

## **Remembering Szatmár, Remembering Himself: The Geography of Memory and Identity in Ferenc Fodor's "Szatmár Földje, Szatmár Népe, Szatmár Élete"**

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In 1952, the Hungarian, conservative-nationalist geographer Ferenc Fodor finished compiling his geographical "biography" of Szatmár-Németi (now Satu Mare) a once-important Hungarian city located in the northern reaches of the Partium, an historic region of the Kingdom of Hungary nestled between Transylvania to the east, and the Great Hungarian Plain to the west. Begun during World War II, and entitled "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete" (The Land, People, and Life of Szatmár)<sup>1</sup> this introspective, 325-page study sought to refresh memories of a lost city which, torn from the Hungarian body in 1920 by the harsh terms dictated by the Treaty of Trianon, had been briefly returned to Hungary during World War II, only to be re-attached again to Romania after the combined German-Hungarian defeat of 1945. By tracing the historical and geographical evolution of the city, and by carefully illustrating its fundamental Hungarian character, Fodor hoped to preserve a permanent place for Szatmár in the Hungarian national consciousness. "Szatmár lives within me," he wrote in the introduction, "and memories from my youth demand that I continue to feel this life, and render it perceptible to others."<sup>2</sup> The communists, he implied, might not appreciate his efforts, but future generations of moral, nation-loving (and potentially nation-building) Hungarians would.

Having spent his formative years in Szatmár, Fodor felt an "urgent need"<sup>3</sup> to testify, both as a Hungarian and as a scholar, to the profound Hungarianness of the city, and to what he saw as the interconnected geographical and historical forces which linked the land to the Hungarian people, and the Hungarian people to the land.<sup>4</sup> His education in Szatmár's Catholic gymnasium at the turn of the century had given him his "first substantial glimpse" into the complex moral, material, and spiritual make up of Hungary and its

people, and more importantly had helped to make him who he was.<sup>5</sup> Half a century later, with Szatmár lost indefinitely to its “Romanian oppressors,” and with his own health failing, Fodor felt compelled to write the city’s biography, both for his own sake, and for the sake of Hungarian geographical science, and by extension also Hungarian national memory.<sup>1</sup>

Shocked, as we shall see, by the dilapidated state of the city’s archives, and unable to trust the ethnic Hungarians of the region to protect and preserve a “correct” memory of Szatmár, Fodor felt both obligated, and also justified, to draw heavily on his own memories and adolescent experiences in order to ensure that the city would “live on” in the minds of his readers.<sup>7</sup> Fodor, in fact, presented himself as being ideally positioned to write a “biography” of Szatmár. Underlining the importance of a morally-informed subject whose ties to the land and its people served to enhance, rather than detract from, an accurate biographical study of a particular place, Fodor wrote: “Every biography stems from two fundamental sources, the life of the subject being examined, and the life of the examiner himself.” The closer the two are related, he continued, the more possible it is “to arrive at a faithful rendering of the subject being studied.” Consciously writing himself into the geo-historical narrative he was creating, Fodor concluded that “only a researcher with intimate ties to the land can faithfully construct the life of his native country.”<sup>8</sup>

Admitting that his study contained an unmistakable “subjective element,” he defended his approach, writing: “If we want to depict the living being of a country in place of its dead, dismembered body, we need to feel that life subjectively; the soul of the land must dwell within us. Only in this way can we come to know or recognize the essence of its life: only in this way can we synthesize a biography.”<sup>9</sup> Suggesting that an “outsider” could of course also “examine and dissect the character of the land, and the history of the people,” Fodor further attempted to underscore his own legitimacy as a biographer by adding that such a study would inevitably “kill the life of the land with the autopsy.”<sup>10</sup>

Fodor’s conviction that he, and perhaps only he, could breathe “Hungarian life” back into Szatmár was very much a product of his own synthetic approach to geography, an approach that he had developed under the tutelage of Count Pál Teleki and others during the Horthy period, and which ran parallel to, and no doubt was inspired by, the idea of *szellemtörténet* popularized by the interwar writings of the historian Gyula Szekfű. Championed by Count Kunó Klebelsberg, Bálint Hóman, and others as the cornerstone of neo-nationalist thinking in post-Trianon Hungary, the idea of *szellemtörténet* sought to overcome the spiritual and moral poverty of the so-called “objective” approaches of the liberal period.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, if the liberal-positivist scholarship

that dominated the Hungarian academy at the *fin-de-siècle* had been predicated, as William Everdell has put it, on “keeping the ghost’s out of one’s machines,”<sup>12</sup> then the synthetic approach was about reintegrating these subjective phantoms into Hungarian history and geography, at least to the extent that they could resurrect and enliven the de-mystified, and thus spiritually moribund, methodologies of modern Hungarian scholarship.

Beyond breathing life back into the memory of Szatmár as an “authentic” Hungarian space, Fodor’s “underground” manuscript was also part of a more personal effort to remember himself. Having been compelled to reinvent himself as a socialist geographer in the post-WWII period, and recognizing that he was nearing the end of his life, Fodor devoted much time and energy to scholarly and autobiographical projects aimed at constructing, and ultimately preserving, a “proper” memory of himself, one which would cast him in an idealized conservative-nationalist light, and which would help to counteract the charges of opportunism leveled against him as he offered his academic services to the building of a socialist Hungary. Situating his manuscript within the broader body of his published and unpublished socialist-era work, this essay concludes by suggesting ways in which we can understand his geographical biography of Szatmár as an integral component of this much larger autobiographical project.

### *Remembering Szatmár*

As it was for many Hungarians, the return of Szatmár-Németi (and indeed the rest of Transylvania) to Romania at the conclusion of World War II came as a serious blow to Fodor, and would remain a source of considerable anxiety for him until his death in 1962. Writing in 1952, Fodor lamented the fact that the reinstatement of Trianon borders between Hungary and Romania had cut researchers off from the resources and factual data needed to produce a truly comprehensive geo-historical rendering of Szatmár and its environs. With important documents left “dormant” in archives that had fallen once more into foreign hands, how would it be possible to keep the memory of the city alive?<sup>13</sup>

Though Fodor’s desperation over the uncertain fate of Szatmár no doubt peaked in the wake of communism’s rise to power during the postwar period, his concern over the fragility of Hungarian memory and, by extension, Hungarian identity, had already been triggered by a three-day trip that he took to the then newly-liberated city in July 1941. The short homecoming, in fact, was deeply unsettling. Though he was undoubtedly relieved that his spiritual

and intellectual “home town” had been returned to Hungary after twenty years of Romanian “occupation,” and though he was pleased to have had the opportunity to rekindle memories from his youth, Fodor could not shake the unnerving feeling that much had changed, and that the very Hungarianness of the city and its surrounding area had suffered untold damage in less than a generation. The speed at which Hungarian memory had begun to fade in the city appears to have startled Fodor. Having had the chance to finally go back, he discovered, much to his horror, that “home” itself was very much in the process of disappearing.

Indeed, two decades of Romanian efforts to suppress Hungarian history and culture, and to claim the region as “their own,” had certainly taken its toll.<sup>14</sup> Though Fodor would attempt to downplay the lasting impact of Romanian nation building in Szatmár, he was obviously concerned about both the nature and nationalist implications of the changes that had already taken place. The Romanian “occupiers,” he noted, had wasted no time in implementing projects aimed at giving the cityscape a “new color.”<sup>15</sup> As early as 1920, Romanian officials had begun to rename streets, buildings, and other important landmarks. According to Fodor, this process was deliberately provocative, with the new names intended as an “obvious insult to Hungarian nationalist sensibilities.” Szent István Square, for example, was renamed “Piata Trianon,” while the Panonnia Hotel was rechristened as the Dacia Hotel (and this despite “the sensational Hungarian style” of the building itself).<sup>16</sup> Business signs in Hungarian were redone in Romanian, and advertisements in Hungarian were not allowed. Even gypsy musicians were forbidden to play the traditional Hungarian *csárdás*.<sup>17</sup> So thorough was the forced transformation, then, that the city had literally ceased to “sound” Hungarian.

From Fodor’s point of view, the Romanians had stopped at nothing to reinvent the city in the two decades that it was under their control. In fact, beyond simply renaming existing buildings and spaces, city planners had embarked on an ambitious program of “urban renewal” in the interwar period, one that appeared to be directed more than anything else at wiping out “a thousand years of Hungarian history and tradition” in the city.<sup>18</sup> Identifying certain structures as uniquely “Hungarian” from an architectural point of view, Fodor lamented the fact that these structures had been targeted by the Romanians for demolition, and had been replaced (or were scheduled to be replaced) by “inferior” Romanian ones. These efforts to transform the city, he added, were haphazard at best, and only proved, as far as he was concerned, the civilizational backwardness of the Romanian people. In pointing this out, Fodor noted that many of the projects undertaken by the Romanians in the interwar period remained unfinished when the Hungarians took control of the

city in 1941. In some cases, he wrote, the Romanians had only gotten as far as destroying the buildings, and had made no apparent attempt to construct new ones in their place. Underscoring this point, he concluded that, unlike Hungarians, Romanians were “destroyers,” not “builders.”<sup>19</sup>

Responding indignantly to Romanian attempts to transform the region, Fodor reeled at the audacity of a foreign people engaged in what amounted to a harsh, and ultimately barbaric, re-coding of the land and its people.<sup>20</sup> With an unmistakable splash of bravado, Fodor initially rejected these Romanian efforts as inherently superficial, maintaining that, though these foreign occupiers could destroy Hungarian structures and change Hungarian place names on paper, they would never be able to “write” these names successfully and permanently “into the ground.” “There was no way,” he insisted, “that the Hungarian spirit of the city would be transformed into a Romanian one.”<sup>21</sup> But Fodor was perhaps less sure of himself than he would lead us to believe. His confident pronouncement that Romanian efforts to re-imagine the city would never succeed, in fact, was betrayed by a concern over the state of the city’s archives. Having traveled to Szatmár in the summer of 1941 to collect material for his comprehensive geographical study of the city, Fodor was appalled to find boxes of irreplaceable maps and documents “mouldering away on dusty shelves” in archives that Hungarians had not had access to for some years.<sup>22</sup> This obviously troubled Fodor. Indeed, without archival sources — without these national narratives and symbolic representations of the land — there was no enduring memory; no Hungarian past, and thus no Hungarian present or future.

Fodor’s concern over the state of the documents as he found them in 1941 was exacerbated not only by the geo-political realities of postwar east central Europe (and in particular by the silence imposed by the communists over the Trianon question), but also by the questionable loyalties of the Hungarians left in the city. Indeed, despite his obvious disdain for the Romanians, a people he refers to throughout the manuscript as barbaric and uncivilized, he is careful to point out that the real blame for the disappearance of Hungarian memory quite likely lay with the Hungarians themselves. Fitting his own narrative into the critical-analytical framework laid out by Szekfű in *Három Nemzedék*, Fodor devotes much space to dissecting the history of Szatmár’s moral and spiritual decline during the long nineteenth century, pointing to the decadent liberalism of the post-1867 period as a regrettable, but in retrospect inevitable, precursor to the “treacherous ethnic Hungarian opportunism” of the interwar period. Though he praised, on the one hand, the idea of an undefeated Hungarian spirit, he was also critical of many of those who remained in Szatmár after Trianon for their apparent willingness to assimilate

and even collaborate with their Romanian “occupiers.”<sup>23</sup> Such a state of affairs, he argued, did not bode well for the future of Szatmár as a historical, or even spiritual, Hungarian space.

Indeed, despite Fodor’s conviction that communism would not last forever, and that Hungary would once again be given the opportunity to return to its proper Christian-nationalist roots, there is a distinctly desperate quality evident in his work; a melancholic, even elegiac element that betrays Fodor’s own doubts about the possible rehabilitation of the city (and with it the nation) in the future. Treacherous Hungarian elements, after all, had done much to undermine the Hungarianness of the city, while Romanian efforts to re-code the region had already transformed the landscape, if only in a superficial way. Even the archives — those all-important reservoirs of national memory — were in danger of disappearing forever. Perhaps, then, Fodor offered his biography of Szatmár not so much as a template for the re-building of a reunified Hungary, but as a time capsule, or “gift,” to be bestowed upon future generations of Hungarians so that they might properly “mourn” what had been lost to the nation.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps, in the final analysis, this is all that he could do. Having devoted himself to what historian Susan Crane has described as “the preservation of what would otherwise be lost both mentally and materially,” Fodor could at least ensure that Szatmár, and the region as a whole, would be remembered “properly” by future generations.

As limited as this form of remembering may have been in practical nationalist terms, it was by no means inconsequential in an ontological sense. As the literary scholar Aaron Beaver has pointed out in a recent essay, the type of mournful, elegiac writing that runs through Fodor’s manuscript has profound existential implications. Drawing on the ontological notion of being-for-others that Jean-Paul Sartre develops in *Being and Nothingness*, Beaver argues that the elegy (and Fodor’s work can certainly be read in this way) does more than simply commemorate the object of one’s memory. In remembering what has been lost, the elegy quite literally constitutes, and thus preserves, this selfsame object. In the absence of elegiac memory, he argues, the dead “not only cease to exist, but in a very real sense *never existed at all*.”<sup>25</sup> For Fodor, then, the biography of his “home city” didn’t simply ensure that the city would be remembered. In a profoundly solipsistic way, it guaranteed the city’s very existence for Hungarians — past, present, and future.

### *Remembering Himself*

Though Fodor’s biography of Szatmár was obviously intended as an under-

ground, socialist-era vehicle for the preservation of conservative-nationalist memory, it was also intended as a vehicle for the remembering of himself. Having been stripped of his teaching position and his academic credentials by the postwar communist regime, Fodor struggled until his death in 1962 to reinvent himself as a socialist geographer. Not unlike Czesław Miłosz's "Alpha" intellectual outlined in *The Captive Mind*, Fodor found himself in a position whereby a scholarly "conversion" to socialism was the only way to remain relevant as an intellectual.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps more importantly, it was the only way he could continue to make a life for himself and his family as an academic. Such a conversion was by no means easy for Fodor from a moral or personal point of view, as it meant opening himself up to charges of opportunism. This no doubt weighed heavily on him, and must be taken into consideration when we analyze the underlying meaning of underground socialist-era manuscripts like "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete." As a time capsule, this study served not only to preserve the memory of the city and the nation, but also to defend Fodor against those who might criticize him of deviating from his conservative-nationalist values, and of betraying Hungary and its people.

The careful packaging of his work, therefore, one in which nation, city, and self were intimately linked, provides a useful glimpse into the important connection that exists between memory and personal identity, or, more accurately, the act of remembering and the act of identifying oneself with a carefully selected set of narratives, images, objects, and even physical spaces. As Paul Ricoeur argues in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, the act of remembering something other than oneself is intimately tied to one's perception of self—to how one sees oneself in the present, and to how this self-image is projected into the future. Connecting this to his conceptualization of "pragmatic" or "active" memory as being creative in a fundamentally phenomenological sense, Ricoeur suggests that, in remembering an object (or, in Fodor's case, an entire city), one remembers oneself.<sup>27</sup>

This self-constructing or autobiographical function of memory outlined by Ricoeur was obviously present in Fodor's socialist-era underground work, and especially in his biography of Szatmár. Particularly relevant in this light is how Fodor periodizes, and then analyzes, the modern era from the beginning of the nineteenth century to World War II. Dividing this era into three periods (namely Christian conservatism, 1800-1867; degenerate "Jewish" liberalism, 1867-1920; and Romanian barbarism, 1920-1939), Fodor suggests how Szatmár was first built into a modern but morally and culturally conservative city by a string of visionary bishops, and then how this "brilliant, shining" example of Hungarian morality and industriousness slowly decayed

between 1867 and the First World War, a period of decadent liberalism and aggressive assimilationist policies which only served to weaken, rather than strengthen, the nation.<sup>28</sup> Though he admits that this period brought unprecedented growth and economic prosperity to Szatmár, he laments the unprincipled and immoral way in which the process of modernization was carried out, and is even more critical of the adverse, degenerative impact that the wholesale “Magyarization” of ethnic minorities had on the city socially and culturally. Weakened by these factors, the city’s Hungarian citizens faced a difficult struggle against the oppressive and ultimately crippling “occupation” by the Romanians during the interwar period.

Layering and then analyzing the history of Szatmár in this way allowed Fodor to do two things. First, it provided him with an opportunity to identify an authentic Hungarian core, one which was at once Catholic, morally conservative, and fiercely patriotic, especially when provoked. The real heroes of Fodor’s narrative are undoubtedly the members of this ethnic body, Christian men and women (but primarily clergymen, teachers, and scholars) who functioned as the true builders of modern Hungary in the first half of the nineteenth century, and who went on to serve as its principal defenders during the subsequent periods of internal decline and foreign occupation. Second, it allowed him to position himself, albeit indirectly, within this ethnic core, and to tie his own identity as a conservative-nationalist Hungarian to the self-image of this group. When read against other unpublished autobiographical sources, it becomes readily apparent that he saw himself as being part of an heroic Hungarian vanguard who, even when they were “barricaded” behind the gates of their schools and churches, managed to hold back the forces of degeneration and tyranny. In the introduction to yet another lengthy underground study “A magyar lét földrajza,” for example, and also in a number of autobiographical sketches written at different points in his life, Fodor referred to his pedagogical work, his scholarship, and his social activism as constituting part of a moral defence for Hungary. When he wrote, therefore, that “it was from behind the gates of Szatmár’s Christian schools, churches, and other institutions that the rootless and unpatriotic spirit of the liberal period was held at bay,” it is easy to see how Fodor, who attended a Catholic gymnasium in Szatmár, and who later taught in Catholic schools, might have seen himself as being part of this line of nationalist defence.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Fodor refers to Szatmár as his home city, even though he was not born there, provides further insight into the autobiographical elements that run through his study. Fodor was born, in fact, in Tenke (now Tinca), a small village roughly 50 km from Szatmár, and only moved from there to this much larger regional centre as a boy of ten to begin his studies as a gymnasi-



um student. Given that a good number of his formative years were spent in Szatmár, it is perhaps understandable that he would regard it, rather than Tenke, as “home.” As he himself admits, “one’s home is not necessarily where one was born, but where one gains self consciousness, an awareness of one’s purpose in life, and a sense of one’s relationship to the outside world. Szatmár is my spiritual and intellectual homeland.”<sup>30</sup> Again, when read against other unpublished autobiographical material, it becomes clear that Szatmár was not simply a place in which he became aware of himself, but rather was a place where he began to imagine or invent himself—as a scholar, as a man, and as a nationalist.<sup>31</sup> Szatmár was significant because it marked his first attempt to “code” himself, to lay down roots, and to begin his lifelong struggle to distance himself from his impoverished, provincial, working-class origin in Tenke. Though he would refer back to Tenke with fondness (especially during the communist period, when it was politically astute for him to do so), Szatmár was his true hometown, however imagined it may have been, and served as a familiar symbolic space in which he could find meaning and solace, even under communism.

Though central to the expression and preservation of his own sense of self, Fodor’s scholarly work alone was by no means sufficient to satisfy the autobiographical impulse which had become so acute during the war years. Even the detailed and ethnographically-informed “Élettörténet” (Life History) that he had begun writing in January 1941 was insufficient, especially in light of his experiences in Szatmár in the summer of that same year. Recognizing the fragility of narratives unsupported by factual evidence, Fodor began collecting and organizing documents, letters, photographs, and other keepsakes to support, and even illustrate, the life narrative that he was so desperate to write, and ultimately bequeath to the future. His own identity and reputation had often come under attack during his lifetime, and he certainly feared what would happen after his death, an event that he felt was close at hand. If his “narrative of self” was to have any staying power, therefore, it would need to be as airtight and “ironclad” as possible.<sup>32</sup>

This need to provide an objective grounding for his life story manifested itself most obviously in a series of twenty-one scrapbooks that he began assembling sometime between the summer of 1941 and the end of the war in 1945. Though the bulk of the project appears to have been completed after the war, and perhaps even during the communist period, the project itself was, at least at the outset, an obvious response to the profound sense of existential destabilization, and at times hopelessness, that Fodor felt during the war.<sup>33</sup> Though devoid of excessive descriptions, the documents and photographs that he included in his scrapbooks were nevertheless carefully organized so as to

tell a particular story, one that would supplement, and help solidify, other purely textual narratives of self. The documents and images in Fodor's scrapbooks, in fact, overlapped and intersected with each other to create an integrated network of meaning; a discursive and symbolic nexus intended to establish a cohesive personal narrative by dispelling the forces of fragmentation and dissolution that had plagued him throughout his life. Assembled into a meaningful, organic totality, Fodor no doubt hoped that these scrapbooks would contribute to the "accurate" telling, and re-telling, of his life story.

Organized more or less chronologically and thematically, the scrapbooks trace Fodor's development through time, from his birth in Tenke in 1887, to his old age in Budapest in the late 1950s. Focusing either on a particular period of his life, or on a particular aspect of his nation-building work (his boy scout activities, for example, or his pedagogical work in Pécs and Budapest during the war), the scrapbooks rely on carefully crafted montages and strategically positioned documents and photographs to construct a "factually-based" narrative of Fodor's personal history. Much like the totalizing narrative of Szatmár-Németi constructed in "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete" — one which gave voice to a "timeless" Magyar identity evolving teleologically over time — the life story that emerges from this process of strategic positioning and careful layering is one of a creative, moral, and fundamentally autonomous subject linked organically and meaningfully to his own past, and to his own familial and geographical roots.<sup>34</sup>

As Hayden White has argued, autobiography itself is "the product of a particular emplotment imposed on the facts of an individual's life."<sup>35</sup> Paul Ricoeur takes this idea a bit further, arguing that emplotment is what establishes the transition from the mere recounting of a life story to its explanation.<sup>36</sup> The first of Fodor's twenty-one scrapbooks provides an excellent illustration of this idea of "emplotment" suggested by White and developed by Ricoeur. Though the organization of the photos and documents is not chronologically consistent, the self-conscious narrative that Fodor attempted to construct is certainly evident. Answering questions of where he was from, and, more importantly, of what he had become in the years leading up to the beginning of World War II, Fodor intended this first scrapbook to serve as an introduction to, and overview of, his life, at least up to 1940-41. Having established in the opening few pages his "authentic" village roots, Fodor then showed how he shaped this raw material into a fully-developed, productive, and ultimately moral masculine self. Highlighting scholarly successes both as a gymnasium student in Szatmár, and then as a university student in Budapest, Fodor traced the trajectory of his academic career to the end of the 1930s.

His inclusion at the end of this first scrapbook of congratulatory letters written by officials at the Ministry of Religion and Education in 1938 and 1939 suggest a continuity between his early training, and his later work for the nation. As it would be in each of the following scrapbooks, the focus here was very much on himself, rather than his family. The family, in fact, when it was represented, merely served as a passive backdrop against which his own identity as a scholarly Christian male was fashioned.

Of course, Fodor could not help but include images which no doubt reminded him of the more distressing and unpleasant events of his life. Photos of his mother's grave, for example, and of his son Zoli who died suddenly and tragically in 1936 at the age of twenty, documented what had been lost to him over the course of his life. And yet, despite the painful, and even negative memories, that Fodor included in this and other scrapbooks — memories which pointed to the fragility of his identity, and to failures and disappointments both major and minor — the project as a whole tended to gloss over his lifelong struggle against melancholy, dissolution, and disappointment. Focusing instead on his personal achievements, and especially on his academic successes, Fodor's scrapbooks projected an idealized image of a unified and triumphant self. Much like his synthetic geographies, and especially his underground socialist-era work, his scrapbooks functioned as a fetish of sorts, an object of obvious symbolic import through which he could resolve his lingering sense of ontological incompleteness and existential anxiety. Though intended primarily for his descendants, the scrapbooks also offered Fodor a sense of solace and meaning during otherwise difficult and uncertain times.

Beyond being embodied in his personal papers and unpublished, "underground" nationalist geographies, the autobiographical impulse was also reflected in his published socialist-era scholarship, especially in biographical and quasi-biographical studies which focused on the lives and work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hungarian geographers and scientists. His *Magyar Vízimérnököknek a Tisza-völgyben* (Hungarian hydrological engineers of the Tisza Valley), which won an award from the Academy of Sciences in 1955, and was published in 1957, was an obvious example of this, especially given the emphasis Fodor placed on the "heroic" nation-building work of the conservative-nationalist icon Count István Széchenyi. Even more telling in this respect was his 1953 study of the life and work of Antal Balla, an important though little-known eighteenth-century Hungarian cartographer and natural scientist who, much like Fodor, had cultivated other educated gentlemanly interests such as archaeology, music, and art alongside his scholarly work. Granted, the narrative of this short work is for the most part mechanical and uninspiring, focused as it is on the more technical aspects of Balla's

cartographical and scientific endeavours. The brief glimpses that he provided into Balla's personal life, however, combined with the praise that he lavished on the more creative, artistic side of his work suggests that Fodor projected his own self-image onto the object of his study. The image of himself that he constructed in his own scrapbooks, in fact, runs parallel in many ways with the image that he conveyed of Balla. Foregrounding the nation-building importance of his scholarly work, Fodor nevertheless integrated images and texts documenting not only his talents as an artist, photographer, and musician, but also his skills and achievements as a botanist and gentleman adventurer. Water colours of birds and landscapes that he painted were included in a number of his scrapbooks, for example, as were references to public performances he gave playing the *tárogató*, or shawm (a double-reed instrument not unlike an oboe). Textual accounts and photographs of his many scientific and touristic excursions, moreover, reflected the self-image of a man who saw himself as being deeply connected to the land through both his work and his passionate love of all things natural.

A montage of three photographs taken in 1912 and mounted in book four of his scrapbooks speaks volumes to the way that Fodor regarded himself, and how he wanted to be remembered. Taken within a year of his arrival at his first teaching post in the provincial town of Karánsebes (Caransebeş), the pictures capture a number of the more important, interconnected aspects of his life which he regarded as being integral to his identity and sense of self. At the top of the page is a photograph of Fodor posed with his *tárogató*. He is outside, amidst nature, his weight on his left leg, a cape strung over his shoulders. He appears to be playing the instrument, though the way he is looking at the camera suggests that the photograph was definitely staged. The caption reads simply: "1912, spring." In the middle of the page is a photograph of the room which served as Fodor's study in Karánsebes. As in so many other pictures of his living and work spaces that he included in his scrapbooks, his desk is fore-grounded. The caption: "my bachelor apartment." On the bottom of the page is a photograph of Fodor obviously dressed for an excursion. He is wearing a Bavarian-style hat, a cape, and leather boots which come up to just above the calf. He is sitting at the base of a tree on one of its exposed roots. In his hand is a walking stick, and on his knee a knapsack. The photographer is slightly below him, giving the image itself an unmistakably noble and majestic air. The caption: "1912."<sup>37</sup>

This sense of nobility and gentlemanly accomplishment is certainly present in his study of Balla. Indeed, Fodor no doubt saw a kindred spirit in Balla, a man motivated not only by the pursuit of science and the love of his country, but also by the beauty and wonder of nature. Balla, he writes, was an

artist rather than a mere technician, a highly-cultured scholar who illustrated his maps with intricate drawings of Hungarian flora, and who inundated his work with mythical and religious symbolism. “It was only after him,” Fodor assures us, “that the profession [of cartography] became a dry [technical] craft.”<sup>38</sup>

Such a statement ultimately says as much about the nature of scholarship under communism as it does about the state of Hungarian cartography at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In making this claim, Fodor drew attention to his own situation, and to the situation of others who, like him, were compelled to become mere political functionaries, bending their scholarship to the pragmatic demands of socialist state-building. By praising Balla’s maps and their artistic, humanistic content, and by further voicing his contempt for the functional yet unimaginative cartography which followed in his wake, Fodor was suggesting — if only implicitly — that he would prefer to be remembered as a creative, free-thinking scholar, rather than as a communist-era drone.

The fear, in fact, that he would not be remembered “correctly,” or that he would be forgotten altogether after his death, underlines Fodor’s biography of Balla as much as it does his biography of Szatmár. In a way very similar to his anxiety that Szatmár would be remembered correctly, if at all, his lament that Balla’s name had “disappeared without a trace from Hungarian intellectual history,” and that German-speaking scholars had even attributed some of his scholarly achievements to Austrian scientists, blends with Fodor’s own anxiety that he himself would eventually be buried and forgotten by a regime guided by a foreign political and ideological agenda. In preserving the memory of a city like Szatmár, or an important Hungarian intellectual like Balla, he was, if only by proxy, also preserving the memory of himself.

## **Appendix**

### **Excerpts from “Szatmár’s földje...”**

[Author’s notes:] The following passages are from Fodor’s work, “Szatmár’s földje,...” They are reproduced here in English to illustrate the tone and contents of his manuscript. The first part has been selected from his descrip-

tions of Szatmár's history, the second from his account of the city's and its inhabitants' fate under Romanian rule from 1919 to 1940. The passages were translated into English by Nándor Dreisziger in consultation with the author of this paper.

## **Part 1**

### The Settlement of Szatmár-Németi and its Life in the Middle Ages

According to the all-knowing Anonymus, Szatmár pre-dates the [Hungarian] conquest. He has to tell of course how the Hungarians took the city. His story, in an old-fashioned translation, goes like this:

It was decreed that Tass, the father of Lehel, and Zábók, the son of Elend, from whom descended the Csakij clan, as well as Horka's father Töhötöm, and the grandfather of Gyul and Zombor, the ancestor of the Maglót clan, marched against Mén Marót. With their army divided into two, they go to the fort of Zothmár, which they took after a three-day siege. On the fourth day they entered the fort and captured Mén Marót's soldiers, put them into chains, and tossed them into the deep dark dungeons. They also took the sons of the inhabitants hostage and left the fort manned by their own soldiers and set out in the direction of Mezes....

This is how Anonymus described the events. We now know that he projected the geographic and political conditions of his own age back to the times of the conquest.

The fact that Kér, Gyarmat and Szatmárnémeti were located on islands free from the floods means that the grasslands that in the 10<sup>th</sup> century stretched from Csap along the banks of the Tisza continued in the direction of Transylvania along the banks of the Szamos. These islands served as location for the eastern defence works of the region. Szatmár retained such a function even after the flood-free area of the grasslands was enlarged. Hydrography determined the location of the royal fortresses such as Szatmár. My own researches have established the location of the earliest grasslands of this region, they were east of the Nyírség and alongside the Szamos.... A third such grassland, one that stretched from Huszt through Várfalu to Erdőszáda, was part of the lands occupied by the conquerors and is known as the Szamos-

háta.

Ferenc Maksai came to similar conclusions when he suggested that the eastern frontier of the lands occupied during the conquest was at the Láp and that the Szamos watershed was taken over only in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, a short distance beyond Szatmárnémeti. The eastern frontiers of the Szamos drainage system up to the Tur creek, was occupied only in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

This suggests, as Maksai argues, that in the lower valley of the Szamos, with the exception of Kér and Gyarmat, all along the river we find royal possessions, in addition to Szatmár and Németi, Olaszi, Jánosi, Csenger, Óvári, Solymos, Dob, Recsege, etc. East of Szatmár in the Szamos valley we find only a few villages that had been in the possession of the clans of the conquerors, namely Krassó, Kolcs, Lápos and the estates of the Koplony clan, and Romád of the Gutkeled, and in the direction of south, Erdőd of the Hontpázmánys. Among these Krassó dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Lápos from the early 13<sup>th</sup>, Erdőd from the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, that is all of them are late settlements and definitely post-date Szatmár. From all this it becomes clear that Szatmár began as a frontier post. The question then is when and by whom it was established? But it is clear that it is not a fort that pre-dates the conquest.

In this connection let us consider first the theories of János Karácsonyi. He says that by 1230 the fort had been definitely established, but he considers the claim that by 1236 it was a royal city to be false. He believes that king St. Stephen's victory over the Bulgarian ruler Kean in 1020 resulted in the region being made royal property. In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century some places in the Szamos region (Hermenszeg, Angyalos) were settled by Flemish or Walloon immigrants. The name of Szatmár was for a long time Szotmár (Karácsonyi derives the name from that of one of these settlers). The name was changed to Szatmár only around 1400. In 1411 the settlement of St. Egyed was part of the town. The use of this name points to the Walloons among whom the worship of this saint was common, according to Karácsonyi.

In Szatmár's neighbourhood there was once a village named Gelyénes (according to old ways of spelling Gylanus, Gyleanus, Kelyanus). This village must have been named after Saint Kilianus who was a respected saint in the Rhine Valley. Southwest of Szatmár could be found the village of Hédre which got its name from a settler named Hédrech (Chudruch) who was of Germanic descent. All this points to the fact that the region of Szatmár was settled by Germans.

The earthen fortifications in the bend of the Szamos must have been built when King Béla had to defend himself from the claimant to his throne, Boris of Kiev. From these beginnings started the fort of Szatmár. It became a

county seat when the *ispán* [in Latin *comes*] was transferred here from Sárvár. These are the theories of Karácsonyi, but they don't stand up in the light of evidence produced later.

According to Maksai the above speculations are wrong. He believes that Szatmár as a settlement and as a county seat was established during the reign of St. Stephen. The presence of any Germans here is not mentioned in any documents before 1216. The residents of the settlement around the fort were Hungarians. Szatmár's origins are doubtless Hungarian. Its name comes from the Turkic name of its first *ispán*. Contrary to the claim of Anonymus, the settlement cannot be older than the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Maksai also points out that all the villages around this place were Hungarian settlements. They were all possessions of the original Magyar clans, except for the royal estates. Dara was the possession of the Csák clan, established no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Pete belonged to the Gutkeleds and was a pre-12<sup>th</sup> century settlement. Daroc was a royal village dating from before 1100. Lázári belonged to the Káta clan and dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. This clan also owned Homok, which dates from the early 1200s. Vásári at first belonged to the Káta clan; it is one of the oldest settlements of the region. Batiz is probably a royal establishment that later belonged to the Hontpázmány family. They owned Szentmárton also, a pre-13<sup>th</sup> century settlement. Vértes belonged to the Kalony clan and was founded between 1234 and 1241. The neighbouring village of Gelényes, which later was abandoned, dated from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century....

These communities surrounded Szatmár and they were undoubtedly Magyar settlements. There is also no doubt that Szatmár pre-dated all of them.

In conclusion, according to the best scholarly opinion, Szatmár was a Hungarian settlement from the age of St. Stephen.

Maksai acknowledges that the Hungarians of the region assimilated some Slavic populations. In this region about fifteen Slav villages existed in the Middle Ages, but of these only two pre-dated the conquest. The Slavs assimilated rapidly. In the Middle Ages there was no trace of the Vlachs [the ancestors of the Romanians –ed.] in this region. In the late Middle Ages only Berend and Bezence had any such populations, as well as the no longer existing village of Medgyes. This is as close as the Vlachs came to Szatmár.

Let us now consider the origins of Németi and German settlement in the region.

Karácsonyi thinks it possible that Németi was founded by settlers who arrived in the country with Queen Gizella, the wife of King Stephen, but he thinks they settled elsewhere first and only later moved here. Maksai also believes that Németi's population was originally German but he cannot establish the time of the settlement's foundation. There are no documents



relating to the Germans there prior to 1216. In all probability the settlement was established in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The saying that the settlers came with royalty is only a popular myth. Perhaps they arrived in various stages. Németi could not have been established before Szatmár was....

## **Part 2**

### Szatmárnémeti as Satu Mare.

In the First World War the national strength of the Hungarian nation was tragically sapped. The country could not hold on to its frontier regions and not even the periphery of its very heartland. The glorious resistance by the Székely division ended precisely at Szatmár. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 1919, on Good Friday, the division's machine guns were still standing on Deák Square, but because they were surrounded on one side by the Reds (vörösök) and the other by the Romanians (oláhok), they had to retreat from there. They were soon followed by the Romanians who entered the town with fixed bayonets. Thanks to the Székely division communist rule in Szatmár lasted only a few weeks, and as a result could do little damage. But then came, quite unexpectedly, another barbaric rule. Szatmár became Satu Mare and remained such for 21 years, 4 months and 15 days.... [later in his manuscript Fodor writes 19 years, 5 months and 14 days].

It is difficult to understand how Szatmár became Satu Mare. In its entire history the city was never known by that name. The name Satu Mare was put in writing first in 1768, by mistake by a Hungarian man, József Zanathy, the justice of the peace, an amateur philologist. When the Romanians renamed city, they could hardly have been aware of that. So, with typical Romanian rationale, they decided on Satu Mare (big village). The Romanians no doubt were aware that this would present a problem, as places with such name abound in Romania which gives rise to confusion. For this reason in 1922 the official state gazetteer of Romania named the city simply as "Satmar". At the same time the city itself requested that this name be used as the name Satu Mare only created misunderstandings and did not do justice to the fact that it is a city. In 1923 Romania's Department of Interior decreed that the city should be known as Satmar, but the government institute in charge of municipalities did not agree to this and insisted on the name Satu Mare.... At

the same time the county, which was not under the jurisdiction of this institution, was named Satmar! In 1935, the Romanian Academy requested that the city's name be changed to Satmar, but this too was rejected.

We don't want to deal with the political history of Romanian occupation but with our city's evolution. We cannot even tell all the sufferings and injustices that the Magyar inhabitants of this ancient city had to endure during two decades. Besides, this was a fate that it shared with every city of Transylvania — everything happened here that happened elsewhere... for the purposes of breaking the Hungarian spirit. We will enumerate only the measures that played a role in the city's evolution. A pivotal event was the fact that the city lost its ability to administer itself. For many years there was no longer an elected body to enact bylaws, only a special committee appointed by the [central government]. In 1934 even this apparent measure of self-government was taken away, the government deciding that the decisions of this special committee should be approved by the city's [also appointed] administrator, to make them binding. In any case the city's fate became a political football. The possibilities of developing the city were greatly limited by the fact that the officials of the city kept changing with the changing fortunes of the parties that ruled the country. That is, long-term plans for the city's development could not be implemented. In every decision the interests of a certain political party played a predominant role. Since the decisions of a particular government could usually not be implemented during the term of that government, the next government failed to carry out or actually nixed the pervious administration's plans. Szatmár was awarded a number of state institutions, but most of them on paper only since before the directive to this end could be implemented the government responsible was removed from power. To give an example, in 1920 Szatmár received the headquarters of the no. 4 railway district, but this office never came to the city. Only a railway inspectors' office was brought to the city, but in 1939 it was moved elsewhere.

A most important administrative and political move happened during the city's two decades long Romanian occupation when in 1925 the government in Bucharest moved the county seat here. [Prior to 1920] the city had waged a long struggle for this to happen but Hungary's government ignored these aspirations.... Nevertheless, the possibility always existed that this decision of the [Romanian] government was not final and that the county seat would be transferred to Nagybánya. The struggle between the two cities went on for years when finally the county seat was established in Szatmár. The county administration's various departments were located in the Hotel Pannonia [that had been renamed Hotel Dacia] and in the City Hall. In the end Nagybánya was transferred to [another] county....

A few administrative offices [related to agriculture, commerce, etc.] were established in the city. The situation of these was not stable. There were always plans to move one or the other somewhere else. The life of the city was characterised by the fact that nothing was steady, everything was insecure, everything was in a state of flux... as party politics determined all decisions, everything was subordinated to it.

The city almost lost Szatmárhegy, as it was completely neglected. In 1934 the people of [this city district] seriously wanted to separate from Szatmár....

Among the city fathers... we often find renegade Hungarians; they had names such as Chereches [Kerekes], Pogacias [Pogácsás],... At other times newcomers became mayors; for example, the man who was appointed mayor in 1938 had lived in Szatmár only for two years. Only [later] did international events elsewhere in Europe have an impact and a Hungarian man, István Antal, was appointed deputy-mayor. It often happened that when a mayor or city perfect was replaced, the new government brought charges of corruption against him....

A great blow was received by the city in 1938 when it was demoted to the rank of a town, with the excuse that its population had fallen below 50,000. This, despite the fact that in 1920 the city's population was estimated to be 58,000, and in 1930, 51,000....

Even though throughout the entire period of Romanian rule there was never a municipal election in the city, the municipal voters' list was maintained. Just how this was done is illustrated by the fact that in January of 1940 the number of eligible voters was said to be 4,134!

In 1935 Szatmárhegy again tried to separate from the city, i.e. from the town of Satu Mare.... In December of 1938 all men of 30 and over were allowed to vote on whether they wanted to separate. 20 voted yes as opposed to 218 who voted no.

The special committees were appointed to administer the city so that the Hungarian majority could not use its numerical weight to control its own destiny, and to make sure that it would be at the mercy of the [city's] Romanian minority. By 1938 the result of this was that out of the 76 municipal officials 59 were Romanians, i.e. 77.6%, this at a time when, even according to [Romanian] statistics, out of the city's total population only 27.1% spoke Romanian....

[Translator's note: Fodor next begins to enumerate the incidents that resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of Szatmár's people for real or alleged pro-Hungarian activities.]

Already in 1921 four of Szatmár's inhabitants became victims of a

show trial: Kamil Irányi (a Lutheran minister), János Szücs (a Lázárite Roman Catholic priest), Ilona Varga and János Varga. In 1922, Irányi received a five-and-a-half year jail sentence, as did Szerafin P. Szabó (a Franciscan priest) and Imre Sándor. In 1933 three students [accused of anti-Trianon agitation] were banned from all the schools of the country.

From 1932 on, the city was terrorized by the so-called “anti-revisionists”. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March that year these people destroyed the premises of the paper *Szatmári Ujság* (Szatmár newspaper) and beat up its editor. From this time on Szatmár’s Hungarians would dread the gatherings of these people....

In December of 1938 [the Romanian authorities] arrested the former notary public István Csengery for [alleged] revisionist contacts and spying. In January of 1939 two young men, István Zagyva and István Antal were arrested on the ground that they were trying to establish a [secret] Hungarian armed unit. In 1937 the Reformed minister of Szatmárhegy was interned because he walked out of his church before the singing of the Romanian anthem was finished.

Unfortunately, the various Romanian political parties were always able to divide Hungarians between themselves and Hungarian political parties. Only at the end of the 1930s could the Hungarians be rallied around an organization called Magyar Népközösség (Hungarian People’s Bloc), but this was only the Hungarian version of a Romanian right-wing movement....

The Romanians carried their chauvinism so far as to pass a decree in 1940 that compelled people attending a theatre or movie production to not leave before the singing of the anthem of the Romanian royal house was finished. Whoever disobeyed this edict was immediately arrested on grounds of being disrespectful to the sovereign....

[end of the appendix]

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The correct Hungarian name for Fodor's "hometown" is actually Szatmár--Németi, a city which was created in the eighteenth century by the amalgamation of the "sister cities" Szatmár and Németi. In spite of this, Fodor insists on referring to the city after the amalgamation almost exclusively as Szatmár. This is potentially confusing, since Szatmár is also the name of the county in which Szatmár-Németi was historically located. His constant use of "Szatmár" as the name of the city, however, is

by no means insignificant. Szatmár was developed as a fortified position, and was inhabited from the beginning, or so Fodor argues, predominantly by Magyars, or ethnic Hungarians. Németi, by contrast, was founded and was for centuries populated primarily by Germans, and served as a commercial centre rather than as a defensive position. It played, in many ways, a decadent, capitalist "Pest" to Szatmár's morally-stable "Buda," and was dependent on the latter for its safety and security (at least this is how Fodor portrays it).

<sup>2</sup> Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtár Kézirattára (MTAKK) Ms 10.740/1, Ferenc Fodor, "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete" (Budapest, 1954), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> See also MTAKK Ms 10.739/1./1-2, Ferenc Fodor, "A magyar lét földrajza" (Budapest, 1945).

<sup>5</sup> Reflecting on his schooling, Fodor would later write that he had been politicized from a very young age. See Magyar Vizügyi Múzeum Dokumentációs Gyűjteménye (MVMDGy) H-20/1 28-97. Ferenc Fodor "Életem eseményei (1887-1959)," (n.d. 1959?), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Fodor, "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete," 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> On Klebelsberg's importance to the development and dissemination of *szellemtörténet*, see Steven Béla Várdy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1976), 50-61. See also Bálint Homan, "A történelem útja," in *A magyar történetírás új útjai*, ed. Bálint Homan (Budapest: A Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1932). This volume of essays was the first comprehensive work outlining and explaining the principles of *szellemtörténet*.

<sup>12</sup> William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Fodor, "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete," 1.

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent discussion of Romanian cultural politics during the interwar period see Irina Livzeanu *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Fodor, "Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete," 251.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 251-52.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 255. Fodor's disparaging assessment of the Romanians as stewards of the city, it should be noted, was far reaching, so much so that it even included a sophisticated ecological critique of the "hydrological management" of the city and its water supply. Arguing that all the city's hydrological problems had been solved by

Hungarian engineers in the pre-Trianon period, Fodor contended that “no one had to worry anymore about flooding,” or about the quality and abundance of drinking water. The Romanians, however, had been delinquent in the upkeep and continuation of earlier Hungarian hydrological work. Any thought they had give to flood control remained, “like so much else,” merely a plan (and this despite the fact that they had the benefit of drawing on the existing plans of experienced, and thus also culturally and intellectually “superior,” Hungarian experts). It was for this reason, he argued, that in February and March of 1940, the city and region suffered some of its worst flooding since the “big flood of 1888.” Though not as destructive as this earlier flood, the damage was considerable, and would have been worse if it were not for the work done by Hungarians prior to World War I. See *Ibid.*, 250-54.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 251-252.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-49.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *American Historical Review* 102/5 (December, 1997): 1372.

<sup>25</sup> Aaron Beaver, “Lyricism and Philosophy in Brodsky's Elegiac Verse,” *Slavic Review* 67/3 (Fall 2008): 600. The italics are Beaver's.

<sup>26</sup> See Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), trans. Jane Zielonko, 82-110.

<sup>27</sup> Drawing on the distinction made by the ancient Greeks between “mneme” and “anamnesis,” Ricoeur distinguishes between passive or cognitive memory, and active or pragmatic memory. “To remember,” he writes, is either “to have a memory or to set off in search of a memory.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>29</sup> Besides “A magyar lét földrajza,” see MVMDGy H-20/1 28-97. 1/1, Ferenc Fodor, “Önéletrajza/Curriculum Vitae” (Pécs, 1940); and MVMDGy H-20/1 28-97. 1/3, Fodor Ferenc, “Élettörténet,” (written in Pécs and Budapest between 1941 and 1950). On the nature of conservative Christian nationalism in Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century, see Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Fodor, “Szatmár földje, Szatmár népe, Szatmár élete,” 2. It is interesting to note that in an autobiographical sketch written in 1931, Fodor referred to Szatmár as his “second homeland” (második szülőföldem). See also MVMDGy H-20/1 28-97. ¼, Ferenc Fodor, “Emlékezetül” (Budapest, 1931), 4.

<sup>31</sup> See in particular Fodor's “Élettörténet” noted above.

<sup>32</sup> There is a strong sense in Fodor's autobiographical work, in fact, that he was well aware of the long-standing scepticism in certain scholarly circles over the veracity and objectivity of autobiography as an historical source. It was as if he sought to address what Jeremy Popkin describes as “the anxiety that comes from the

fact that the autobiographical author is caught in the process of defining his or her own narrative identity without being sure that readers will accept the result.” See Jeremy Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 47. The first two chapters of this book deal in great detail with the relationship between history and autobiography, and the problem of objectivity and veracity in autobiographical sources. For a sustained discussion of the notion of an “ironclad identity,” see Thomas Ort “Men Without Qualities: Karel Capek and His Generation, 1911-1938” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> In the absence of any supporting documentation, Fodor's scrapbooks are difficult to date. Only the first and last books can be dated with any degree of certainty. The first book contains photographs of Szatmár taken in the summer of 1941, and therefore could not have been assembled any earlier than July of that year. A caption under one of these photos, furthermore, indicates that the picture is of “Deák Square, which is now called Horthy Square.” Since the square in question was renamed after Admiral Miklós Horthy, the regent of Hungary in the interwar period who was still in power when Szatmár was reclaimed by Hungary early in World War II, it is very likely that the book was put together before the city fell to the Russians on October 26, 1944, or at the very least before it was officially returned again to the Romanians in May 1946. The last book, numbered “twenty-one,” contains documents dated between March 1955 and September 1959, the year his health deteriorated to a point that he could no longer do things on his own. 1959, then, marks the end of the project. There is at least one other clue which helps determine the progression of this ambitious autobiographical undertaking. In book eight, Fodor includes a photograph of Vira and their son Zoli, taken in May 1927 on the occasion of his confirmation. There are two ragged holes in the top half of the picture. Written across the bottom of the photo is the following: “This picture, which once hung on our wall, was hit by a bomb fragment during the siege [of Budapest] in 1945.” We can surmise, therefore, that at the very least this and all subsequent scrapbooks were put together sometime after the siege of Budapest.

<sup>34</sup> There is, in fact, a real sense that Fodor sought to resolve in his scrapbooks a quintessentially modern problem identified by Ricoeur, namely the paradox of how an individual, like the nation or any group, can be seen as the same even as it changes over time. Narration, argues Ricoeur, plays an important role in this attempted resolution. As he writes: “Without the aid of narration, the problem of personal identity is... an antimony without resolution.” Of course, unlike Fodor, Ricoeur is too much of a postmodernist to hold out hope for resolution, and rejects the possibility that the negotiation of identity could ever lead to a stable result. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narration*, 3:355 and 3:356-58. Commenting on this, Jeremy Popkin adds: “[One] distinctive characteristic [that] Ricoeur attributes to autobiography is its lack of closure. Autobiographical narratives necessarily lack a real beginning or ending, and they are therefore always subject to revision and reinterpretation.” Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography*, 47.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Cited *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> This is a common masculine motif that runs through his scrapbooks.

<sup>38</sup> Ferenc Fodor, *Balla Antal élete és műszaki munkássága. 1739-1815* (Budapest: Budapesti Műszaki Egyetem Központi Könyvtára, 1953), 53.

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