. It was completely still. Everybody planned to go home, to reunite with our families, to start a normal civilian life. The younger people with families talked especially about their plans. About where they would go and visit the little Transylvanian villages where they were born and where they grew up. Saturday was a day of expectation because Sunday was a special day at home. Going to church and donning a navy blue suit. I particularly liked to pump the organ during Holy Mass. In the Cistercian church in Eger, all masses were conducted with organ music. This church stood next to the Dobó School on the corner of the Cistercian School. The altar was actually a sculpture where a monk obsequiously says mass before the altar. The next day, we would have mass in the camp; the chaplain of the regiment would say it in front of a wooden altar.

Sunday early morning we awoke to the sounds of alarm and loud shouting. The sun did not yet come up, but everything was visible. The dawn sky was beautifully reddish in color. Suddenly at least one hundred armed American soldiers showed up in the camp. They ordered us to line up immediately and leave everything behind in the camp. We had to march to the road, where the soldiers of the entire division were surrounded, and they started us in a regular column toward Freistadt and then to Zwetl. We started to yell, hey, we are going in the wrong direction, to the east! We want to go west! Our company only had one officer left, the old reservist captain from the

First World War, the music teacher from Eger. Hey, boys, he was saying, they are taking us towards the Russians, this is not good. I know the Russians, they are cruel—he said. We had already walked several kilometers under the American bayonets. Our premonition was getting worse. We are not marching into freedom but into slavery and death—said the captain. We are American prisoners of war and now they are delivering us into the hands of the Bolshevik mass murderers. I remembered that after the battle of Debrecen I had to accompany some Russian prisoners. They said that they would be shot if they did not go ahead in battle. Hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers died because they were executed in battle by their own political commissars. If anybody did not promptly obey orders, he was immediately shot without the benefit of a military court.

We knew that our destinies were sealed because in Soviet communism, human or prisoners' rights did not exist. Something terrible had happened with the liberation of Europe. Hitler's terror was exchanged for Stalin's terror, and, fancying the clothing of the victors, the Russians would commit more and more mass murders. Unfortunately, the individual and the entire Transylvanian division were helpless.

After several hours of marching, we saw a dark streak on the road between Freistadt and Zwetl. As we approached it, we recognized that Russian soldiers had closed off the road. When we got real close to them, the Americans quickly drove away. At the same time the Russians surrounded us with bayonets drawn. We became Russian prisoners. A squat, round-faced colonel stood up on the hood of a jeep and briefly informed us that although we had fled to the Americans and therefore were traitors, we were now Russian prisoners and they would treat us just like any other prisoners of war. Of course, he did not say what this meant, but we knew that many died in the Russian camps.

I had torn the three stars off my epaulet already at the time of the dawn alarm, and so I entered Russian prison camp as a simple, nineteen-year-old royal Hungarian private. The Russians did not waste any time with us. After a few more kilometers march, they threw us in a former French prisoner-of-war camp in Zwetl. My new quarters turned out to be just under the ceiling on a double bunk. We barely arrived and settled in when cholera broke out in the camp. Twice a day we received some thick soup in large pots; the Russians

passed the pots to us through the gates via wooden pegs. They wanted to spare themselves from contagious diseases in the camp and never entered through the gates.

Our fate was sealed when the Americans delivered us to the Russians. While the Americans were present, the Russians behaved pleasantly and told us that our direction would be to Hungary and that we were going HOME, but when the Americans left, all hell broke loose. Cholera-ridden camp, boarded-up cattle cars, five days travel by boat on the Black Sea, without food or water, explosions of magnetic mines, harbor of Poti, stoning, jackal camp no. 6, death camp no. 44, underground prison, high fever, freezing, cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, lice, bedbugs, etc. etc. etc. Collecting camp, interrogations, beatings, and then after 37 months of military service, home as a sick man.

These few words should explain why for 67 years I did not think back on those things. Silence and secrecy were compulsory in the Kirovabad collecting camp and in the Debrecen Pavilion garrison. Psychological stress and the length of time that passed since then contributed to the loss of details because there was no chance to keep a log or write a dairy. The Russians confiscated everything and kept a constant search of our personal belongings. They permitted us to keep our canteens and spoons. We could not possess any pencils, paper, knives, or tools. After three days of clean up and wound healing in Debrecen, I was released on August 20, 1947, as prisoner of war No. 80,372.

World of barbed wire: the Zwetl cholera camp

We arrived in the camp in the middle of May. It was empty, the French prisoners all gone for home. The French received not only the German camp food. The Swiss offices of the International Red Cross sent them food supplements like canned food and silver-paper-wrapped chocolates. Only the empty containers could be found in the barracks where we, soldiers of the 27th Transylvanian division, were placed. It seems that to the International Red Cross, the Hungarian prisoners of war did not mean anything because we never received any supplementary food from the Red Cross. However, it is possible that the Russian military inspection excluded all such contributions, or that it expropriated them. Thus, this huge prisoner of war camp disappeared through the trapdoor of the universe, from

where no news from or about us leaked out. We could not send or receive letters. Our families did not know anything about us. Nobody knew whether we were alive or dead.

So, life and death continued in the Zwetl camp as every morning they came and carried away the dead. This is where the barbed wire world of Soviet communism started for us, a world that spread for nine thousand kilometers from Berlin and Bayern through Siberia to Alaska. We common soldiers saw only what was happening immediately around us. We had not gained a broad oversight about the war. We did not hear anything about the Jews and Hungarians who were dragged away to Germany. During the great withdrawal, there was no news, and we never received letters or packages from home.

Prisoner transport

In the newspaper, I read today in Sarasota, Florida that the unfortunate Jews who were dragged away from their homes were transported sometimes for two whole days in cattle cars. The Sarasota *Herald Tribune* had a full page article illustrated with pictures of the wagon that would be displayed in a museum in order to remind people of the great suffering.

Our transport in cattle cars from Zwetl, Austria to the Soviet Union lasted exactly for two months, from June 20 1945 to August 20 1945. Many factors contributed to this extraordinary length of time at the end of the war. Among the reasons was the bad or hastily repaired quality of railroad tracks, the increased civilian and military traffic in all directions, ruined bridges, shortage of fuel, etc.

We entrained from the camp in the middle of June. There was complete darkness inside the cattle cars. The windows and openings were boarded up airtight. The inside space was divided horizontally in half to an upper and lower level by a built in board. During the movement of the train the large side doors were tightly locked, there was no looking out, or fresh air coming in. The prisoners stripped down to their underwear because of the 40-to-45 degree Celsius heat and had to lay side by side like sardines on the floor and on the dividing partition. The heat was unbearable as the sun fired down on the metal roof of the wagon. At one end of the wagon, there was a small round hole on the floor; it served as the toilet. We entrained

under the darkness of night so that nobody should see what was happening; that nobody should see that this was the greatest torture inflicted on people who were already weakened by illness. It was the worst kind of abuse.

The train was moving slowly; sometimes it made only 5 or 10 kilometers per hour. It rattled on for hours amid the animal-like growling and howling of people. We received two ladleful of water and a portion of salted fish daily. The fish was thrown in from a barrel. In ever rising loathing, people went crazy or suffered a nervous breakdown and tried to climb the walls. There was no escape. The dead were taken and placed outside at dawn before approaching a station. The Russian guards traveled in two separate wagons; at every stop, even on an open track, they got out and stood guard by the train.

After two weeks, my condition was unbearable. We knew that the train was heading east. One of our sergeants had a small drill and he drilled a tiny hole in the wall of the wagon. We knew from the movement of the incoming sunlight that our general direction was to the east. Suddenly the train stopped with a loud bang. It was noon. We received our portion of salted fish, and they opened the wagon doors. I glimpsed the great hall of the Western Railroad station in Budapest. Suddenly, our hopes rose. Perhaps due to some miracle we would be let free and we could all go home! But it was not to be. The train started, turned toward Szolnok and slowly left the environs of Budapest behind. At one point between Budapest and Szolnok, we stopped at a railroad station. Again, it was at noon; they gave us the fish and opened the doors. On the tracks next to us, a passenger train full of travelers just stopped. The people stared at us. These are Hungarian prisoners, wonder where they are going? They yelled that the country was back on track, there was food. I still had a pencil and a little piece of paper in my possession. I wrote my parents name and address on it with a brief message that I am a prisoner and heading to Russia. Years later, after I was released, I learned that my parents received the message.

Distribution camp

After three weeks of extreme misery we arrived at the distribution camp in Máramarossziget. Surrounded by soldiers with drawn bayonets, we wobbled out of the wagons at the railroad station of the

small town. At least those of us detrained who were still alive and able to move. The Russians used rifle butts to prod prisoners who were unable to either stand or walk. I slowly climbed down from the train and, although I was very weak, I could walk. I am not writing down the terrible details of the train transport here, or anywhere else, because it is impossible to tell the details. It is enough to say that for weeks, a small hole in the bottom of each wagon served 40 to 45 people to relieve themselves. Compared to this, an unclean stable would have appeared to be a wonderful luxury hotel.

Well, but here there was no time to think and I did not even want to remember anything. We stood in line and started in the direction of the distribution camp. We marched on the main street of the small town, where not a single soul was visible. We were shepherded in a lager fenced around with barbed wire, where several thousand people crawled around awaiting their doom. We did not know where we would go: to the northeast were the hellish, cold Ural Mountains, to the east the distant Siberia, or to the southeast in the vicinity of the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. By this time all of us were past the first phase of captivity; everybody had lost weight. Our trousers hung loose on our emaciated bodies, and our souls were hardened. We knew that we needed to fight hard and to have a lot of luck to survive, that we had to try to avoid becoming sick, because even a simple diarrhea might become deadly. We had our first "bath" here in several months. We undressed in front of a large building, received a small wooden pot filled with water and had to pour the water over our heads. There was no soap and the towel was a gray rag. In front of the building there was a large pile of washed underwear. It was unpleasant that after such a "bath" we never received our own underwear back. I managed to select more or less clean drawers for myself.

After three days amid much howling and swearing, the Transylvanian division of Marosvásárhely was lined up again at dawn. We were ordered to the station and entrained. An entire freight train full of about two thousand Hungarian soldiers started off to somewhere. Nobody knew our destination. By that time not a single officer was with us. Even the old music teacher from Eger had disappeared. Our journey in the dark, hot, boarded up wagon started anew towards an unknown destination. I was counting on about three weeks of travel again. Counting the days kept me alive. I knew that we would spend about 20 to 22 days in the locked wagons. I experienced the

shocking impacts of the first transport less. The light coming through a tiny hole indicated that we were going in a southeasterly direction. This was a good sign. The hope kept us alive that we would not end up in the freezing-cold north. After long days of agonizing suffering, one day the Russian guard forgot to fasten the lock on the wagon door. A tiny slot remained open. We were just passing on a long bridge over a huge river. I concluded that it could only be the Danube at Csernavoda and that we must be heading to Constanza on the shores of the Black Sea. A few days before, the noise of a big city we heard must have been Bucharest. As I had memorized the entire map of Europe in my head, I passed along the information that was confirmed by the others. We concluded that our destination was the collection camp at Constanza on the shore of the Black Sea. We shortly arrived in the huge camp on the south side of the city. By this time, I was unable to stand up either. Along the tracks to the lager, we collapsed on the grass as though we were toddlers who could not yet walk. We rested for about two hours there and received noodles cooked in water that they called a soup. We dragged ourselves up after a couple of hours and entered the nearby camp. The marquee above the gate announced that we would be building the great and glorious Soviet Union and communism.

Collection camp at Constanza (Constanta)

Under the intense heat of the August sun, we arrived. There were about 40 thousand prisoners assembled from all parts of Europe in the huge camp. Our lot in life was the worst possible. We could not stay inside the barracks during the day because of the extreme heat, and at night from the teeming bedbugs. The conditions were so bad that the busiest activity in the camp consisted of throwing the dead into lime pits. There were several huge lime pits on the edge of the camp; all worked in full shifts. We arrived in Dante's Inferno and Milton's Paradise Lost. I tell you and to the Lord Almighty that our journey on the Orient Express had come to an end. Our thoughts had turned bitterly sour. During the six weeks of travel, in my imagination I pretended that I was a Hungarian count traveling from Paris to Constanza on the Orient Express.

After several days, at 4 o'clock one morning the Transylvanian division was alarmed and received orders. Daylight was just dawning. We had to line up anew and were directed to the harbor. Five days of travel by ship, without food and water, was awaiting us.

During the day we received a piece of bread and soup, and then we embarked.

Journey on the Black Sea

Slowly we marched toward the harbor, two thousand Hungarian prisoners of war on about August 12. In the early morning, the weather was still bearable, and then to the east purplish light spread through the white clouds. As we sauntered on toward the sea in a 4-or-5-meter-deep road cut, a form appeared on the top of the cut and started to shout loudly in Hungarian:

"Hungarian soldiers! What you will be doing is glorious! You will be building communism in the Soviet Union for the benefit of the entire human race. Go therefore proudly; hold your heads up high to build the future for humankind. Hungarian soldiers, you are walking the way of glory and humanity. Do not forget that you will build the future of the Hungarian people as well!"

For the first time, I became really angry. I would have liked to have shot this crazy guy, or cut his throat with a knife. The guards did not say anything; they allowed this crazed communist to shoot off his mouth. After he finished his speech, he disappeared behind the hill. To this day, I do not know who it could have been. But it reminded me that there is an irrational, crazy streak in the communist ideology. Europe was built on a rational society where logic and sensibility dominated the culture, but in the east, in the Russian empire, the society is irrational, where the unreachable and dysfunctional society of communism is attempted to be built by sacrificing millions of people. All "isms," ultra-nationalism, Nazism, communism, are the phantasms of crazy dictators who murder millions to achieve their goals.

As we stumbled on toward the harbor, our physical condition was very weak, and the guards realized this too. Therefore, they urged us on slowly. Furthermore, there were several sick people among us. The ship was already in the harbor. It was about a ten-thousand-ton freighter with a top deck and white cabins for the captain and the crew, and 30 or 40 military guards. One by one, we stumbled across the gangway onto the deck where, to our greatest surprise, our quarters were not on the deck itself but on the tops of several hundred 200-to-300-liter oak barrels. They were wine barrels heisted

by the Russian army somewhere, and they were tied together with ropes. In the hot August sun, the prisoners had to sit and crouch on the tops of the barrels. Not only was this especially uncomfortable, it was also dangerous. It was impossible to lie down on the tops of the barrels because of their rounded raised rims. The ship wobbled on the undulating sea and the barrels moved. This was dangerous and could cause injuries to our limbs. In the sultry heat and the muggy, salty sea air, we could not stretch out, only huddle up and doze off. We tried to defend ourselves from the intense sun with our shirts and rags. For five days, we did not receive either water or anything to eat as the ship sailed on the stormy and often wildly undulating sea. People threw up and were dehydrated, some were delirious and raved. Our lips were dry, broken and bleeding.

On the barrel next to mine there sat a clever farmer who discovered that in the engine room slightly oily water was dripping from a pipe. We tried to filter some collected water through four or five shirts to gain a few sips of water. I drank a few drops of water but even after the filtering process it remained oily. Our sergeant with his little drill sat maybe on the fourth or fifth barrel from mine; he drilled into the barrel below him and gave a few people some wine. I drank about one deciliter fine wine. Unfortunately, the Russian guard noticed our movements and, jumping on the barrels, started to hit and beat us amid loud bellowing and swearing. Thus, our wine heist had ended, and the sergeant was taken to a penal slot. I could hardly imagine that the penalty was more severe than the sea voyage atop the barrels.

The storage below the deck was full of goods pillaged by the Russian army: machinery, riches and private property. The only space left for the prisoners on the fully packed boat was on the uppermost deck. One of the prisoners discovered a copper plate on the side of the cabins indicating that the ship was the property of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and that it was a 1910 vintage. It was possible that the ship itself was captured by the Russians during the First World War.

On the fifth day without food or water on the high seas, everybody was seasick, dazed, comatose, sick and physically weakened. The sun was setting behind us on the west when I first glimpsed the mountains in the distance, the peaks of the Caucasus, the narrow strip of land, and then the harbor ahead. I barely recognized the

approaching land when the alarm was sounded. The Russian crew took the cover off the cannon and started to shoot. We were close to the dock. I was sitting atop a barrel in the aft of the ship when I noticed two magnetic mines on the starboard side closing in on us. Perhaps on the ninth or tenth try, the cannonball hit one of the mines and blew it up with a huge explosion, creating a water fountain. The second mine, however, was too close to the ship, collided with it and exploded. By that time most of the Russian crew were in the hastily-detached lifeboats on the opposite side of the ship. The maimed ship, canting to the side, lamely continued to float toward the docks. I heard later that by then all Russians, even the captain, had left the ship, and the prisoners all remained on the barrels.

The ship leaned on its side, and chaos broke out. I do not know how I ended up on the sandy beach from the aft side of the ship. There was panic among the prisoners being afraid that the ship will sink and everybody will drown. I do not remember how I got ashore, possibly I struggled forward and the shore currents carried me to the beach, possibly on a barrel. The sun was already low on the horizon, and soon it was dark.

I immortalized this luxury journey on the Black Sea in my poem *"Ship of death"* and attach it in the Appendix.

I collapsed on the beach and fell asleep. The sound of voices woke me up early next morning. Two or three female Russian soldiers stood above me. They distributed water from a barrel with a ladle and gave mush to the surviving prisoners. In a few hours, but still before noon, a prisoner-guard unit arrived. We stood up and, in lines four abreast, proceeded through the south side of Poti. This part of town was built along a small creek. Large crowds of the local population lined the roadside. They were throwing alluvial rocks and pebbles at us, cursing us all the while. They were indicating with gestures that we should all be hung. I believed that these people were intimidated and wanted to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that they were faithful Soviet citizens and the enemies of the Germans.

After our stoning, several of us were injured, but I avoided the flying rocks by bending away from them. We dragged ourselves to an open field on the edge of town surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers. For about three days, we laid on the bare ground on rags. Twice a day they brought us mush, soup, bread and some water. In

the guard towers, armed female soldiers watched over us day and night. Every three or four hours there was a changing of the guard. On the evening of the third day, we entrained again in cattle cars and started slowly inland from the seashore in the huge middle valley of the Caucasus.

All night long the train slowly shuffled along. This was a real luxury travel. There was no horizontal divider; everybody got a fairly large place on the bottom of the car. There were fewer people in each wagon, and the sliding door was not completely closed. We could see the countryside. We did not get salted fish but either mush or soup twice a day. We stopped several times and waited on the open tracks.

On a nice sunny day, we arrived in a big city. The train station stood on higher ground and we could overlook the town. It was Tbilisi, the capitol city of Georgia. We could see the populace as they traveled and moved around on the station. All of them looked poor and like villagers. The train started to roll along slowly. In the distance we could see the snow covered peaks of the Caucasus. On the third day, we arrived in Kirovabad. We slowly crawled out from the cars of the long train. Soon a long column of open, brand-new, American trucks arrived. Each was to be loaded first with two Russian guards, then the prisoners. After about an hour, the column of trucks started eastward. The cars did not follow the highway but proceeded along dirt roads and trails amid brushes and trees, as though we were following a meandering river on its wide alluvial terrace. North of us along the river there was a huge forest.

From Kirovabad the trucks advanced with a speed of about 20 to 30 kilometers per hour. At about every 15 to 20 kilometers apart we could see barbed wire enclosed lagers where people worked. Every lager was guarded by armed soldiers. One of the lagers was full of women, young and old, mixed together. We had gone about 100 kilometers when we glimpsed a little Azeri village in the forest amid huge trees. The houses were in part recessed in the ground, and the walls were braided from tree limbs stuck together with mud. I thought my eyes were deceiving me: was this for real? It was as though it were an Indian settlement of 300 or 400 years earlier. Soon after this, we arrived at a clearing on a small rise where double barbed wire fence surrounded a camp guarded by the military. We got off from the trucks. The wide gates opened and we, soldiers of

the Marosvásárhely Transylvanian division, entered the double fenced camp, protected by armed men and guard towers.

The camp commander and his soldiers, and the political officer counted us. There were 573 of us. The division had ten thousand people when it fought against the Russians on the eastern slopes of the Carpathians. There were about four thousand of us when the Americans captured us near Freistadt. And now, this was the remainder, 573 people. At the Zwetl camp, there was not a single officer with us, but there were still about four thousand of us the Russians entrained. It took two months for us to get here. The dead and the terminally ill disappeared and now, on August 20, 1945, on the feast of Saint Stephen, we lined up on the yard of the huge lager where the underlings of the *nacsalnik* (the camp commander), the people of the Russian GPU, and the political commissar each counted us.

There were a few people in the division from Sub-Carpathia who spoke Russian. Our commander became an artillery sergeant who spoke fluent Russian. The camp commander gave a short speech. He urged us to work well, fulfill the norm, and then they "soon" will let us go home. It turned out that we arrived in a Gulag work camp where thousands of Germans, Romanians and Slovaks worked already. We were to make up the depleted headcount. The *nacsalnik* himself was a prisoner since the Great Russian revolution in 1917, and he had no permission to leave the lager. Prisoners were guarding prisoners. With the exception of the political commissar, all the armed guards were also prisoners.

They told us to spruce up for the presentation parade. We tried to clean up our clothes as best we could and formed a disciplined line of the captured division's now only about battalion sized soldiers. After the counting, the transporting unit, the receiving camp command and some of the guards paraded in front of us. I remember very well that after two months of agony, the Hungarian battalion looked like an imperial and royal honor regiment, compared to the Russians. It did not last long. In three or four months, our clothes became so ragged that they had to be exchanged for Russian quilted jackets (*pufajka*), peaked Bolshevik caps decorated with a red star, and blue linen shoes equipped with wooden soles. By that time we too looked like Russian murderers and jailbirds.

The Russians did not fuss around with us too much. With 200 of my comrades, I was put in a large adobe barrack that was built partly underground; it was furnished with wood frame bunk beds. My bed consisted of crossed reed; my pillow was a piece of red brick that I put my clothes on because it was warm. My bed linen was my own clothes. The soles of the blue linen shoes were fabricated of a piece of pinewood that split in several pieces as we walked and wounded our feet. I tried to wrap my feet in clothes to be able to walk. To be able to walk was vitally important because our place of work was 3 to 4 kilometers away from the camp. We were to be woodcutters of huge trees on the floodplain of the Kura River. We started out on foot to work at 7 o'clock each morning and returned to camp at 6 o'clock in the evening.

Life and death in Jackal Camp No. 6.

Slowly we learned the geography of our immediate environment. The peaks of the Caucasus Mountains, snow covered even in the summer, rose on the north; similarly tall mountains were visible south of us. The peaks of these two mountain ranges were higher than the High Tátra or even the Alps and were white with snow cover all year round. In the wide valley between the mountains flowed the River Kura; it originated in Turkey. The Kura was about the size of the Tisza with trees and forests, sometimes extending 10 kilometers wide on both sides. It was similar to the woods along the Bodrog at Tokaj but much bigger. On the first terrace of the river, giant oaks grew. Our camp was on the second, higher, drier and treeless terrace of the river. Our job was lumberjacking.

Every morning at 7 o'clock, we walked the few kilometers to the distant, primeval forest to cut the trees. First we had to clear a huge, square-shaped strip where the guards stood on the corners and in the middle of the strip. The guards were not changed all day. They stood or sat all day at their appointed places. The prisoners were let inside the square. Every two men had to select the tree they were to cut on any given day. Each pair of prisoners was obliged to produce eight cubic meters of lumber each day. This consisted of an eight-meter-long, one-meter-wide and one-meter-twenty-centimeters-high pile of logs. The smaller branches did not count, only the bigger logs had to be piled up. At 5 o'clock in the afternoon the foreman came who measured each pile and credited it to our account, marking it on a pinewood board. There was actually no paper in the camp. The

foreman carefully examined the piles, lest there be some cheating the norm. This was the norm; this had to be fulfilled every day.

When the entire square was cut, a truck came and transported away the wood. We received a new assignment and everything started anew with the cutting of the square-shaped strip. Every morning when we reached the square, at the sound of the whistle I hurried with my partner to select the possible best tree. If we got a bad tree, much more energy had to be used to fulfill the norm. As all the guards and foremen were themselves prisoners, they demanded excellent production because they could easily receive a few extra years of punishment if caught at sabotage. The principal authority above was the AVO of the Russian empire. Of course, at the time we had no idea that there would be AVO and forced labor camps in Hungary too. During 1100 years of Hungarian history, such things had never existed.

The inhabitants of the camp were Germans, Romanians, Slovaks and Hungarians, in about equal numbers. Somehow, every lager nationality stuck together and formed small circles of friends. Everybody understood what the other wanted, and work progressed better. The camp commandant from the prisoners was a handsome German air force captain. He outranked all of us and issued orders. The Great Russian triumvirate consisted of the lager-director *nacsalnik*, the political commissar and the work commandant; they gave the leadership for the internal affairs of the camp over to the German prisoner-commandant. He was the only officer among the prisoners in the entire camp. He was very exact, reliable and just. I don't know how and why, but the Russians trusted him, and he obeyed all their orders and wishes accurately. This way, the production by the camp exceeded the work load given out by the central command each month. Our production therefore was "haraso (very good)." The German commandant wore his full military uniform and had his own separate quarters in the camp.

Our diet and nutrition never changed for years. Morning, noon and night we got noodle soup without any vegetables or meat. We received about 25 decagrams of watery, not-completely-baked bread we called prickly bread, and two soup spoonful of yellow, unrefined crystalline sugar. There was never any change in this diet. There was always concern to line up at the serving pot. Do we get more noodles in the soup at the beginning or at the end of the line? We

needed this to survive. Our caloric intake was about half of what would have been necessary for the hard physical labor we exerted. The prisoners were constantly losing weight, had less and less energy and could not fulfill the norm - the eight cubic meters of lumber daily. For punishment in such cases, the weakened people did not receive any supper and were put in a penal slot for the night. The next day, they had to fulfill the norm. Within one or two weeks, this meant certain death. I don't know if there was a Geneva Convention or not, but I do know that in the Russian empire no international law prevailed. I also don't know why President Truman announced in his big victory speech that "all of Europe was liberated." Here, along the Kura River in Jackal Camp No. 6, torture was practiced systematically, and there was no evidence of a liberated humanity. The Soviet Union and its conquered peoples groaned under tremendous terror, where millions of people sank to the level of animals.

I soon realized that to survive these conditions one needs to have exceptional psychological strength and quick thinking to take advantage of every possibility. The system meant certain death. The forest was a big help. In the fall, acorns started to fall off the oak trees. I picked up about 15 or 20 pieces, hid them in my pockets and in a distant corner of the camp roasted them like chestnuts on a secret fire. Very slowly I ate eight or 10 of them. This may be good for the squirrels, but for people it may be poisonous. Anybody who ate too much suffered terrible stomach pains. Small, insignificant looking trees in the forest sometimes bore fruit, and we ate a few that were lifesaving. We learned that the fruit was pomegranate, and the tree was growing wild in the forest. Sometimes we caught a turtle and secretly cooked turtle "soup". Of course this did not happen often and could not be carried on for long. Most of the time hunger constantly gnawed at us. The prisoners were always sick and hungry.

Medical care in the camp consisted of a sick room without a doctor or medicines. There was a medic, however, from the Soviet military. He made his diagnosis by looking at the prisoner. If the prisoner was already like a skeleton and could not walk, the medic pronounced him sick, said he did not have to work and assigned him to the sick room. There was no medicine of any kind, not even aspirin. Many people came down with malaria and dysentery. Many of them moaned and wailed. One of the Romanian soldiers who did not fulfill the norm

banged his head all night against the jail cell's window bars and yelled. After three or four days he stopped because he died. Interments were frequent. Anybody who volunteered for grave digger would receive an extra portion of soup. I seriously considered volunteering for the extra soup. Finally, I decided not to. I heard that at night the jackals gorged themselves on human remains and that the cemetery was in woeful condition. Therefore I did not volunteer for the extra soup, although it was hellish to bear the constant hunger.

Once in my barrack, across from my bed, a soldier died. There was a piece of bread sticking out of his mouth. Before breakfast, as soon as I had a chance I took it out of his mouth and ate it. My custom of saving my daily sugar portions and collecting it in a little pouch on my belt also helped. Every Sunday I had a stash of about eight or ten dekagrams of yellow sugar. On Sunday mornings I cut my watery bread into little pieces and mixed it with the sugar, thus creating a Sunday dessert a 'la Gerbaud. The bread was prickly because the flour was milled from poorly hulled wheat; therefore, its final biological departure from our bodies was also prickly. Humans cannot digest this stuff like cows. The weekly portion of half a pack of mahorka (tobacco) also helped. This was the coarse butt veins of tobacco leaves discarded by cigarette factories. Some of the prisoners gave up their bread portion for it. A couple of cigarettes were more important for them than bread. In spite of all this, the physical deterioration of the prisoners was ensured. Lacking replacement, the headcount in the camp decreased so much that one year later, the remnants of the 27th Transylvanian division, ninety three people, were transferred to another camp.

In a distant, hidden corner of the camp was the latrine. Once, I was feeling very sick, and when I came out, my cross from the holy land was not on my neck anymore; it probably fell in the latrine. It happened several times that sick and dizzy prisoners fell in and drowned in the latrine. There was a huge pit dug in the ground, a log was flung across it and one had to sit on it without a handrail to hang onto. When we wanted to rebuild the latrine, the *nacsalnik* did not allow it, saying that it was good as it was. It seemed that the Russian soldiers had heard detracting lectures about "European culture". Whenever there was an accident they yelled, "Is this the famous European culture?" People were sick and could not control bodily functions. The Russian guards were quite patient but sometimes

went crazy and either kicked us or beat us with their rifle butts. I learned quickly how to bend away and reduce the sting of beatings. In spite of this, once they managed to smash my face in a pile of excrement lying on the ground. By then I knew that if I did not become a wild beast, I would not survive the Russian camp.

The Russian guards could be quite cruel. One time, a native Azeri truck accidentally drove into our camp, and the guard shot at it immediately. Two civilians who sat on the back were hit. Both of them died. Soon after, men and women arrived from the nearby village and wailed and cried miserably. This happened during the first week we spent in this camp. It profoundly affected all of us. We could not get close to the double, barbed-wire fence because the guard would shoot immediately. It was ill advised to break the rules. Several prisoners died like this because they were delirious and wanted to escape. It was unfortunate that nobody had energy enough to help others. Everybody was responsible only for himself. Hearing shots, I often stretched out on the ground, not knowing where the shots came from.

An artillery sergeant, leader of the Hungarians once asked who would be willing to clean the *nacsalnik's* house on a Sunday afternoon. Although the Sunday afternoon rest was important for us, I volunteered, hoping that I would find some food in his apartment. Well, it was not an apartment, only a single room; here and there I found a few beautiful, golden-colored cans; they were completely empty. They used to contain pork meat and were marked "Made in the USA." I did not even find some left-over potato skin peelings near the fireplace. After this, I did not volunteer for extra work anymore.

On a spring Sunday morning, two brand new American trucks stopped in front of the camp gates. There was some trouble with the engine, and the Hungarian mechanic was called to repair it. We gathered around the gate and started to communicate with them. It turned out that the two trucks were full with Hungarian Jews. They told us that they were in a hellish, cold camp far north of us, where most of them perished within a year. They were the only survivors and were being transported to a warmer place because the other camp had closed. Alas, I forgot where their original Nazi concentration camp was, but they told us an incredible story. After they escaped from the Nazis, they sought refuge with the Russians, who did not believe their story and locked them in a death camp with

the other prisoners of war.

Our cultural activity consisted of night raids every few weeks, when all paper and pencil were taken from us. We had to strip to our underpants and wait until the guards searched our barracks. In about a half an hour, we could go back. We were not allowed to write or learn languages even on our free Sundays. But every second or third Sunday in the afternoon we had to listen to a lecture for about an hour. The political commissar gave a speech about communism, about its superiority over capitalism. Everything was perfect, and the hope and leader of mankind was Stalin, the greatest genius and hero of the world. Every once in a while, we had interrogation in the middle of the night; there were ten or twelve written questions and answers. That is, the answers we had to give to the questions were also written out for us. I was careful always to give a "good answer," to praise the great Stalin and the historical significance of communism. I told them that there was no better political system in the whole world. The political commissar asked us after the lecture if we had any question or wishes. Somebody always stood up and asked when we were going home. The commissar turned angry and said that first we must build communism here, and in due time we could build it at home. I believe that the commissar reported to his superiors that our camp was making great strides in understanding communism, and, eventually, all of us would become enthusiastic supporters of it. At least those of us who would still be alive.

Life in the camp went on with sickness and death, and the return to our homes seemed farther and farther away. Our loved ones, families and homeland were slowly more and more distant. The transformation of the self-started, and our daily struggle to survive was more and more difficult. People became cynical and callous. So what if we would eat a good goulash or a nut cake sometime in the future, somewhere in Hungary. For now, I just got a kick in the butt from the Russians because my eight cubic meters was not according to the regulation, and there were too many gaps in it. It was more important for me to receive the dishwater with noodles when we returned to the camp. This "soup" was more important than family, or home, or who we were, or who we could be. Everything was a great big lie. That is what the First World War was, the Peace Treaty of Versailles (I have to laugh!), the rotten politicians in Paris; they should all have been shot because they were all blackguards and had pushed Europe into the Second World War. There were no

newspapers, we did not know what was happening in the world, and we could not write or receive any letters. The international Red Cross in Switzerland, or the great United Nations justice-makers, did not work for us.

During one of our lunch breaks in the wilderness, I had just finished my daily soup portion and had a few minutes of rest. I was inside the square-shaped clearing when I heard a voice nearby softly saying "Hungarian soldier, Hungarian soldier!" Was I hallucinating? A local Azeri man had snuck into the forbidden zone inside the square and was pointing at me. I was wearing my old coveralls from Miskolc that day because my trousers were torn, and I could not exchange them. This old pilot coverall was light brown and had perhaps twenty zippers. The Azeri man approached me and whispered to me that in the First World War he was a prisoner of war in Hungary. He was pointing at the zippers and told me he wanted to buy them and would bring me goat cheese the next day as payment. I quickly unstitched two zippers, gave them to him, and he promised to bring me the cheese next day. The Russian guard was asleep and farther away. The Azeri returned the next day and brought two cheese balls for me. He indicated that he would buy more zippers. Slowly I "sold" him all twenty zippers on my coverall. Meanwhile, I received a quilted coat and pants in the camp and no longer needed the cut-up coverall. At about that time, my friend cadet sergeant Feri Czike and a fellow prisoner, a physician who had pulled out my infected tooth with pliers, were sick, and Feri was seriously ill. So, I shared with them the forty cheese balls the Azeri brought me. Feri slowly recovered, and the physician got better. I was glad that my old coveralls thus kept three people alive for a while and supplemented our meager camp board. It is impossible to know what would have happened to Feri Czike without the cheese balls. This was one of the biggest military feats in Jackal Camp No. 6 that I achieved. It was not without danger, either. The great gift of nature, the wild pomegranate, was very welcome; it grew for a few weeks in the forest and gave us vitamins. I took a few back to the camp with me and gave them to my sick prison mates. Pomegranate was a life saver.

There was a constant coming and going of prisoners from one camp to another, and we never knew where people were taken. It happened mostly in the middle of the night that a few dozen, maybe a hundred men had to line up in the yard; they disappeared in the great sea of camps of the Soviet Union, where millions lived and worked. A

young political officer of Bulgarian descent, while somewhat tipsy from vodka, once told us that there were 27 million people in camps across the Soviet Union.

After a mild winter, spring arrived. One night we woke up to the noise of engines. All night long we heard the noise, as one truck after another passed by our camp. By the morning, the noise ceased. Everybody was wondering who were the people transported to unknown destinations during the night. A few days later, about forty prisoners with two guards were ordered to prepare a new work-square further away than usual because the intensive lumbering depleted the nearby forest. We found that about five or six kilometers away, a brand new lager had been built for the Russians. Stalin degraded the officers who fought in the Russian army and participated in the occupation of Germany and Berlin; he sent his generals to Siberia, and the soldiers who fought on the western front received equal treatment with the soldiers of the vanquished enemy. This was the "reward" given for victory. I saw many Russian soldiers later who, as prisoners of the greater Gulag, were lumberjacking just like us.

Once, I managed to talk with a guard across the barbed wire fence. We talked in German. He told me that he used to be a printer in Kiev, and two years before they took him away but he had no idea why. Ever since he was a guard and was not allowed to write to his family. He was of Jewish descent and spoke some German. Slowly, we realized that in the Soviet Union nobody was free; everybody, even those living at home, were constantly afraid of being dragged away. You did not have to be a czarist aristocrat or an officer to be carried away at any time and locked up for ten or more years. The chief executioner was Generalissimos Stalin, but he himself was afraid and had his co-workers and their families executed. The political officer of Bulgarian descent, the *nacsalnik,* and the guards slowly revealed that they were all prisoners; the leaders of the GPU were also executed. This was bad news for us because we knew that in such a lawless country, our destinies were totally uncertain.

The different nationalities in the camp got along with each other without any conflicts or trouble. There were no problems like, you are Romanian, Hungarian or Slovak. Nationality did not count at all, but there was a Russian classification and treatment. First came the Germans; the Russians trusted them completely and regarded them

most highly. They worked very well and accurately and could solve all the technical problems for the Russians. The Russians left all the problems for the German commandant to solve. This was interesting because during the war the Germans gave orders to the Hungarians, and now that we were prisoners the Germans continued to give us orders. In the Russian's classification, the Romanians came last. They looked down upon them primarily because of their work habits. The Romanians were slow and persevering but did not finish anything on time. According to the Russians, they were the stupidest but physically the hardiest.

The Hungarians worked fast. They finished the work first but not according to the way it was specified. They always tried an individual method that did not always work, and then they were in trouble. The Russians did not like this Hungarian nonconformity. The Slovaks were colorless and nearly invisible. They worked as they were told, quietly like bureaucrats according to the instructions given by the Germans. They obeyed the Germans best. The Germans behaved in a superior manner, but they were among the first to die. A diarrhea was enough to kill them. Luckily, I recovered from three or four bouts of diarrhea. The Germans had already been fighting for five years, closely followed orders, and their physical capacity in the war was huge. They were overwhelmed by a much greater majority. They fought on four fronts, on east, west, north and south, and even on the seas. They were bombed, but they never reached either the American or the Russian centers of military industry. After five years of fighting, they were here in the camp and were falling away like chaff.

The jackal camp was aptly named because at night jackals climbed across the fence and ran around. The constant controls, whistling, line ups, and head counts were nerve racking. We never knew which line would be good, and which one would be bad for us. During the middle of summer in 1946, at early morning the soldiers came and ordered the Hungarian barracks emptied. By that time, only 93 of us were left, the remnants of the 27th Transylvanian division. We had to take along with us all our remaining possessions, clothes, canteens, spoons. The prisoners did not have any knives or forks. These had been taken away from us long before. We received an early breakfast and, accompanied by the guards, got onto the well-known American trucks, were counted and read our orders. Slowly, our convoy started, and on winding roads we started into the high mountains.

Our destination was Death Camp No. 44, a cauldron surrounded by high peaks. There were no more forests here, only cliffs and mountains. Even in the summer, it was cold here, and the prisoners died quickly; they needed reinforcements.

Death Camp No. 44.

The name of this camp indicated well that life did not last here very long. There were no trees and forests, only bleak rocks. Next to the camp was a huge stone quarry where the prisoners produced rip-rap for road building. The road led into a narrow valley toward a pass; it was a Russian military road to the American, Turkish and Iranian spheres and troops. We only knew that stone production was vitally important to build x number of kilometers of road yearly. We also knew that the road would be used by military trucks, not by civilians. Everybody would be driven hard to fulfill a huge norm. The norm was 100 wheelbarrows of rock per person per day. Instead of lager buildings, 30-40 people were garrisoned on bunk beds in large tents. The tents were barely livable; it was terribly cold, as the sun came up late and set early because of the surrounding high mountains. It was called a death camp because the work was extremely hard, and the winter was cold and snowy. Replacements were constantly needed.

The camp commander was a puffy-faced, constantly-squinting Russian who came along with the political officer and the guards. They counted us again, three times. There were 93 of us. It was a huge stone quarry not far from the road, and the noises of the blasts and rock breaking were very loud. Every two or three hours, the whistle sounded, and we had to line up and be counted again and again. A few days before we arrived, three prisoners had escaped and took off towards Mount Ararat that was visible in the distance. Mount Ararat, where according to the Bible Noah's ark was anchored, was in neighboring Turkey. The three runaways were hunted down by mounted patrols and dogs; they were all executed. This was an effective warning for us. If anybody tried to escape, he would be stopped by patrols and dogs. But what kind of dogs! Huge, wolf-killing, Caucasian hounds. Three or four of them could tear a man to pieces. The patrol went around with loaded semi-automatic guns, with long-barreled Russian rifles that could find their targets from 1000 meters away. I knew them well because we had acquired some from the Russians. Furthermore, the small mountain horses were fast and tough, similar to the ones the Mongols rode from the Gobi

Desert to the middle of Europe. Thus, we received appropriate information about our new "home," and I was already worried about how to produce 100 wheelbarrows of broken rock daily.

The next morning we started the work. As at the forest cutting, the quality of the tools was very poor. Blasting took place before or after the prisoners arrived. Then the crashers piled up the volcanic rock used in the road building. Others shoveled the wheelbarrows full of the broken rock, and we pushed the barrows 100-150 meters to the road. As I was assigned to a wheelbarrow, I only had to push it. The wheelbarrows were poorly constructed; most of the weight was concentrated on the handles. In the Hungarian wheelbarrows, most of the weight was on the axle, not on the handles. The guard stood at the exit and, after each load, marked a line next to our prisoner number, five lines vertically, five horizontally. He created a "grill" this way and one grill meant ten loads of rock. Before lunch I tried to complete 55 loads, and after lunch 45. The grills were carved on slabs of pine wood because there were no pencils.

At midday the sun was beating down on us. We were dusty and dirty, and had our shirts on or off. There was no forest here and no supplementary food. At springtime in the forest, we had eaten even some tender leaves and turned them around in our mouths as though we were eating. Our diet was the same as in the jackal camp: noodle "soup" without vegetables or meat, a piece of bread and unrefined sugar. By September and October, the weather turned cold. In November, the first snow fell. We had a lot of trouble protecting our feet because the wood-soled, linen shoes gave up on us. Our feet were wounded and bleeding, and there were no rags or medicine in the camp. It was a near miracle that before the onset of winter we were given yellow American tablets to guard against malaria. They should have distributed those in the forest, not there. There, hunger and the cold, rocky ground troubled everybody. Besides, every two hours the blowing of whistles and the line-up for counting were bothersome. The constant control was necessary because theoretically the Turkish border could be reached. Seeing the conditions, however, nobody thought of running away. Deserters were easily dispensed with. My greatest grief stemmed exactly from these circumstances.

I was loading my wheelbarrow in a distant corner of the quarry and was somewhat dizzy; I did not hear the whistle and did not line up

with the others. In this part of the quarry, the wall was not very high and it would have been possible to escape. Suddenly, I heard shouts. There was a big commotion, and the Russians were running towards me with guns pointing at me. I just stared at them: what's the matter? When they reached me, they threw me on the ground and handcuffed me; they took me back to the camp, yelling all the while. Amid shouting and swearing, the *nacsalnik* said, "You rotten Hungarian, you wanted to run away. You will be punished appropriately." Then two guards took me to an underground prison near the end of the camp. The *nacsalnik* kept on yelling, and I understood that I would either be shot or hung for trying to escape. Unfortunately, just then there was no interpreter available. So I only said "nyet," - no, I did not want to run away, only "roboti," "roboti" - I was only working.

The underground prison was a recess carved into the mountainside. Next to the door there was a small window with an iron grill but no glass; it was as cold as the ice cave of Dobsina. The earth floor was ice covered as the groundwater froze on it. The recess was not high; it was not possible to stand up inside. I pulled my clothes together, pulled my Lenin styled cap with the red star on it down on my head and fell asleep. The next day, I expected some food but did not receive any. It was Christmas Eve, December 24, 1946. The barracks were silent. Nobody was singing.

Of course, according to the Orthodox calendar, Christmas is not at the same time as in the Christian calendar. At any rate, in the communist system churches were abolished and religion was not practiced. During the first years of the Great Russian revolution, all Christian churches were razed. Therefore, the spirit of Christmas could not be expressed in the camp. Four days passed without food or drink, and I was still locked up in the underground prison. I broke little pieces off the icicles and sucked them. I used a corner of the slot for the "bathroom" but not very often. The functioning of the human cells slowed down, and I was getting thinner and thinner. Early morning on the fifth day, I heard the approach of heavy steps. Somebody was opening the locks with big iron keys. What would happen now? A Russian soldier pulled me out of the slot, kicked me roughly in the butt, and I fell down to the ground. He yelled at me to go to my tent. My tent-mates greeted me happily. One of them took out of his bed two or three portions of bread and sugar that he requisitioned from the cook for me, telling him that I could not walk. I fixed the sugary bread, ate it and then drank a canteen of water. The

next day I had to go to work. Three of my mates helped me to push the wheelbarrow.

This was Christmas and New Year's in Death Camp No. 44 when I was twenty years old. There was an explanation to all this. The camp had received an unexpected inspection. An ethnic Armenian general, the commander of the entire construction project, accompanied by some high ranking officers, visited the camp. They found the *nacsalnik* dead drunk, immediately sacked him and took him away. Nobody knew where. A new *nacsalnik* was appointed who heard my case and promptly let me out of the grip of death. It is possible that I owe my life to a bottle of vodka.

Hospital Camp No. 4.

The hard winter days were spent with even harder labor. The snowstorms closed us off from the rest of the world, and sometimes our supplies were brought in by camel caravans. These were good times because we could not work either. By the end of March, however, I was getting weaker. Puss-filled boils formed on my hands and feet. The Hungarian prisoner physician cut them open with a knife he stole from the kitchen and disinfected in fire. The infection on my left palm was especially painful and sensitive. I struggled on until June, when I fell ill with a high fever and could not stand up. The next day, by order of the Russian medic, a sergeant, I and some other sick prisoners were transported to Hospital Camp no. 4 near Kirovabad. Hungarian soldiers lifted me from the truck. Because of my blond hair and blue eyes, they thought I was German. One of them said "Well, this guy will not leave here on his own two feet." I looked at him and said, "I hope that will not be the case." He looked at me a little embarrassed and stuttered that he hoped that too.

The Hungarian medics carried me on a stretcher to a hospital room where there were already some twenty people. A sympathetic, perhaps sixty-year-old physician came soon after, who spoke fluent German and French. He diagnosed my high fever and that I was in critical condition. Unfortunately, he did not have any medicine, but he ordered better sustenance and small, colored balls for me. The latter turned out to be American vitamin pills. We would see what happens. The others were in similar condition, most of them 25-35 year old Germans.

In the big hospital lager, there were some Japanese and other nationalities. I recognized some Polish prisoners. Day after day the dead were carried away. After one week I was delirious and was hallucinating, I could not sense reality. The high fever lasted for a few days, but during the third week it slowly started to decrease. Of course, I only felt this, because there was no thermometer in the hospital. By that time, I could exchange a few words with the doctor and his Hungarian aides. He kept saying, "Haraso, vengerszki szoldat (very good, Hungarian soldier)." On the fourth week I could feel the good effects of the more diverse nutrition. There were vegetables in the noodle soup, better quality bread and the colored American vitamin pills. Gradually we learned that our physician got his degree at the Sorbonne and finished his residency in Berlin before the First World War. Ever since 1917 he had been a prisoner in the medical system of the lagers. I do not know his name, but I was especially grateful to him for improving my diet and for giving me a double dose of the vitamin pills. By the fourth week my fever abated and I could stand up; I was transferred to a hospital barrack to join maybe 50 or 60 recuperating prisoners. It was impossible to stay there at night because millions of bedbugs hung from the rafters and the wooden walls. So I took my blanket outside and slept on the rocky road between the barracks. Several other people did the same because it was impossible to sleep inside the barracks.

The elevation of the hospital camp must have been pretty low because in June it was much warmer than in the death camp. The crew told us that in the entire region this was the super hospital, shown proudly to foreigners. Soon after, I was ordered to receive physical therapy. On the shores of the little creek that ran across the hospital grounds there were a lot of small, rounded pebbles. We had to go to the shore and lift up first smaller, then gradually larger pieces of rock. Bend down, lift up. Bend down, lift up. After two weeks I could lift rocks weighing one or two kilograms. This was a miracle camp where the sick and the convalescent did not have to work. The golden life continued until the end of July when the news came like lightning that the recovered prisoners would be taken home because they were no longer able to work.

Journey of Hope

The news was incredible because the general knowledge was that the prisoners were sentenced for four to five years, and five more for

giving ourselves up to the Americans; we were considered to be traitors to communism. Undoubtedly, at least one thousand Hungarian prisoners of war were unable to work anymore, as well as several thousand of the other nationalities. The hospital camp was built for those who could walk already but could not be used for work; therefore this camp would become the center for home transportation. Moreover, people in similar physical condition from other camps would also be brought here. Everybody's health would be improved, they would receive new clothes and would be tested ideologically, and then in groups of one thousand to twelve hundred, the transportation back home would begin.

This was still incredible but there were some signs. Our nutrition improved even more. The ingredients in the soup became more varied. The bread was a much better brown wheat bread from an American-style bakery built perhaps by the Americans in the twenties; it was not watery and prickly anymore. The quality of tobacco improved; we no longer received the stump of tobacco leaves but tobacco ground from the leaves, which lent it for rolling cigarettes. There was no fruit, meat, or potatoes, but our food became adequate. People started to count the days.

One day we received brand new uniforms made from fine American textile, with Russian styling over the shirt and pants, with a trapezoid shaped patch over the knees. They gave us new belts and new leather shoes. They separated about one thousand Hungarians into one section of the camp. A military barber shaved everybody every day. For the first time since we were captured, we were allowed to write a postcard home, just two sentences, that we are all right. My family in Eger received it. Somebody heavily censured it with a red pencil; I saw this when I returned home.

And then the nightly interrogations started. There were twenty questions and one interpreter. There was one question I had to answer: "Yes"; do you have any relatives in the camps? I said yes, my older brother. How much older is he, and what was his rank in the army? I told him that my brother worked at a state bank, was twenty years old when they enlisted him, and he had no rank. The questioner was a higher-ranking officer. The interrogation was repeated three times.

A week later my comrades brought me the news that a new group of

Hungarian soldiers arrived at the gate and that my brother was in the first row. I hurried to the gate about one kilometer away and my brother was truly there. He was brought down from one of the mountain camps too but was in much better shape than I was. Slowly it turned out that he suffered much heavier psychological damage; his diarrhea lasted for two years after his return home. The new arrivals received the same treatment in the hospital camp as we did. They were not sick but could not work because they were physically weakened and emaciated. One unit of Hungarians at the gates, and miraculously my brother was among them.

It was around the middle of August when the freight train arrived on the private tracks of the camp. The next day we entrained. There were only thirty people in a car now, everybody had his own cot to sleep on, and the side door was partly open. We got in the same wagon with my brother and we could hardly believe that we were together. The next day the train started to move slowly. The remaining prisoners climbed onto a little hill behind the barbed wire fence and waved at us. Some of them took their shirts off and waved. Our train increased speed and soon we hurtled on with a speed of forty kilometers per hour. The remaining prisoners were still waving from afar but the distance was greater and greater until suddenly they disappeared. We may have been about two kilometers away. Many of us on the train cried and were teary eyed; this separation was hell. We never found out what became of those left behind. Death could have struck them down at any time. Or a new GPU boss could have stopped the transports home.

From Kirovabad our train was proceeding east toward the Caspian Sea. This is not the right direction—we thought. Several of us started to panic. That's okay; we'll see which way we turn at Baku, whether at Makhachkala we turn east toward Siberia, or west toward Hungary. The train went exceedingly slow until we finally reached Makhchkala. There, after passing through many tracks and crossings, we turned east! Everybody got frightened and there was horror on their faces. Everything was a big lie; we were going to Siberia! Then, suddenly the train turned west, in the direction of Groznij. We breathed more easily. But then we stopped at a great big railroad station, and every such stop was suspicious. Perhaps they would take us off the train and transport us some place else. But the train lurched forward again, and we reached the city of Rostov. We passed extremely slowly on a huge wooden bridge across the River

Don. We felt that at any moment this creaky, squeaky pile of cards, this so-called bridge, could collapse under us. Then we arrived in Rostov. Our train got a new engine. It was going faster, with a speed of 50 to 60 kilometers raced along to Dnepropetrovszk.

We slowed down on the bridges and then arrived on the station of the great industrial city that is several times larger than Miskolc. The axle and wheel on one of the wagons on our train started to smoke, and it had to be changed. We had to wait at the station for a few hours. The Russian guards allowed us to get off the train and walk around in the hall. Seeing our beautiful American uniforms some people stopped us and wanted to buy our shirts and pants. For a few rubles to sell our pants? Should we arrive in Hungary in our underwear? In the shops at the station only small, colored candy twists could be bought. We did not have any money but some of the travelers bought us a few pieces. Everybody admired, touched and envied our beautiful clothes. There were some that would not rest until they took something off us.

In Dnepropetrovsk we got a new engine. The train sped on and raced at 70-80 kilometers per hour. The windows were open and the big side door was hooked on the last notch. After the long and great race, the train slowed down; we reached Jassy. We passed through stations like Krivoj Rog, Kishinev and others. Always slowing down but never stopping. As it turned out, Jassy received trains with returning prisoners from everywhere in the great Soviet Union. We stopped there for two days. It was a great distribution camp. We again had bucket baths by hand and passable food. If I recall correctly, here there was potato in the soup. In the morning of the third day, we got on the train with the Hungarians in the front and the Romanians in the back. We started towards the Carpathians.

It was at night when we crossed over the pass of the Carpathians to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). In Kolozsvár we stopped at the storage yards, where the back of the train with the Romanians and Transylvanians was detached. The front portion of the train proceeded in broad daylight across the Királyhágó to Nagyvárad (Oradea). The Királyhágó sparkled. We crossed the Trianon border at Biharkeresztes. From Kolozsvár on, a Hungarian engine pulled our Hungarian train. Before Biharkeresztes, on the Hungarian side of the border, we stopped. Several of us got off the train and dug out a few sugar beets and started to eat them. We thought the raw beet tasted

just fine. Then we arrived in the great big railroad station of Debrecen where they took us to the Pavilion barracks. The next morning we got cream of wheat for breakfast, a visit by a physician and other officers received us. I got the number 80,372. This was the number of the returning prisoner of war. There were more than eighty thousands of us returning through the Pavilion barracks.

My medical discharge paper read as follows:

Géza Kisvarsányi, 21 years old, university student, 1947. August 16. Passed medical examination and received treatment. Free of lice. Aid received: free train ticket from Debrecen to Eger and 20 Forint monetary help. From June 1st 1944 to August 20th 1944 labor camp inmate. Enlisted October 1st 1944 to August 20th 1947.

I walked into Debrecen and bought a melon and a piece of chocolate. Viva paradise on Earth! Viva Hungary! From Debrecen by motorized train to Füzesabony. From Füzesabony by slow train to Eger. Across the rails and barriers from Eger station to Sas Street. From the corner of Sas Street to No. 3 Bajza Street. Everything good that you could imagine was here. Compared to the great Soviet Union, Hungary was heaven on earth. For me, Hungary was a land full of milk, butter and honey.

I entered our garden through the gate. We are at home! My aunt looked and looked at us: who are we? She hardly recognized us. Our heads were shaved bald; the war carved deep lines on our faces, the suffering in the camps was all shown in our expressions. My aunt told us that our mother and sister escaped from the Russians and were currently in Germany. My father moved to Tokaj to take care of my 87-year-old grandmother. It was no longer the old, beautiful home that greeted us.

I slowly walked into town next day. In front of the Cistercian Church I accidentally met my classmate Laci Lőw. He told me that his mother and older sister perished in Auschwitz, but his father came home. He told me that if I should have any trouble, I should just call on him. I only understood much later what he meant.

My brother got his old job back at the bank in Budapest. I also moved up to Budapest and started my new life.

Part 3: Geology, the life-saving science

University life in Budapest

In Budapest I enrolled in the University. I gave up on the technological university. With my damaged hand I could not have completed drafting assignments and descriptive geometric problems at an acceptable level. I enrolled in the Péter Pázmány University of Science, majoring in geography and history. For the second time in my life, I was a freshman. One year later I changed my major to geology, and I became a freshman for the third time. Geology was an unknown subject in the high schools at that time. Béla Bulla, a professor of physical geography, directed my attention to it. In his lectures he explained that basic concepts of physical geography are based on geologic principles. Therefore, in the second semester I took several classes in geology. I found that the mineralogy and petrology lectures given by Professor Béla Mauritz provided an excellent basis for the subject. Moreover, geology students took field trips to nearby mountains every weekend. These excursions gave me back my health.

In 1944 Budapest was a modestly glittering, proud and defiant, well-ordered and clean city. In September of 1947 she did not dream of her wonderful potential but struggled with her very modest present. Her country was carved up some more, destroyed in the war, completely robbed, her economic and political significance reduced. I ask, what kind of city Paris would be if 72 percent of France were taken away, and the country were in ruins and plundered. Budapest in 1947 was a city struggling with her limited future; on the losing side of war, under foreign rule, with pale and poor looking people. The surrounding world loathed Hungary, the last satellite, for not giving up her German allies. It is not so difficult to explain. Hitler considered Hungary his own province, Austria's defense bastion. Many Hungarian army officers were of German descent because of centuries of Austro-Hungarian co-habitation and German immigration. What a situation! A good portion of the American army was also of German descent, including General Eisenhower himself.

After having been away for three years and three months, at the beginning of September 1947, I was in Budapest once more. Without a penny in my pockets, in Russian military clothes I stood before the great vaulted windows of the Geology Department building on

Múzeum Boulevard. I was lucky that my brother was able to help me, and I could live with him. Although he is no longer alive, I thank him again and again. My grandmother in Tokaj was a pensioner without a pension; my father, released from the communist prison, was also a pensioner without a pension. My mother and sixteen-year-old sister escaped from the Russian invasion and were somewhere in Germany. Most of our property, the fields and the vineyards, were confiscated.

As I stood in front of 4/A Múzeum Boulevard, I had a great idea and started out for the western border. Before I reached Sopron they asked for my papers. When I told them I had nothing but my release papers from the prisoner of war camps, they let me go. As I approached the border on foot, I saw that it was closed down with barbed wire fencing and that there were guards everywhere. So I turned around and returned to Budapest. My attempt to flee was unsuccessful and I gave up the idea to leave Hungary forever. I braced myself for the task of finishing my university studies.

My professors at the Péter Pázmány University were very helpful to a returned prisoner of war. In the basement of the main building every morning, hot chocolate was distributed to the students through a welfare package of the queen of the Netherlands. This was not the first time that the Dutch royal family helped famished Hungarians. After the First World War, many eight- to ten-year-old Hungarian children were taken to the Netherlands to receive better nutrition and medical care. My father in law was among those children and, even after many decades, he fondly remembered the Dutch family that "adopted" him for several months.

From 1947 to 1952 I completed my university studies, I passed my comprehensive examinations and wrote my thesis. Its subject was the titanium mineralization in the wehrlite host rock near Szarvaskő. My thesis was published in the Bulletin of the Geological Society. This was considered a great distinction because mine was the only thesis in the class to get published. As a result of this, the Department of Mineralogy invited me to join them at the assistant professor level.

The field trips and excursions during my geological studies were extremely beneficial and within a few months my health had returned. I concentrated on the future and tried to forget everything bad that

happened to me. During the university years, I did have some ideological problems, in part because of my military service, prisoner of war status, and my family situation. My mother and sister immigrated to the United States, where my mother's two older sisters had lived for decades. In the 1950's everybody who had any connection with the "imperialist" West, in particular with the United States, was looked at with suspicion. One of my classmates, however, had a major part in the communist party and liked me because I helped him in his studies. In gratitude, he removed the bad, confidential dossier on me from the safe of the party office and gave it to me to burn. There was no trace left in my dossier of malicious and baseless accusations.

In the meantime, the University was renamed after the great 19th century Hungarian physicist Loránd Eötvös. My professors were knowledgeable, outstanding scientists and exemplary humanists. Two or three of them were members of the Hungarian Academy of Science and had great influence in the political sphere as well. Even the highest members in the government listened to them.

The instruction of geology was excellent. Mauritz, Sztrókay and Vilma Széky-Fux taught mineralogy and petrology very well. Mauritz and especially Sztrókay were disciples of the great German masters. Sztrókay studied ore deposits and ore microscopy in Berlin and was a product of the Schneiderhőhn and Ramdohr School. The huge ore deposit volume of Schneiderhőhn and the world famous ore microscopic book of Ramdohr were our textbooks in Budapest. Professor Vadász was an excellent geologic map maker and field geologist; even at the age of 66, he came along with us to the Transdanubian Bakony, Vértes and Pilis ranges to teach observation and interpretation. Professor Szádeczky- Kardoss was the storehouse of great ideas; with his elegant, aristocratic manner and wide knowledge of languages, he masterfully intimidated the mostly-primitive, party cadres who were elevated in the communist system. The professor of paleontology, Telegdi- Roth, and geophysicist László Egyed, alas, died fairly young. Both of them were good mathematicians as well.

Sixty years and many new experiences later, I may add a few critical observations about the instruction of geology in Hungary at the time. The practice of geology, especially the exploration for oil and minerals, is an economic activity as much as a scientific one. In

Hungary the economic aspect of exploration was somehow left out of the instruction. The lack of knowledge of foreign languages especially that of the English scientific literature, was a grave shortcoming. The publication of results of geologic research changed from the earlier German, French and Russian to predominantly English. To keep up to date with current scientific research is only possible with a secure understanding of English and through reading of international geologic journals. It was evident in the writing of academic textbooks. A comprehensive geologic study of the entire Carpathian basin should have been made, including the Bihar Mountains, the Eastern Carpathians, the Uplands and the volcanic ranges. Neither the political nor the financial situation made this possible. Our field trips were overwhelmingly in the Transdanubian Middle Mountains. Fortunately, this region contains a lot of bauxite, manganese and coal deposits and has interesting fault systems. It gave a good foundation for geologists interested in mineral deposits.

Hungarian universities in those years lacked modern equipment as well, although they tried to catch up and made great strides fast. The professors did not do a lot of experiments. Professor Szádeczky-Kardoss once remarked that he was working on the origin of life on earth. When I asked him what kind of experiments he intended to perform, he pointed at his own head, meaning that the experiments would be in his brain, without a laboratory.

The method of teaching and study was jam-packed; we had to learn the material heard during the lectures, but there was no time for laboratory experiments, or for individual research. We simply had to know what the professor said. The university was a strictly-defined system of fast-paced study and hard note-taking, where everything proceeded forward according to schedule. From the beginning I modified my emphasis to the study of mineralogy, petrology and ore deposits as well as to geologic mapping. I always received excellent grades in these subjects. In the other subjects I was satisfied with good grades. I was least interested in paleontology and stratigraphy. At that time, tectonics and structural research were still very rudimentary. A good fifteen to twenty years later, when the knowledge of the earth's crust was better understood, the development of plate tectonics, primarily in America, revolutionized these subjects.

The practice of geology in Hungary, 1952-1956

Beginning in September 1952, I was an assistant professor in the Department of Mineralogy at Loránd Eötvös University. I had a lot of work. Among my consulting jobs, the stabilization of the lakeshore at Balatonaliga was most interesting because potential landslides endangered the luxury resort used by the leaders of the communist party. During the week I lived in a beautiful villa with marble baths and a balcony overlooking Lake Balaton. On the weekends the party leaders such as Ernő Gerő came for rest and relaxation, and I had to leave by Friday afternoon.

Another interesting assignment was the artificial replenishment of the alum in the mineral waters at Parádfürdő. The guests at Parádfürdő, if the spa is still in use, hardly know that the healing potassium-aluminum sulfate content of the waters is derived from the alum-rich host rock of the ore veins. In Nagybörzsöny, I mapped the adit and other exploring openings; in Gyöngyösoroszi, I conducted ore mineralogical studies for the ore concentrator. I worked with other colleagues on several other problems, such as mapping projects at Mount Kánya, the gold prospect at Telkibánya, and manganese mineralization at Komlóska.

Geologic study of the Recsk ore body

At that time one of the most outstanding ore deposit experts, later State Geologist in Hungary, was Gábor Pantó. He asked me to work on the exploration and mapping of the Recsk ore body. Pantó and Jenő Noszky, then the director of the Hungarian Geological Institute, reviewed the task for me. They emphasized that it was part of the five-year plan and that it was very important to complete. If the five-year plan was not done, we could all end up in prison— said Noszky.

The geologic mapping of the Recsk gold and copper mine was perhaps the most dangerous geologic work in Hungary. The complete mapping of the mine meant that we had to work below the lowest levels of the abandoned mine, often crawling on our stomachs, in the flickering light of a carbide lamp, in mostly unsupported and more-or-less crumbling exploration adits left behind by the former stock mining. The work was not only physically hard but also hazardous. My tough and well-organized work habits enabled me to complete the work. My colleague János Kiss, who was

associate professor in the department at that time, completed the surface mapping between Báj Creek and Kékes Peak. We mapped Mount Darnó together. While mapping in the eastern part of Mátra Mountains, along the andesite ranges I discovered the forced labor camp and the temporary camp near the highway where hundreds of Hungarians, enemies of the communist system, were subjected to forced labor. That is when I realized that the soviet Gulag had arrived in Hungary.

In 1955 I presented a two-volume report on Recsk to the Geological Institute. The first volume contains the text and the illustrations, and the second includes the maps of the mine. It is a comprehensive ore deposit, petrologic and structural study.

Based on my mapping near Parádfürdő and the examination of the old exploration openings and adits, I concluded that further exploration should continue in the direction of depth. The ore of the known mining levels was zoned, reminiscent of Selmecbánya and Körmöcbánya, where the mother lode or pluton was reached at the lowest levels; ore enrichment at Recsk may be similarly deeper. Recsk deserves more attention because it is our only remaining copper mine after Trianon.

The Lahóca mountain range is approximately one half kilometers away from the Recsk-Parádfürdő highway. It contains gold and copper ore; mining goes on with the sounds of a low buzz and the ore is enriched in the shade of apple trees near the mine lake. My work completed the first major reappraisal of the mining region after the war. Studies were gradually continued later, and by the 1970's about 750 million tons of ore was found at a depth of 500 to 1000 meters. This is the achievement of Hungarian geologists, a victory for science, and Hungary's great treasure, which unfortunately has not yet been fully utilized. Hundreds of millions of forints that were spent for exploration have thus been wasted.

The geologic studies and exploration at Recsk are excellent examples of the importance of economic principles that should be applicable in mining; the importance of investment versus profit for the national economy are concepts absent from the minds of many bureaucrats. A complex ore deposit, like Recsk, that contains copper, gold, silver, molybdenum, lead, zinc and other metals, can only be developed and sold when the price of metals is high. If it is

left standing for twenty or thirty years, groundwater fills the underground cuts and shafts, and its value is much less. A base-metal industry should have been developed on this deposit instead of wasting billions on the iron and steel industry which collapsed, and the monies invested (the country's funds!) were lost. By the 1980's this had become quite clear. Years later, when I returned from the United States and discussed this with Hungarian experts, they argued that "the Soviet economy will never be affected by economic downturns and that the steel industry shall never decrease."

The Ore at Recsk and Neo-Europe

When I review my English description of the Recsk ore body (1988), I feel the symphonic poem, Italian opera and Greek drama. It is condensed and set on the enormous stage of geologic events. Imagine a Europe where there are no Pyrenees, Alps, Carpathians, there is no Italy, Hungary or the Balkan Peninsula, and even Turkey is missing. This strange landmass was Mezo-Europe and a sea washed its southern shores. The giant African continent slowly started to move northward and bumped into Europe. The African plate forced itself under the European plate, exerted immense horizontal pressure on it and pushed up the mountain ranges of southern Europe. It pushed the smaller islands against Europe as well. The force of the collision folded the marine sedimentary layers multiple ways and glued them to Europe. The peak of the Matterhorn in Switzerland consists of African rock that slid along a transform fault nearly horizontally to its place.

Magmatic activity followed the collision and subduction. About 34 million years ago at a depth of three to four kilometers, a huge stock, a pluton of diorite composition, intruded at Recsk and slowly cooled down from the outside inward. The more volatile matters in the diorite magma, the water vapor, the gases and metal-bearing solutions, slowly concentrated inside until the ever-increasing inner pressure caused the whole thing to explode, similar to boiling water in a tightly covered pot. The explosion created cracks and crevices in the surrounding rocks and in the outer solidified parts of the stock, wherein mineral deposition began. At the start, the temperature of the ore solutions was a minimum of 600 degrees Celsius, but through the millennia it cooled down. The mineral solution, the hydrothermal ore, was not a simple ionic solution; it consisted of complex ions.

The heat energy increased the temperature of water in the surrounding rocks, the groundwater, and even that of surface precipitation from rainwater seeping through. This complex hydrothermal ore solution "cocktail" slowly deposited the ore minerals. Close to a billion tons of ore was thus accumulated in the diorite and surrounding rocks. The ore reserves approach 750 million tons, but the value of the deposit depends on the market price of metals at any given time. Underneath the Lahóca at Recsk and in the mountains around Parádfürdő, at depth there is a great treasure that would be good to utilize. It would cost about one billion dollars to develop a mine, a mill and a base metal industry here, and the mine could be active and provide jobs for one hundred years.

The origin of the Recsk ore body was only a small part of the huge geologic drama that lasted for millions of years. Constantly working erosion formed and modified the current geomorphologic shape of the continent. Through millions of years of geologic processes, Europe increased in size, her mountains rose up from the sea, her granite metamorphic rocks proudly shining in the sunlight on the mountain peaks. The natural beauty of Europe became wondrously beautiful. The pressure of the Alps pushed the Pannon crust a little to the east and caused the folding and uplift of the Eastern Carpathians and Transylvania; they embrace the Carpathian basin in a 270-degree arc. The Balkans was also folded up, and Hungary became surrounded by mountains in a 360-degree circle. In sixty million years, beauteous Europe was formed through the movement of the African crust plate. My report on the Recsk ore deposit is placed in open file at the Hungarian State Geological Institute.

October 23, 1956 (by Éva B. Kisvarsányi)

On that bright and sunny autumn day at 9:00 AM I went, as usual, to the University where I was a junior majoring in Geology. Ironically, we were supposed to have a class in Marxism-Leninism, a compulsory subject for everyone. My classmates excitedly informed me that no classes would be held that day. That afternoon we were going to march with the University students in a demonstration. We discussed the situation in the next few hours and studied the pamphlet that a student from the Technical University distributed among us. The pamphlet drafted the night before summarized in 16 points the demands for reform, democracy and human rights in Soviet-occupied Communist Hungary.

We paled at the audacity of the demands that gave expression to such a national and revolutionary program that for the last 10 years we could not even dream of. We demanded the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, the forming of a new government under the leadership of Imre Nagy, free elections, and freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We demanded justice for those arrested, tortured, convicted and imprisoned by the secret police and the impeachment of those responsible for the mock trials. We demanded the replacement of the Soviet-style coat-of-arms on the Hungarian national flag with the Kossuth shield, the removal of the monstrous statue of Stalin from the City Park and the re-establishment of March 15 as a national holiday.

We spent the morning in great excitement. There were alternating rumors that the police and the secret police would and would not permit the students' march; that all participants would be arrested; and that everybody would be expelled from the University. However, nobody went home and at 2:00 PM we formed organized lines under the banner of the University. I was in the first line, marching toward the Danube. Students from other universities joined us and the crowd swelled to more than 15,000, all of us shouting the refrain of the National Song: "We swear by the God of Hungarians that we shall not be slaves anymore!"

These were never to be forgotten, staggering moments. In the idealism of youth we truly believed that we would overcome tyranny and oppression, that by our mere presence we could change history. Our lines swelled as more and more people joined us. People of the street and workers joined our ranks as we continued our march to Buda. We intended to pay our respects to the Polish people and express our solidarity with their aspirations to be free by placing a wreath at the statue of General Bem, a Polish hero of the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848. En route, lowered from the 5th floor balcony of an apartment house, I glimpsed the national flag from which the hated Soviet-style coat-of arms has been torn. The sight of that flag with the huge hole in the middle was absolutely shocking; maybe it was then that I first realized that I was truly a part of an historic event.

By the time we reached the bridge across the Danube, the main boulevards of the city were like a river of people. It seemed like the entire population of Budapest was marching along with us. We were

singing patriotic and folk songs and coined some newly invented slogans, like "Imre Nagy in the government, Rákosi in the Danube!" and "Hungarians, join us!" But mostly we shouted, "Russians go home!" We did not see any policemen or members of the secret police. By the time we reached the Bem statue, there were about 50,000 people in our ranks.

It was close to 7:00 PM when we arrived in front of the Parliament building to demand the acceptance of the 16 points and to request Imre Nagy address the crowd. By then, the crowd numbered about 200,000.

Personally, I did not take part in the fighting that started later that evening at the Radio Station. At about 8:00 PM I returned home. However, I will forever remember that glorious October day and the 12 days of freedom that followed. And I will never forget my friend Mária Kováts who was my classmate for 8 years. She was killed on October 25th on Parliament Square by the secret police that were shooting indiscriminately at the unarmed demonstrators. She was 20 years old and she wanted to be a teacher.

Part 4: In America

My wife, née Éva Bognár and I arrived in New York on January 16, 1957. Both of us participated in the 1956 Hungarian revolution and although we did not have a major role in it, after its defeat we were afraid of the communist reprisal.

We left Hungary near Sopron early morning on December 1st and went directly to Vienna where we waited exactly one month before we could go on by train to the harbor of Bremenhaven. Our ship the eleven thousand-ton *Marine Carp* was full of 1956 Hungarian refugees. In January the North Atlantic Ocean is very stormy and our journey to New York took sixteen days. During this time we saw the sun only once when the ship, following the southern route passed near the Azores Islands.

The 1956 revolution greatly increased the fame and respect for Hungary and the freedom fighters in America. President Eisenhower gave special immigration status to 36 thousand Hungarian refugees and the people welcomed us with open arms. I started to look for a job as a geologist in the headquarters of different mining and exploration companies. For six weeks I went to New York City daily to find a position. In the meanwhile Eva and I were diligently learning English because we really needed to. Neither German, nor Russian, nor Italian was any good here. On the other

hand, the Latin we learned in high school gave us an excellent foundation to learn English with relative ease.

As of the first of March the Kennecott Copper Corporation hired me as an exploration geologist. They sent me to the exploration subsidiary, Bear Creek Mining Company office in the State of Missouri to search for Mississippi Valley Type (MVT) ore deposits.

We flew from New York in cold wintry weather to Saint Louis, a metropolis at the joining of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. From winter we flew into spring. Missouri greeted us with bright sunshine and mild spring-like weather. The red bud, the tulip tree and other characteristic shrubs such as the dogwood, Missouri's state flower, were blooming in the forest. From St. Louis we took a train to Rolla, about 160 kilometers southwest of the city, where my company's field office was located. We arrived late in the evening. Two colleagues waited for us at the station with an interpreter who was the American born son of Hungarian parents and spoke broken Hungarian; he was a student at the local university.

We spent our first night in our new home at the local Edwin Long Hotel but the next day we found a furnished duplex apartment with a garden in a pleasant neighborhood. The wives of my colleagues collected for us various items needed in a household, dishes, bed linen, towels, etc. because we arrived with a single suitcase to Rolla where we lived for thirty-seven years. The little town had a population of about fifteen thousand; it lies in a beautiful natural setting, surrounded by forested hills. To our surprise the oldest mining school west of the Mississippi River, the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy, founded in 1873 and part of the Missouri State University system, was located in Rolla. This proved to be important to us because Eva was able to continue and finish her geologic studies, which she started in Hungary, and years later I received my Ph. D. in geology there.

Besides the university, Rolla also had offices of the Federal Geological, Hydrological and Topographic Surveys, the United States Bureau of Mines, the Federal and State Forest Services, the Missouri State Geological Survey and exploration offices of several mining companies. The public school system in Rolla was excellent because the large number of professors, intellectuals and "white-collar" workers living in town demanded a high quality of education. It was an ideal place to raise children.

Ábel in the Wilderness

America is a country of immigrants. Even the native population, the

Indians are immigrants as about 15-20 thousand years ago they came from Asia to North America through Alaska. Everybody who arrives in America has to discover the "New World", the "New Continent". This is especially important for a Hungarian geologist who learned geology in little Hungary. The university in Budapest gave well-prepared geologists to the world, albeit with limited practical knowledge. In order to make up the missing experience my company organized a huge field trip for me to study all types of ore deposits and totally new geology. I examined 3.5 billion year old Precambrian banded iron ore formations, porphyry copper deposits, epithermal gold veins and tectonic units formed four billion years ago on the Precambrian Shield as well as "exotic terranes" in the Western Cordilleras. This trip helped me a great deal to acquire knowledge as an exploration geologist and to be able to discuss fundamental science with my colleagues and superiors.

Europe has a certain all-intrusive and giant "Culture" that every European was raised in and proud of without realizing this trait. European culture is kind of narcissistic and tends to forget that there were others who created in the past. As a European, I immediately recognized that this is a New World, new, and never before seen and experienced geology, new language, new methods, systems and technical requirements. In educated circles it is necessary to know not only geology but history as well and one has to feel that we follow in the footsteps of Columbus, Cabot, De Soto, Cortez, and many other discoverers. It is necessary to know something about the English-Scottish state philosophy, the Scottish and English enlightenment, about the founding fathers and the Constitution, and about the political and economic system of America. The New World is indeed new and very different from the "old country". Yet, the people and the culture are basically European and not strange only different. It is a great and powerful order that transforms and molds the individual and eventually may melt it in. The heart, the soul, the spirit may remain the same, it does not bother anybody.

America is a seductive country. The people are welcoming, polite and helpful. They sincerely hope that the "great experiment" of becoming Americanized would be successful. But in the end, every immigrant has to create his own better future. This society is based on competition, everybody competes with everybody else and the competition has its own unwritten rules. America is a great European realization, unique in its own way and is actually the most successful European enterprise. The Europeans conquered conscious of their

culture. They conquered either peacefully, or with commerce, or with superior technology, or with guns and blood. The conquest in America started with a few hundred immigrants, Indians, forests, mountains, wolves and bears. This created a huge romanticism that survives to this day. Parts of the country are 300-400 years old, but in its totality it is barely 100 years old because it consolidated only in the 1890's after the conclusion of the Spanish and Indian wars. The European powers, the English, the French and the Spanish fought each other for 300 years to possess America. In 1800 the existence and future of America was totally uncertain. Everything depended on the European powers. In the beginning America was not only an English colony, the English themselves were the immigrants. The English, the French and the Spanish played the most important roles in the creation of American civilization; later the Irish, the Germans and the Italians were important. Other influences are relatively insignificant. Hungarians were eminent in the sciences and in the film industry. Today the most significant Hungarian component is Hungarian music.

Ore exploration the American way

Ore exploration is the most exciting, the most interesting, and the most complicated and the most romantic activity in the world. No wonder that humankind has practiced it for five thousand years. In a mineral-rich region I have seen the local grade school teacher and her pupils searching for ore on the weekends. In the age of the gold rush a well-paid captain of a ship or a mayor of a town would leave his job and go to become a gold prospector or gold digger. With some luck he could increase a monthly income of 50 dollars to five thousand.

Geologic exploration is a complicated scientific and economic activity that generally costs a lot of money. To prevent bankruptcy and turn your luck around two ingredients are necessary: a capital-rich company and a few good geologists. An excellent ore prospector is like a victorious field marshal. He should study the world's greatest battles and most successful commanders from Hannibal and Caesar through Napoleon to Rommell. The geologist in command of the battle for ore should be able to envision the potential ore deposit in three dimensions in a time dependent mode; he should apply appropriate strategic and tactical decisions grouping his forces, to recognize the situation in time and to find the deposit, thus

conquering or rather overtaking his rivals. He should know the types of ore deposits, their characteristics and ages, their tectonics and all other surface and subsurface geology that would lead to success. He should know the geochemical and geophysical signatures of ores and how to evaluate the data. Furthermore, if none of the data can be applied he should be able to solve the task with purely geologic reasoning and interpretation. Analysis and synthesis beyond the data, the projection and application of geologic thinking and reasoning within the limits of reality often decides whether there will be enough funds to complete the exploration and whether there will be a discovery in the end.

Time is money and the exploration process cannot be either too fast or too slow. During exploration the time machine has to be started. It should be completed in one, two, or three years. When it is finished the company should not leave the area with a blank hole drilled 10 meters from a mineable ore body not even noticing the billion-dollar deposit hiding nearby.

The exploration geologist needs total information: where can he acquire the data, where is the competitor and what is he doing, who is flying over our drill sites and whose helicopter landed on the neighboring hillside on a Sunday afternoon. The most important characteristic for an exploration geologist is to be many-sided and willing to be totally committed.

My company's exploration for Mississippi Valley Type (MVT) ore deposits became a huge endeavor. It provided an excellent opportunity to practice the geologic and economic methods of mineral exploration including its strategic and tactical planning as well as for the execution of a formidable deep drilling program. During the cold war he United States needed mineral based raw materials. The discovery of the Viburnum Trend as well as other deposits provided important metals for the country. The discovery was made exclusively with geologic methods although aeromagnetic maps played an important role in the detection of deep-seated Precambrian rocks and structures.

In 1957 the exploration target in Missouri was the discovery of new MVT ore deposits. The Kennecott exploration group comprised of three geologists and I was one of them. At times others also participated in the work. We had to work out a geologic model and an

economic model in four or five variations. During the critical time of the discovery and intensive exploration I performed all the fieldwork, supervised the diamond drilling and evaluated the results. Besides the administration the group leader was engaged in acquiring land to lease for drilling. At one time my company had 42 thousand acres of land under concession. The sedimentologist worked in the office on facies maps based on my drilling data.

The region was barely populated with small towns of 500 to 1000 people and miniature airstrips. The exploration district was comparable in size to Hungary today, similar to the Bakony Mountains; there was plenty of room and opportunity. The Precambrian igneous rocks of the interior region have variable structure, erosion surface and topography and influenced the exploration. The ore was in a transgression sequence of Cambrian marine sedimentary rocks, primarily in the nearly 100-meter-thick carbonate rocks of the Upper Cambrian Bonneterre Formation. The Bonneterre is a classic example of Cambrian seashore algal reefs with limestone and shale beds on the leeward side and dolomite and limestone on the shore side. We recognized the connection between the ore and the facies and 80 percent of our drill holes encountered mineralization.

Every imaginable geophysical and geochemical method was used at the beginning of our exploration but the surface did no reveal anything about the ore hidden in the depths. Without drilling we did not get much information; aeromagnetic maps of the buried Precambrian surface helped the most to reveal the spatial relationship of the buried ore zones. The maps of magnetic anomalies show the Precambrian rocks as hills or steep escarpments, and indicate the most promising sites for drill hole locations.

The discovery of the Viburnum Trend

The Viburnum Trend is located in Southeast Missouri and extends for about 80 kilometers south from the town of Viburnum. The ore bodies lie 330 to 500 meters deep beneath a hilly and forested surface with no discernible traces on the ground. Two companies played important roles in the discovery of the "Trend". About 80 kilometers distant from our exploration area another company, the St. Joseph Lead Company was exploring. Already in 1955-56 in great

secrecy they discovered three MVT deposits in that area. The drilling of hundreds of exploration holes was necessary to establish the existence of a new ore district in the beautiful forested region.

In 1957 three geologists of the Bear Creek-Kennecott Company, including me, found significant mineralization 80 kilometers south of Viburnum. It was realized later that the Kennecott discovery represents the southern end of the "Trend", while St. Joe's discovery at Viburnum is the northern end of it. Originally, Kennecott's southern end seemed to have an east-west trending deposit and only in 1960 did we locate the deposit that indicated the turning of the mineralization to the north. On the one hand, our drilling indicated a nearly 90-degrees turn of the mineral belt to the north and on the other hand it also indicated the complex geology of the district.

Interestingly, the discovery of the Viburnum Trend started with the finding of the ores on both ends of the Trend. After Kennecott's discovery that the east-west ore zone turns sharply to the north and may connect to the 80 kilometers distant ore zone at Viburnum, the need for exploring the region between the two ends became obvious. The Longyear diamond drill worked excellently and our core recovery approached 100 percent.

In spite of the greatest secrecy news of the discovery leaked out and by 1959-60 a dozen companies sent exploration crews to the region. The race was on for the deposits valued at billions of dollars. The drilling machines worked three shifts every day. The situation was complicated by the fact that the formation above the Bonneterre was the very flinty Potosi Formation and churn drilling had to be applied through it because the diamond drill bits wore down and the drilling process slowed down. Ore exploration required great organizational skills; after the churn drill penetrated the hard strata the diamond drill bit had to be reapplied. Everything had to work like clockwork. The company's chief geologist called every week and visited often to check out the situation.

At the end of the 1950's and the beginning of the 1960's numerous companies came to the region and drilled between the St. Joe and Kennecott deposits. By the 1960's the continuity of the mineralization along the Trend was certain and the close relationship between the different sedimentary rock types and the enrichment of the ores was established. The geologists discovered something

every day in the course of logging the diamond drill cores. In order to understand the complex geology of the district careful and detailed logging of drill cores, construction of precise maps and foresighted planning were necessary. In the later phases of the exploration several geologists contributed to the discovery of the various ore deposits along the Trend in the course of deep drilling and mining activities. The discovery of St. Joe and Kennecott is an excellent example of the strength of geologic thinking, organization and management.

The economic foundations of exploration

The Southeast Missouri Lead-Zinc District was the most productive lead, zinc, copper and silver and other metals mining region in the United States. It is the largest multi-billion dollars worth MVT district in the world. From the point of view of metals exploration the United States and Canada is one country. Ore exploration is essentially an economic activity based on scientific foundations. Science is the most important tool but is only one of many. An economic model as well as a scientific model is indispensable. The knowledge of the productivity and types of drilling equipment are necessary. During my experience the drilling machines were capable to drill in all directions thereby facilitating mining practices. The American companies demand a lot from their geologists, such as:

Confidential company data need to be kept for ten years, even if the geologist changes jobs. Bureaucratic or other hurdles cannot delay the exploration process when the plan is ready. This requires military precision and execution.

The competition needs to be surprised because if it knows every step the most important battle is lost. The force of surprise needs to be applied.

Concentrated efforts are needed for a successful outcome.

The flexibility and nimbleness of exploration is fundamental. If the scientific theory is in error, it should be changed. This is one of the hardest tasks. Many geologists stubbornly cling to their theories even if the drill hole data prove exactly the opposite.

The exploration geologist cannot be partial to his own exploration. If another location is better and there is no other choice he has to

draw the conclusion and close down the project. It cannot be stretched ad infinitum and waste time, money and energy.

When the ore is discovered a new phase begins and exploration gets a brand new face. This process involves the evaluation of the deposit and its preparation for mining. From there on the economic model directs the work of the geologist. The amount of monies to be invested multiplies. The minimum size and quality of the deposit suitable for economic mining has to be established. The size of the optimal drilling net has to be calculated. The mining model needs a correct database. The expected environmental impact of the flotation plant and the waste dump has to be analyzed.

Nothing raises the value of the stock in a mining company more than a new discovery. The yearly expenditure for exploration among the largest corporations in the world is approximately six billion dollars. On the average an ore mining company spends about five to ten percent of its annual income on exploration. Nowadays when rapid development requires ore exploration the cost of discovery of an ounce of gold is about 50 dollars. Gold is needed in the industry, for the banks and for the jewelers. In 2011 here was a great need for geologists and the discovery is economical. The situation was similar in 1956. Geologists were needed because of military preparations and the cold war. The Soviet Union spent thirty to forty percent of its gross national product on armaments while the United States spent about six to seven percent of the GDP. Moreover, in Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan the cold war became hot. The international political strife threatened with the extinction of mankind. The competing great powers invested large sums of monies in the production of armaments.

The reason for intensive geologic exploration for new lead, zinc, copper and silver deposits in Missouri was the decreased production of these metals in 1956 because the older deposits were largely mined out. Kennecott Copper Corporation already started exploration in Canada for titanium deposits. Nuclear energy and the age of the rockets demanded a lot of titanium beside uranium. Geologists were busy because the United States built ten modern naval fleets and a new air force. The ten fleets were greater than the combined naval force of the whole world. America thus took over the centuries old role of Great Britain as the leading world power.

As Germany wanted to conquer England in 1914, the Soviet Union wanted to bury America in 1956 and the universal competition of the titans began. The Russians believed themselves unconquerable as owners of the infinite and mineral-rich Siberia. The United States compensated for the Soviet advantage with alliances with Canada, Australia and South America. Large-scale geologic exploration started already in 1950 and lasted until 1992, after a 12-year hiatus it was revived again in 2004. Naturally, metals are needed not only for the production of armaments.

During the cutthroat competition geologists worked even on Sundays, there was no rest or vacation. Based on an 1890 law the United States Forest Service allowed only ten thousand acres of land to be leased by any company because at that time it was not expected that any ore deposit could be larger than that. The ownership of the land was in part federal, in part state and in part private. It was a game of chess to select land to be given up and to keep, where to acquire new concessions, and by the time we arrived at a certain place somebody else had leased it. In a short time our company needed three land men who could at the most rest five or six hours a day. By 1962 our company had 80 million tons of ore discovered and the other companies had 150 million tons all together. In a few years the known and proven ore in the Viburnum Trend reached 800 million tons and in 1964 the production started. The amortization of a 50 million-ton ore body took about two years and paid back the total cost of exploration and mining development. After that the yearly profit was nearly fifty percent.

The discovery of the Viburnum Trend is proof of the correctness and effectiveness of geologic thinking and selected exploration methods. It is somewhat similar to the discovery of the deep ore body at Recsk that is the achievement of Hungarian geologists. Mining in the Viburnum Trend proceeded with twelve production shafts and it became one of the most modern mining districts of the world. In 1977 it produced eighty-five percent of he United States' lead production. It produced 500 thousand tons of lead, 83 thousand tons of zinc, and more than 12 thousand tons of copper as well as other metals. Silver production amounted to 2.4 million troy ounces that is equivalent to about 72 tons. The exploration discovered the largest MVT deposit on Earth. Its parts comprise the Viburnum Trend, Indian Creek and the Old Lead Belt, and its productive zone is about 216 kilometers long. The total reserves are

probably on the order of 800 million tons but the precise data cannot be established without the knowledge of the individual companies' reserves.

From the geologic point of view exploration may be divided into two main phases. The first is the reconnaissance phase, and the second is the drilling phase that accompanies, proves and establishes the reserves of the ore deposit. Both facilitate a better understanding of the geologic setting and the clarification of the relationship between the ore and the host rock. If geologic proof is not established for the economic utilization of the deposit as a result of the first phase further investment should not be expended. During the duration of the exploration complete secrecy was strictly enforced because of the competition between the companies and precise data were not made available for a long time. Even the historical details of the discovery have not been made public and a detailed monograph of the district still awaits publication.

It was important that the expenses invested in the exploration and mining should be recovered with profit as soon as possible. That has happened indeed.

Three decades in American higher education

After exciting, varied and infinitely educational years as an exploration geologist I returned to the university and after four years of hard work, in 1966 I earned the highest scientific degree, the American doctorate or Ph. D.

In the meanwhile Eva completed her geologic studies in Rolla at the renowned Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy. She earned the Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 and the Master of Science degree in 1960. From 1959 she was employed in the Missouri Geological Survey as a research geologist. She has worked for 34 years at the state institute that was established in 1853 and took early retirement in 1993 as deputy director of the Geological Survey. Her research comprised petrologic and geochemical studies of the Precambrian St. Francois Mountains, an ancient mountain range exposed in Southeast Missouri. This is a distinct geologic story that only Eva could tell.

In 1964 our daughter Erika was born. I started working for the

University of Missouri on the Rolla campus at first as an Associate Professor and later as a full Professor. I retired in 1993 and we moved to Florida. I wrote several articles about higher education in the United States and gave presentations in Hungary about it. This could be the subject of another book.

The higher education in the United States has an interesting aspect in that it has an undergraduate and a graduate program. The undergraduate school gives a Bachelor of Science (B. S.) diploma. After two years the graduate school gives a Master of Science (M. S.) diploma, and after four or more years it is possible to obtain a doctoral diploma (Ph. D.). One of the requirements for a Ph. D. is the knowledge of at least two foreign languages. Basic knowledge of physics, chemistry and mathematics is also required. Consequently, after completing high school education eight to ten more years of intensive study is required to obtain a Ph. D. in a scientific field. A student who attends graduate school may receive a salary either as a teaching assistant, or as a research assistant. Furthermore, for both the Master and the Ph. D. the student must conduct independent research and the results must be reported in a thesis or a dissertation.

Geza in 1993 (retirement)

Epilogue

I am sitting on the palm tree covered sunny Florida seashore and think about Hungary. I left there fifty-four tears ago but as far as it was possible I maintained contact with my native land. I visited for the first time in 1964, eight years after I left, subsequent to a general amnesty given in 1963 to those who were not armed participants in the revolution. For years afterward I spent at least one month, sometime three months in Hungary. I presented several scientific lectures during my stays in Budapest. The Hungarian Academy of Science published my lectures about the petrology of moon rocks and about mapping by remote sensing in their proceedings.

As I reflect on the past more than half a century, I see a lot of developments and progress in Hungary. In many respects the country reached western standards. Although the European Union kept the borders drawn by Stalin, the barbed wires disappeared. From a cultural, intellectual and sometimes even from an economic standpoint the EU united the nations. The jail walls and the border fortifications collapsed. This is a good opportunity for the Hungarians. In order to benefit from it they need to develop a historical consciousness and continuity, as well as to keep in touch with Hungarians outside the present day borders. It is distasteful for me, for instance, that many middle schools take their students to the Greek seashore for holyday instead of to Transylvania. It is extremely important to value the neighboring countries, to know their language and culture, and to get along with them politically. The horrors of the two world wars cannot be ascribed to the present generations. Hungarians should be thinking in the context of the Carpathian Basin. The possibilities of industry, commerce and tourism should be used for the benefit of the people in the entire region.

In spite of the positive results, Hungary's future worries me. During the past twenty years thousands of young people trickled out of the country to the west for a better livelihood and economic reasons. At the same time the natural birth rate constantly decreases. If this tendency continues, it is only a question of a few decades and Hungary, even the tiny Trianon remnant, disappears through the trapdoor of history.

I finish my writing now. Although I did not consider it important, I penned down my memories only because of my wife's steadfast and constant encouragement; she thought there was something in them that should be preserved for posterity. She carefully prepared my manuscript for publication. I merely selected a few episodes from my life and conveyed my thoughts about my experiences.

Éva and Géza in 2013, Sarasota

Appendix

Selected poems by Géza Kisvarsányi

SHIP OF DEATH (2006)

It would be a blessing to forget, to find salvation

But it's impossible to forget the past and the war

The dreams are true

And the horror always remains…remains

The collection camp at Constanta

Was the center of the slave transport

Where at the dawn of peace hundreds,

Dragged off from the Hungarian *puszta*

Were thrown into the lime pits.

Brilliant seashore, eastern Nice

There is no human trade in the

Paradise of slaves,

The slave is not worth a farthing

On his way to the Soviet Union in chains.

Plague, cholera and malaria rage

Execution and leprosy ever accumulate

The skeletons in the lime pits

In Dante's inferno.

Victims of a new age by old age methods

Their own passing sings their tragedy

The psalm of divine redemption

To the living, the damned

And the ones on their way to death.

The last of the Christians start here

For heavenly redemption

To the wondrous empire of Marxism

For torture, a bullet

And icy destruction.

The ship of death glides on the high seas

With two thousand slaves on her top deck

Their bodies flogged and in chains

The starved and perished with thirst

Slide daily into marine graves.

Then in a scarlet dawn

Magnetic mines approach the ship

The slave masters, soldiers,

With grotesque fear on their faces

Jump into lifeboats.

A huge explosion shakes and blinds us

Breaks up the body of the ship

As a winged angel I fly high towards the heavens

And fall back like a stone into the waves.

Blood oozes from my ears and mouth

The Black Sea turns red

And the blood of one hundred bodies in the oil

Like a huge cross in the water

Bursts into flame.

Bloody arms, heads and bodies

Swim in the turbid water

Without mercy are the fire, the water and the sun

And the still living wounded

Submerge without a cry.

Only one yells in agony

Brothers, help me!

Screaming and rattling—then silence

In the wind and the waves roll

In the green sea of the blue sky.

Slowly my pain eases

I sink into the bright of day

I stretch out on a piece of board

Wondrous heaven

And lay silent and unconscious.

Twenty kilometers from the cotton port of Poti

Blessed me the Lord

Where the spiked magnetic mine

Liberated my soul

And cleansed me of my sins.

A salvage ship threw me on ashore

And I lay motionless all night

Then the guards came yelling and

Poking me with their bayonets

“Stand up you swine Hunky”.

“I’ll finish you off with a bullet”

I stood up, the earth swayed beneath my feet

Stars swirled around

And slowly I started toward my destiny

On the land of the jackals in the Caucasus.

Along the road devils and skulls

Smirked derisively at me

But I was not despaired

I still wore on my neck

The golden cross

I received from my mother.

The salty seawater even now

Gnaws at my wounded soul

Asking with a prattle

Why so much youth from

Hungarian land was lost

On the blazing, black sea.

On the stormy sea

Souls rise from the green foam

But there was never a wreath

And there never will be on the waves

From wildflowers of the Great Plain.

In the Gulag of Russia (2000)

In the great grinding machine,

In the killing fields

Of the enormous Gulag,

I was only a man

Who could not laugh and smile,

And God created man and woman.

I had divine choices,

To work to death,

To starve to death,

And by far the best

To be shot through the head,

Or to be killed slowly

By cholera, dysentery, malaria

Or mental atrophy.

The dark secret of the taiga

The giant northern forest

The death of innocent millions,

The secret of the black earth

Of the Ukraine is

The death of millions,

The murder was spreading

Like the wildfires of dry forests

From the Solovetsky Island

To the Volga region

The Caucasus, Vorkuta, Kolyma

Baikal-Amur

Across the great land

In thousands of re-education camps.

That was the great cultural competition

Of Europe

Who kills more,

The Nazis or the Communists.

By the passing of time

The Nazis were hanged,

So the Communists won

And the red flag

Became the symbol

Of civilization,

The homeland of peace-loving

Intellectuals

And the politically correct

Education of minds.

The time will come

When the flesh and soul

Will not be tortured,

When personal right and liberty

Will be sacred,

And to live is divine.

Since ancient times

Men strived against slavery

Against white slavery,

Against black slavery,

Yet, it still flourishes

As twisted mastery.

The reindeer forages in the north

Freely,

The melons and pomegranates ripen in the south

Freely,

The birds flying over the barbed wires

Freely,

The white bones of the murdered

Scattered from the Volga to Kamchatka

Freely,

The final salvation was replaced

By the final solution

Freely.

In the slave camps of the Gulag

I was only a man,

With a beautiful soul, an inner glow,

I went through the purgatory hell,

I was at the gate of the Spirit World,

The truth I can tell.

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Early versions of the book have been critically reviewed by Dr. Ágnes Huszár Várdy, professor of comparative literature, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Hungarian edition of the book was read and evaluated by Dr. Béla Várdy, professor of history, Duquesne University, Dr. Ferenc Pölöskei, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Julianna Bika, director of the Kossuth Club of Sarasota. The Hungarian edition was published in an anthology volume of earth science professionals by Dr. János Horn, in Budapest (2012).

REVIEWS

In the course of our joint researches we read many reminiscences and memoirs. Few of them summarizes in such a dramatic way the nature of human cruelty, dressed in the garb of bolshevism. This book will surely be included in future references on communist regimes demanding a hundred million victims.

Dr. Béla Várdy and

Dr. Ágnes Huszár Várdy

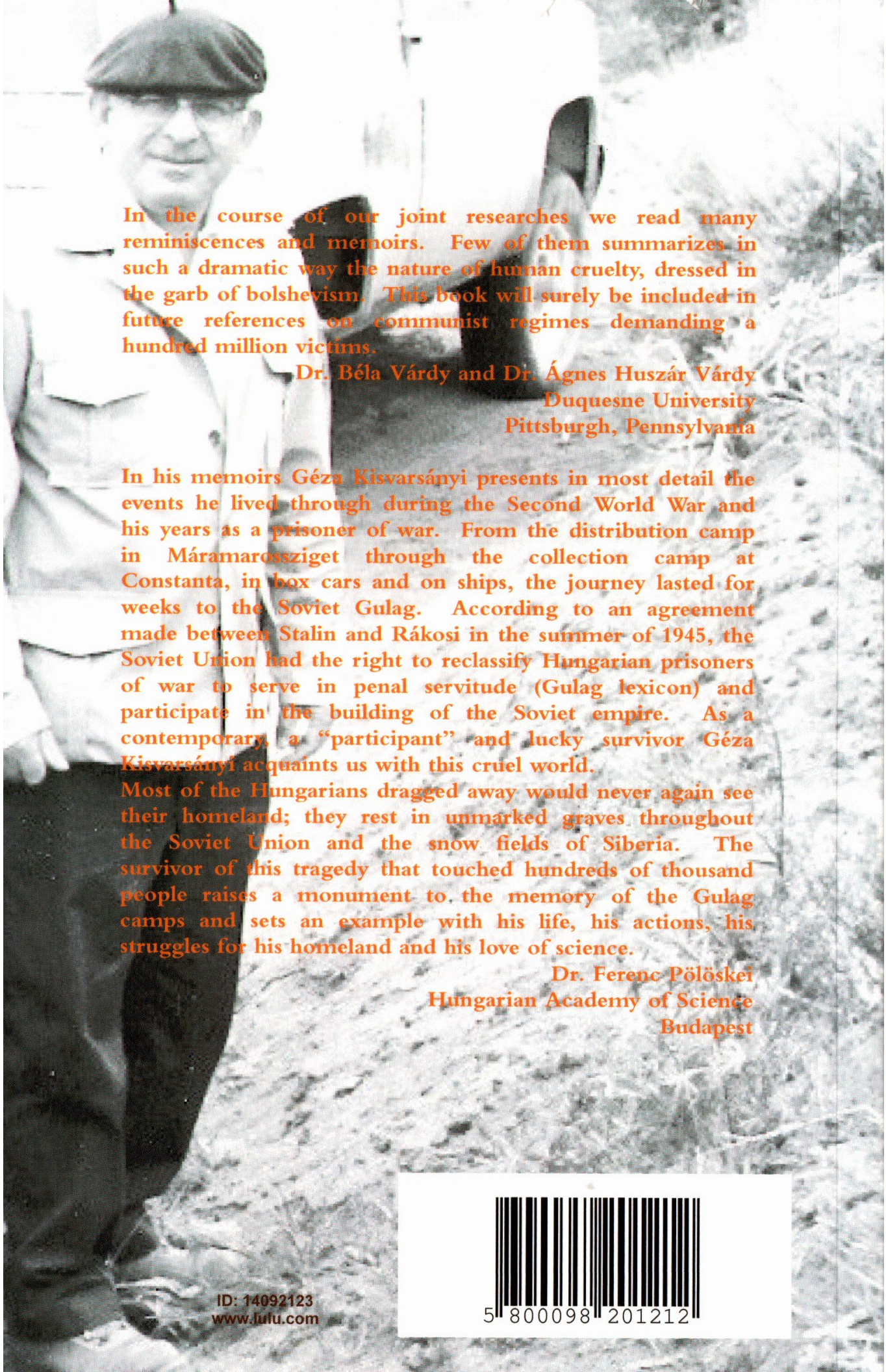
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

In his memoirs Géza Kisvarsányi presents in most detail the events he lived through during the Second World War and his years as a prisoner of war. From the distribution camp in Máramarossziget through the collection camp at Constanta, in box cars and on ships, the journey lasted for weeks to the Soviet Gulag. According to an agreement made between Stalin and Rákosi in the summer of 1945, the Soviet Union had the right to reclassify Hungarian prisoners of war to serve in penal servitude (Gulag lexicon) and participate in the building of the Soviet empire. As a contemporary, a "participant" and lucky survivor Géza Kisvarsányi acquaints us with this cruel world.

Most of the Hungarians dragged away would never again see their homeland; they rest in unmarked graves throughout the Soviet Union and the snow fields of Siberia. The survivor of this tragedy that touched hundreds of thousands of people raises a monument to the memory of the Gulag camps and sets an example with his life, his actions, his struggles for his homeland and his love of science.

Dr. Ferenc Pölöskei

Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest



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