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THE BUDAPEST TIMES

**FIGHTING THE CURRENT
AT HELLO HAL FISH BAR**

**ARTIST IS ON THE
LOOKOUT FOR
THE OFFBEAT**



HUMAN TOUCH

INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER ZOLTÁN BALOG



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THE BUDAPEST TIMES

TODAY



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FEAR NOT IF YOU HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE

The government plans to pass legislation that would make it mandatory for NGOs receiving their funding from abroad to disclose where they are financed from. The law “is a disclosure statute that requires persons acting as agents of foreign principals in a political or quasi-political capacity to make periodic public disclosure of their relationship with the foreign principal, as well as activities, receipts and disbursements in support of those activities”. Horrible stuff, what this government is planning. Apparently it is trying to threaten civil society with this new law. Some civil groups – the usual suspects – called it unacceptable that they were not consulted before such an unheard-of regulation was submitted to Parliament. Here's a little problem though: the above quoted text is not from the Hungarian government's pitch – though it could be, because it's practically the same – but from the Foreign Agents Registration Act of the United States of America, which was enacted in 1938. Oops. There are very similar laws in a number of European countries and elsewhere in the world: seems to me that it's not such an unheard-of regulation. So don't let these foreign-financed civil groups fool you. The government is not going after your average NGO, the ones that are collecting trash or trying to help the homeless or orphaned animals. In fact nobody's going after foreign-financed NGOs either. All they have to do is register and they will be more strictly obliged to disclose their sources of funding. The only thing that makes me wonder is why they have a problem with that. . .

Attila Leitner



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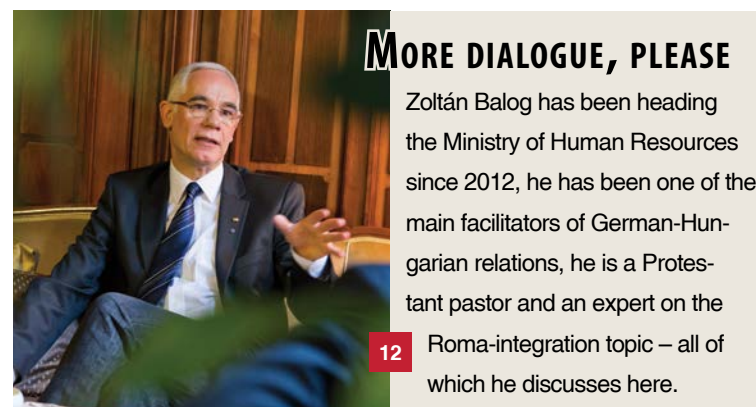
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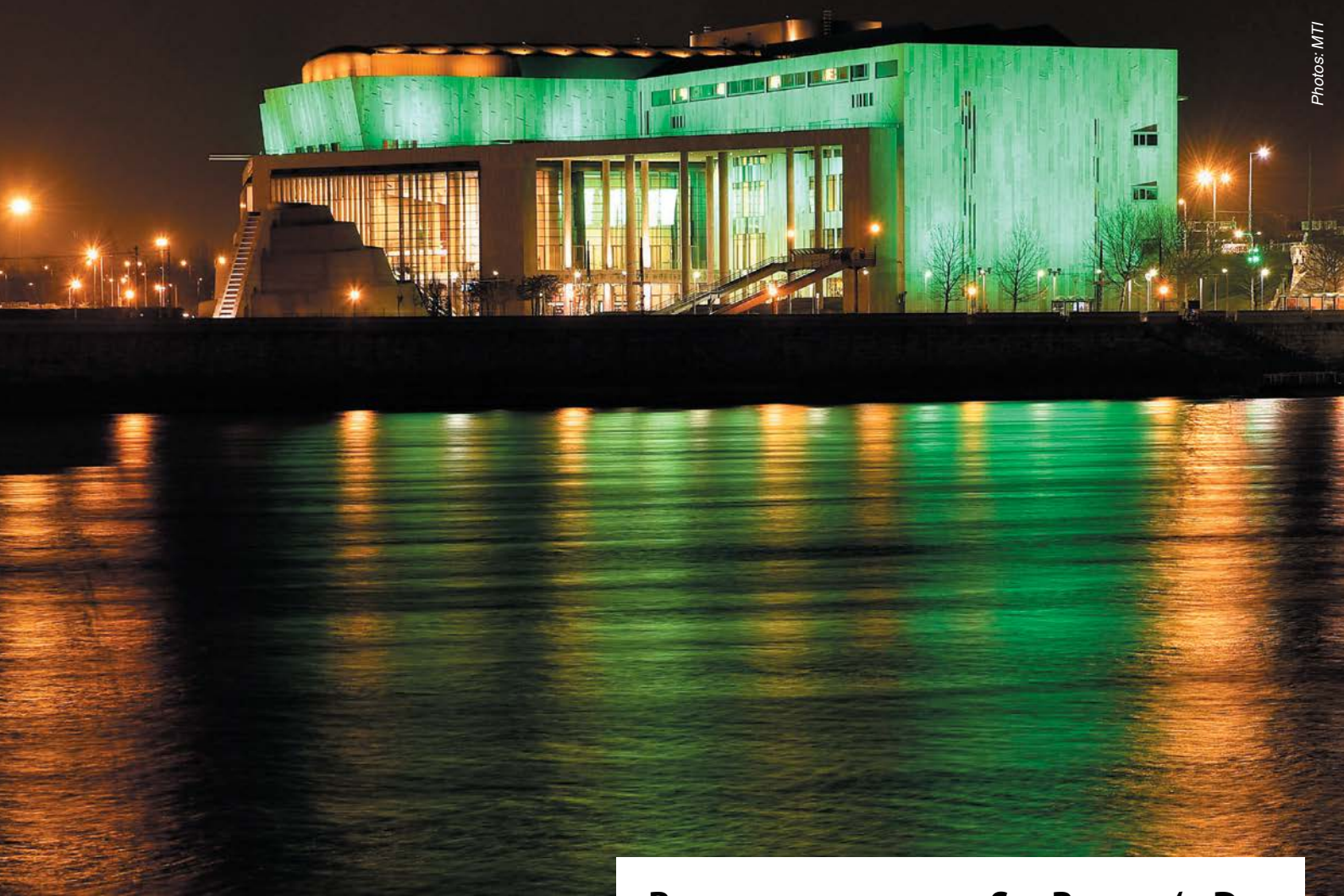
MORE DIALOGUE, PLEASE

Zoltán Balog has been heading the Ministry of Human Resources since 2012, he has been one of the main facilitators of German-Hungarian relations, he is a Protestant pastor and an expert on the Roma-integration topic – all of which he discusses here.

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE OFFBEAT

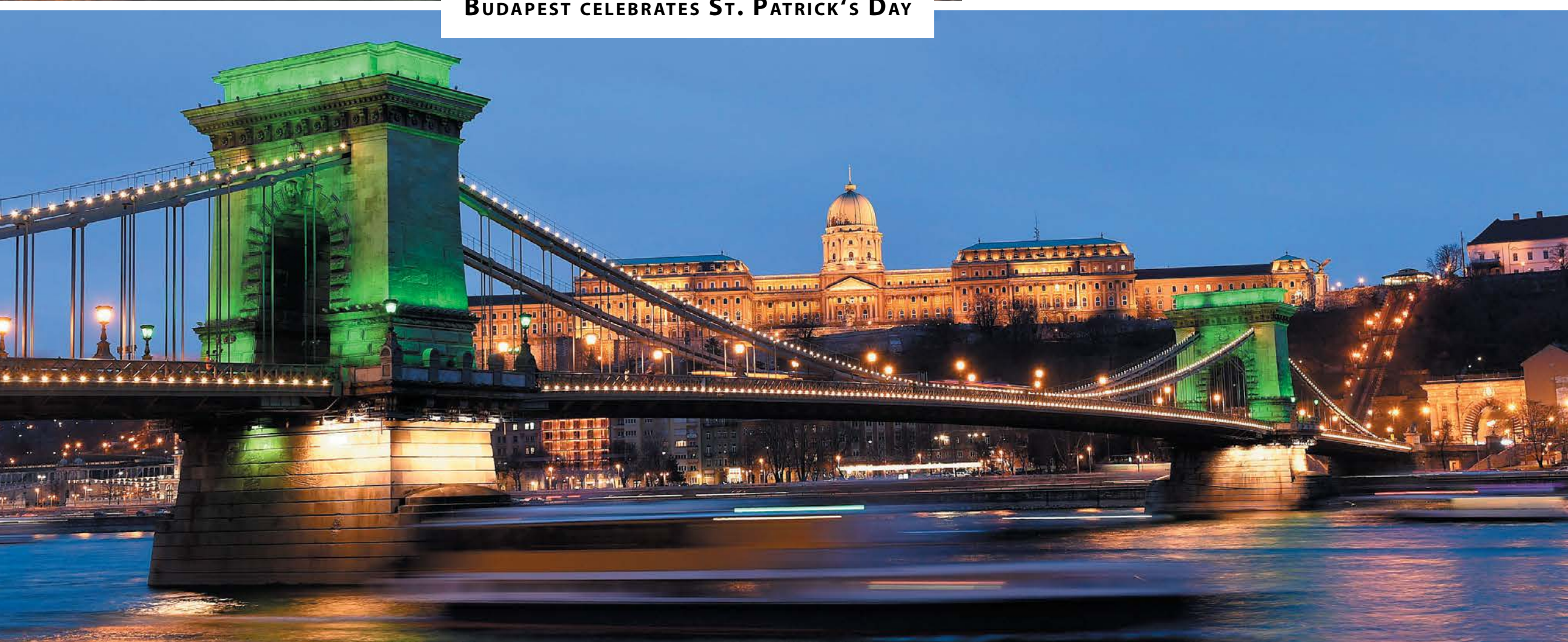
Artist Marcus Goldson's paintings cover a lot of ground when it comes to Budapest icons and character. Whether it's the Gellért Baths or Keleti Railway Station, grumpy commuters or chain-smoking old ladies in fur coats, he captures the characters and scenes with flair, humour and a touch of irony.





Photos: MTI

BUDAPEST CELEBRATES ST. PATRICK'S DAY



THE NEWS THAT MADE HEADLINES

THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MONTH

Presenting in one concise package the month's most important and fascinating national stories, whether they be economic, political, cultural, sporting or among the hundreds of other happenings that go on daily.

Orbán gives Putin a call

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has phoned Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss issues around the planned upgrade of Hungary's Paks nuclear plant. The call came after the European Commission gave the green light to the project, the prime minister's press office told state news

agency MTI. Putin's official site, kremlin.ru, said the talks also discussed topical issues around bilateral relations and the implementation of agreements signed during his February 2 visit to Budapest. The two leaders welcomed the EC decision, which has "removed obstacles from adding two new blocks to Hungary's Paks Nuclear Plant, involving Russian

state company Rosatom", kremlin.ru said. International affairs were also touched upon in the talks, the site added.

Another day off, folks

MPs have voted to make Good Friday a work holiday, following a pledge by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán last autumn. The motion was approved with a vote of 163 ayes and two abstentions. This year is the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation. In addition to Good Friday, Hungarians have work holidays on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, Labour Day, Whit Monday, All Saints' Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, plus the national holidays of March 15, August 20 and October 23.

Beer row ends in cheers

The Romanian unit of Dutch brewer Heineken and microbrewery Lixid Project say they will settle their dispute over the use of the "Ciuc" and "Csiki" beer brands, just days after Hungarian government representatives interceded on behalf of the Transylvanian craft brewery. As part of the settlement, Heineken Romania



**SPAGHETTI-BRIDGE
BUILDING CONTEST
IN DEBRECEN**



**CAMEL ESCAPES FROM CIRCUS IN
KECSKEMÉT (PHOTO: BAON.HU)**

consents to the coexistence of the Ciuc and Csiki brand names and agrees to allow Lixid Project to market the Csiki brand, the parties said. “As a result of this agreement both parties will abandon all legal activities related to the commercial dispute ... The settlement involves compromises on both sides and it allows both companies to continue building their relationship with their consumers, employees, business partners and the local community. Both companies now look forward to leaving their past differences behind them and focusing on what they do best and enjoy most: brew beer”. The agreement comes after Minister Overseeing the Prime Minister’s Office János Lázár visited the Csiki Sor factory in central Romania, encouraging both parties to agree out of court. At a subsequent press briefing, Lázár said the Hungarian government is ready to help all Hungarian companies in discussions with multinational companies abusing their power. In January, a Romanian court upheld a ruling prohibiting the microbrewery from marketing its product as “Real Csiki Beer” because Heineken already owns the locally-brewed “Ciuc” brand, which means “Csiki” in Romanian. After the court decision, Lixid Project started marketing its product as “Real Prohibited Beer”.

**Amateur finds
unknown mineral**

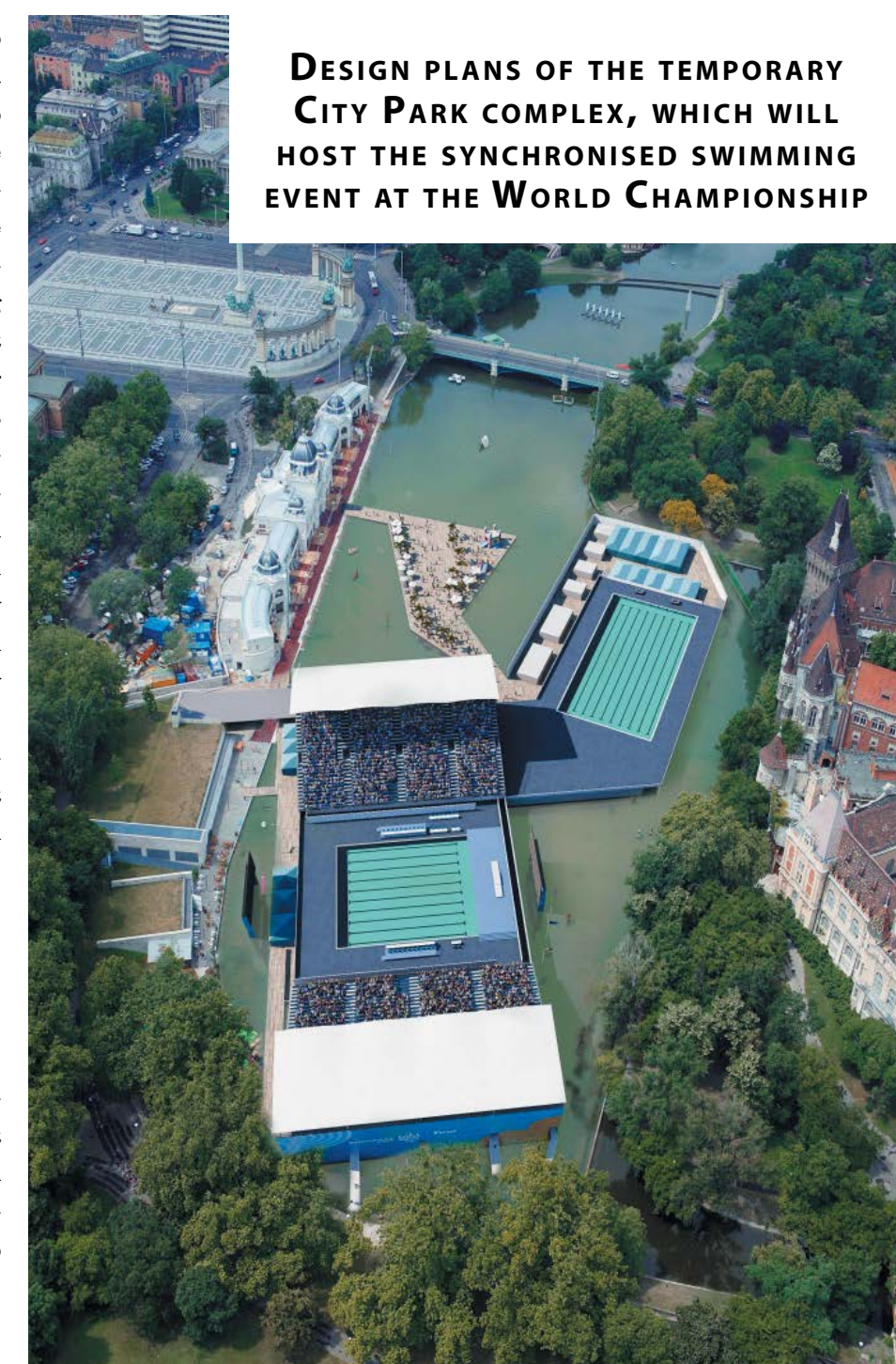
A new mineral discovered by an amateur geologist in Rudabanya, northeast Hungary, has been recognised as an unknown species by the International Mineralogical Association, the Otto

Herman Museum of Miskolc has said. The mineral, found by Gábor Koller seven years ago, has been named rudabanyaite. Bela Feher, head of the museum’s mineral collection, said that out of the about 5000 minerals known in the world, only nine including this new one were discovered on Hungary’s current territory. Whenever such a discovery is made, experts examine its chemical composition and structure.

Rudabanyaite proved to have an unknown structure.

**Verona bus crash
‘human error’**

Italian police think that the bus crash in which 16 Hungarians died near Verona on January 20 was caused by a human error. Verona Polstrada



**DESIGN PLANS OF THE TEMPORARY
CITY PARK COMPLEX, WHICH WILL
HOST THE SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING
EVENT AT THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP**



BINTI AND HER TWO-MONTH-OLD CUBS IN NYÍREGYHÁZA ZOO



OPEL FACTORY IN SZENTGOTTHÁRD CELEBRATES 25TH BIRTHDAY

chief Girolamo Lacquaniti ruled out technical problems with the vehicle that hit a pylon and caught fire, and said the driver may have been sick or fallen asleep. Italian state prosecutor Angela Barbaglio said the driver, who suffered serious injuries and has been in a coma since the crash, is suspected of causing the accident. The prosecutor said reports by various experts were being evaluated, after which legal proceedings might follow.

Airport leads region again

UK-based consultancy Skytrax has ranked Budapest’s Liszt Ferenc Airport the best airport in eastern Europe for the fourth time this year. Budapest Airport CEO Jost Lammers noted that 50 billion forints will be spent on developments at the airport as part of the BUD 2020 programme. Skytrax surveyed 13.8 million passengers at 550 airports worldwide on their views on cabin staff, airport, airline, airline lounge, in-flight entertainment, on-board catering and several other elements of air travel. Changi Airport in Singapore is the World’s Best Airport for the fifth year running.

More flights to Paris, Amsterdam

Air France-KLM is raising the number of its Budapest flights to Amsterdam and Paris to four a week in summer. At present the airline offers three Budapest-Paris flights and three Budapest-Amsterdam flights. Last year passenger numbers on the Paris route rose 2pc and on the Amsterdam flights 21pc.

Olympics funds back to budget

The government has decided to return back to the budget HUF 12.6 billion left over from the HUF 19.1 billion allocated for Budapest’s 2024 Olympics bid, Minister Overseeing the Prime Minister’s Office János Lázár has said. Budapest Municipal Council voted to withdraw the bid last month “in light of the dissolution of political unity” on the matter. The council acted on a recommendation made by local council leaders and the heads of governing Fidesz days after the Momentum Movement submitted more than 266,000 signatures calling for a referendum on the bid. The International Olympic Committee approved the second round of documentation for Budapest’s bid last December and the capital had been set to submit third-round documentation. A decision on the host city, now a contest between Los Angeles and Paris, is expected in September.

350,000 aquatics fans expected

Nearly 350,000 spectators including 85,000 foreigners are expected at the 2017 World Aquatics Championships in Hungary from July 14-30, an organiser has predicted. Altogether 4700 hotel rooms have been reserved for the competitors, their escorts, media workers and FINA delegates for a total of 85,000 guest nights, spokesman Miklos Borsa of Bp2017 Nonprofit said. The competitions will take place in four Budapest venues, including the brand-new Duna Arena, as well as in Balatonfured. The 17th edition of

the championships will feature swimming, water polo, diving, high diving, synchronised swimming and open-water swimming.

Vajna projects himself

Hungary’s film subsidy system needed to be repaired and the country’s film industry is now enjoying the benefits, government film industry commissioner Andrew Vajna has told public Kossuth Radio. The subsidy system had to be “built up from the ruins” of the previous one, Vajna said. There had been so many problems “surrounding films” that the old system had to be scrapped, he insisted. Its replacement had “turned out to be very transparent”, and film industry players were now fully aware of where subsidies were going.

Jobbik seeks EU pay parity

Radical nationalist party Jobbik is launching a campaign to promote its bid to equalise wages throughout the European Union. MP Marton Gyongyosi said a citizens’ committee formed by Jobbik recently has already sent its petition to Alexander Italianer, Secretary General of the European Commission. The committee is seeking a speedy assessment of the petition so work can begin to collect one million signatures needed to include the principle of “equal wages for equal work” in the statutes of the European Union, Gyongyosi said. Jobbik leader Gábor Vona is opening the campaign in Budapest before visiting 26-27 cities to meet representatives of unions and other bodies.

'ATTACK' ON UNI NEW RIFT IN HUNGARIAN-US RELATIONS

COLLISION COURSE AT CEU

The US embassy has expressed concern over a new bill to amend the law on higher education to clarify and tighten rules governing foreign higher education institutions operating in Hungary. The embassy says the proposal would “seriously restrict” the operation of the Central European University (CEU), but the government sees no reason to change its mind.

David Kostelancik, the chargé d'affaires at the embassy, told state news agency MTI that the US is opposed to any measure that would endanger the university's operation or independence. He called CEU a “first-class higher-education institution” enjoying an “excellent reputation” in Hungary and around the world.

The university is an “important centre of educational freedom” in the region, Kostelancik added. CEU has taught and employed thousands of Hungarians, he said. The university, founded and financed by American billionaire George Soros, had been a “success story” of US-Hungarian relations and had strong bipartisan support in the US.

President and rector of CEU Michael Ignatieff told a press conference that CEU would not close down “under any circumstances”, and intends to continue its academic programmes. The university considers Budapest its home and intends to stay here, Ignatieff added.

He said CEU considers the amendment proposal discriminatory and an attack against the university. CEU also believed it would be harmful to educational freedom across Europe and damaging to US-Hungarian relations. Ignatieff said the government should withdraw the bill and find an alternative solution.

CEU was prepared to hold talks with the government, he said. However, the submission of the higher education bill had broken the trust between the university and the government.

The Ministry of Human Resources said there is no reason for the government to withdraw its draft amendment aimed at changing rules governing foreign universities and colleges in Hungary. The ministry was commenting after talks between Laszlo Palkovics, the state secretary in charge of education, and Ignatieff.

At the talks, Palkovics said the government was open to talks with the US to regulate the operations of CEU and three other US institutions in Hungary, and

they would have a full year ahead before the new regulations could take effect.

He insisted that it was crucial the other countries involved should take a role in running “universities of an international status”, and said the authorities of “countries of origin” fail to monitor the operations of those universities in Hungary, which may lead to irregularities.

Hungary's authorities have no power over their tuition, while their foreign counterparts are negligent, Palkovics argued.

He asserted that the bill did not pose a risk to CEU and no other foreign university had complained about it. All higher education institutions must comply with Hungarian laws, the state secretary said.

The ministry said the measures were needed after a government probe found violations and shortfalls at the “majority” of foreign colleges and universities that offer instruction in Hungary. In the future, the law would allow universities outside of the European

Union to operate in Hungary only on the basis of an international agreement.

The ministry noted that Hungarian law requires foreign universities that award diplomas in Hungary to operate in the countries in which they are based.

Opposition parties slammed the government for what they say is a threat to close down CEU. The Socialists said the university is a national treasure, and the government's “threat” to close it down is tantamount to “treason”.

The party said the Orbán government “is always looking for new enemies” to distract attention from its “sins”, and after its attacks against NGOs and Brussels it was now launching an attack against CEU.

The leftist Democratic Coalition (DK) said the bill was “unacceptable”. Agnes Vadai, the party's deputy leader, said it targeted CEU. The bill is an “underhand,

DAVID
KOSTELANCIK



ideologically based” attack on the highest-ranking university in Hungary, Vadai said.

Instead of attempting to close it, “any normal government” would strive to open up such an institution to benefit as many people as possible, she added.

The Együtt party said the government's “xenophobic campaign which paints George Soros as the devil” was an attempt to discredit

CEU. Együtt MP Szabolcs Szabó called on the government to “take its hands off Hungarian higher education and respect its autonomy”.

The LMP party said pushing CEU out of Hungary would be “a shameful milestone in the history of [Hungarian] education and culture”. The proposed amendments to the higher-education law could severely damage the country's institutions.



INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER ZOLTÁN BALOG

MORE DIALOGUE, PLEASE

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JAN MAINKA

Ministry

Why did you change the name of the ministry?

When I was appointed minister in 2012, I had the name changed from Ministry of National Resources to Ministry of Human Resources. The emphasis on the human factor is very important for me, not only in the sense of human resources but also in the sense that a human approach is applied towards problems.

Your ministry is a considerable size.

Yes, almost 3000 employees. The former background institutions have been integrated into the ministry step by step, such as part of the health and pension insurance system and some of the research institutions as well. In terms of administration this is a huge challenge. However, it's worth the effort, since new workflows and new levels of co-operation are arising from it. The areas belonging to my ministry, including among others health-care, education, family and social affairs, not only have their strong dynamics

but also quite clear outlines that separate them from the other areas. It was a difficult task to break these a little bit in order to build synergies but we have made a lot of progress. Many specific projects prove that our holistic approach was successful. Projects can be implemented much better this way than if the family, education and social ministry would be totally separated units.

How do you manage to have a complete overview of your huge ministry?

I don't want to sound arrogant but in principle I have a similar role as the Prime Minister in regards to his government. I need to know about my areas just as much as he needs to know about his. The daily work takes place at the level of the state secretaries. My responsibility is selecting the right state secretaries and letting them work, and then asking them for the relevant information so that I am always aware of current matters and can be questioned both by the government and by the public. In addition I have co-ordinating work to do. This is why I am managing many professional discussions with the state secretaries and under-secretaries. Once I have received information about a

problem and we have discussed the possible solutions, I am turning to the next problem.

Are there areas you are dedicating special attention to?

This depends partly on the performance of the state secretariats. I consciously do not want to name any specific areas now, in order not to publicly criticise my state secretariats. We should do that internally at the end of the legislation period. However, there are topics of course that have been very close to my heart for years, for example Roma integration. In this context the holistic approach of my ministry is also very beneficial, by the way. Almost all the state secretariats are impacted by this topic.

The opposition is constantly criticising the health-care situation. Are they right?

This area needs constant attention, since health-care is an area that constantly changes. Although we are spending several hundred million forints more than the previous government, the structure still needs to be improved. Health-care is a huge business for some actors, while it con-



cerns the innermost affairs of a person. This is why it's a very sensitive and difficult topic. It's about making economically feasible solutions without sacrificing people's health. If it was for the pharmaceutical industry to decide, we could spend a lot more for health-care. But that would not automatically mean that this would make health-care that much better. Compromises always have to be made. We took over the responsibility for the health-care system from the municipalities. Now everything is in central government ownership. Now we have to make the next move: we need to build regional centres that manage the budgets and capacities of the hospitals among other things.

Roma integration

What special results could you describe for us in this area?

I am really proud that we are the first country in Europe where the gov-

ernment managed working together with experts to be able to measure the current status of the Roma population in a way that no privacy regulations or personality rights were violated. Our method, which was praised by the European Commission as well, allows us to get a very specific picture about the situation of the Roma population. We can then compare this present status with the former situation. This is a stable solution to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts. Of course, the data from the Central Statistical Office also gives us some points of reference. According to them, the poverty rate of the Roma population decreased significantly in the last six years. The upper class of Roma were able to work their way up to lower middle-class. More Roma managed to do that than in our neighbour countries.

How was that possible?

Among other things, thanks to our employment policy. There is

another point I am very proud of: the number of young Roma studying at universities has doubled. We are talking about several thousand youngsters here. Six-seven years ago we started a co-operation together with the Church to establish a boarding school system. This initiative is bringing its first fruits now. It's very important to build an educated Roma community here, who are interested in the co-operation with other people and not confrontation.

What else still needs to be worked on?

We need to do something against the tendency that more and more Roma children are leaving high school without a graduation exam. This is a negative development. The same thing is true for vocational education. The number of early pregnancies has also increased among Roma people.



What could be the reason for these two negative tendencies?

In my opinion, the public employment programs are a bit too tempting. People can already participate from 16 years of age. If someone is already a father, he has a right to participate in it. This way he gets HUF 58,000 a month, while at the school he would only get HUF 20,000 as a scholarship. It's not surprising that some Roma parents get the idea: "Boy, why are you still at school?" We still have to work on changing this disproportionate pricing. We need to ensure that young people enter the labour market with a valuable education.

What are your plans in this area?

It's one of my big dreams to create a really elegant, beautiful and impressive Cultural and Education Centre for the Roma. I just got a large step closer to this dream: at the end of last year during the distribution of the budget overhead this goal received more than one billion forint from the Prime Minister. The plans for the centre are al-

ready completed. It will be built in Budapest's District VIII, where the largest population of Roma lives. In Europe the only place with something similar is Madrid. I would like to present all the positive things in the centre that were established in Hungary thanks to the Roma culture and not only Hungarian "gypsy music". The president of the German Sinti and Roma Central Council, Romani Rose, once said Hungarian Roma were the ones with the strongest cultural power of expression in all Europe. I am very proud about this evaluation. This is exactly what we want to present at the centre now, both for ourselves and for the outsiders. It's necessary for Roma people, in order to value themselves and to be able to integrate into our society, to see what they can be proud about. They have a special culture. This is a very positive thing for them. On the other hand, the non-Roma need to recognise better that Roma are not only causing a problem for society, they can be an enrichment too. I hope that the construction works will be finished in 2018 and that the centre can be opened in 2019.

German-Hungarian relations

What about these relations?

I am biased. I have a lot to thank to Germany, and many Germans ranging all through the party spectrum ever since my studies in Germany. I will never forget that. Therefore I will always be striving for strengthening these relations. However, I have to say that the climate of conversation, which used to be excellent back at the times of Helmut Kohl, changed a little bit. The smaller European countries, such as we are, are not taken so seriously anymore. At the beginning of the nineties, I can still remember very well Helmut Kohl followed a policy of eye-level. No matter how small the other country was, he was always communicating at eye-level and treated the other one as an equal partner. In the past few years on the other hand we have witnessed some decisions where we were not involved. I know that very well, since I am aware of every important negotiation that takes place between German and Hungarian politicians. The new way of handling became especially apparent during

the migrant crisis. Germans should have sought out much more information and much faster about what was happening at the Hungarian borders and what our point of view was. We have offered to give that information several times. To express it in a polite way: we did not really experience that they were ready to discuss matters as we would have wished for it. Some German politicians were and are living very well with their own prejudices against Hungary.

Despite all that, everything seems to be calmer than in 2011.

The European Commission has examined us in all respects, regarding the rule of law, our new constitution and the media law as well, and found that everything was Euro-conform. Except for only some small details in the media law, which we have changed without a delay. I don't know whether there is any other country in Europe where the whole legal system and the whole functioning of the system of law was examined so intensively. In any case, we passed the exams. So now we can step forward and say: "People,

what's your problem with Hungary?" All the rest is just artificially created tension by the media, in order to keep up Hungary's negative image and the negative prejudices about the Orbán government, which some political circles are interested in preserving. I hope that more and more Germans will understand: when we are protecting our borders, we are protecting yours as well.

What can be done for German-Hungarian relations so that there will be no decline?

The German investors who are active in Hungary are doing very well. The digitalisation strategy, on which we are working very closely together with German companies and the German development politicians, opens up new perspectives. Mr Oettinger emphasised several times: all the EU funds invested in Hungary and Poland are benefiting in majority to the German economy. The Hungarian employees just the same, who are employed by German companies here. The German-Hungarian economic relations are a solid foundation. Just like the cultural basis. If we lean on these two pillars, the actual differences in political opinions will be put in a perspective and negative deviations will be reduced. I also have strong hope in the young generation. There are some good initiatives, for example the German-Hungarian Youth Office. Many politicians from both countries and from all the parties support this initiative. There is a consensus on this issue. I hope that there are going to be more similar projects.

The most serious tensions between Germans and Hungarians are about the migration crisis. What perspectives do you foresee there?

We have to talk more openly with each other and discuss the issues. For example whether a possibly high cultural homogeneity in a society is something we should strive for, or just the opposite. The governments of the two countries represent clearly different opinions on this subject. But that does not have to mean that we cannot complement each other and accept the other one's opinion. One of us decided for this way, the other one for a different way. Of course there is a lot more to talk about. There will still be a lot of discussions full of conflicts. These should be led primarily not only by politicians but also by cultural creators and philosophers. The educated class and the young people should have more conversation with each other.

What are the other topics you would like to discuss with German political parties?

Besides the already mentioned Roma policy, also our family policy, which is proving more and more successful. For example, the number of marriages increased by 50% in the last four years. In the eight years before that this number sank by almost 30%. So here we have also made huge progress. Our citizens have recognised that we are supporting families with generous offers in all the relevant fields. In terms of family benefits we belong

in the top four in Europe. This is our answer to the demographic challenges that are troubling Germany just the same: renewal from own resources.

Parliamentary elections 2018

What are the chances your government can continue its work after the elections in 2018?

Chances are good. However, good chances can result in defeat too. When you look at France, at the United States or at Italy, you will see how fast an unstable political situation can arise. So we should always watch out. The permanent good scores in opinion polls should not make us lean back. After all, democracy has become a certain culture of dissatisfaction. The dissatisfied people always have better chances to enforce their will than those who would like to keep on building and make sure that citizens will be even more satisfied.

Why is it so hard to advertise yourself with the results you have already achieved?

Because it can be easily interpreted as self-praise. Even if the citizens are feeling the results. The critics, who believe that this or that is bad, always have better chances. This seems to be anchored deep in the nature of the democratic system. This is why we should be careful. We should work even more and show that we have not forgotten the people, who we represent. We need to show that we know

how the everyday life in Hungary is and that we are not an uplifted elite, who are strongly controlled by their personal interests in how they govern. It's very important that we should not only say this but prove it to the citizens with our work day after day. This should be an important guideline in our policy. If we do not succeed in doing that, there is a danger that we will be put in such a bad light that the people will say "No!" to us despite the positive situation.

So basically you are optimistic?

Yes, absolutely. I think that if we continue on this path as so far, then there is no better alternative for Hungary. I'm not saying that there are no alternatives, only that there is no better alternative. In 1998 MSZP led by Gyula Horn lost for among other reasons because they represented the viewpoint that there are no other alternatives. And even though Horn was practising a comparatively good policy. The Socialists today could learn a lot of things from Gyula Horn. By the end of his period he became a very wise father of the land. However, it was a big mistake to say that there was no other alternative to them. In life, and even in politics, there are always alternatives.

Among the present decision-makers there are a lot of idealists who are doing what they do because of the cause itself. However, there are also some people with somewhat different motivations. Could this group

endanger the continuation of your constructive work from 2018 on?

I am not a romantic. I will not pretend as if I had no pockets. Even if you are a politician to the bottom of your heart you will have your own material interests, of course. There are people to whom politics is also a business. This does not mean that they don't have valuable ideas. Looking back at our socialist past, when there was a general equality in wages, it's easy to agitate against rich citizens, of course. However, if someone gets rich in a right way, within the legal boundaries and keeping the rules of the competition, then that is a positive thing. The fact that politics can be a business too is not a negative thing per se, I believe. However, it's always important that the relevant businesses are running in a correct way. The fact that in the past years there was a layer of wealthy people established in Hungary is a positive thing. Of course, there is always the question of corruption that has to be examined. Especially when someone has been governing for such a long time. All the suspicious cases should be examined by the state authorities. If someone knows about something negative, it should be clarified in the legal way. There are indeed some proceedings going on against Fidesz politicians. However, the presumption of innocence should be applied in their cases as well. If the investigations carried out by the responsible judicial organisations confirm the suspicious circumstances, then the affected people must bear the appropriate consequences. But sim-

ply putting all the wealthy citizens under suspicion is just a populist opinion making.

How do you handle such accusations at your ministry?

It's very important for me to stand on solid ground in my own area. When I hear something, for example that money planned for the Roma integration is not used in the right way, I immediately start an internal investigation and have a report done. This is the only way how other ministers and I can fight against such things in our own territory. For sure we are on the same page on this topic on the whole government level. I am very sure that something like the three-digit million huge scam related to the construction of the metro line 4 could not have happened in our government. This is not only an opinion, not a guess, this is based on hard facts, which are put on the table in black and white ever since the OLAF report was submitted.

Would you like to continue as a minister after 2018?

The engagement, which I signed up for 27 years ago, still has perspectives. Whether I or someone else will be put in this position is not my decision. That is the decision of the Prime Minister, who will hopefully remain Viktor Orbán. Concerning this ministry I will suggest a couple of changes. I would not like to name them specifically right now, since first we have to discuss them among ourselves. I do not feel

any weakness of age yet, even if I look old sometimes. I still feel quite well and even able to continue leading this ministry.

The 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation

What is planned for this anniversary in Hungary?

We will have discussion with German and Hungarian top politicians among others, about how evangelic faith can inspire politics today. The Prime Minister of Saxon-Anhalt, Reiner Haseloff, already signed up for it. We have also invited politicians from the Netherlands and Switzerland. Furthermore, we are planning an exhibition where we will present the influences of Reformation on Hungary. By the way, the only original copy of Martin Luther's testament can be found in Hungary. It was countersigned by Melanchthon among others and it can be seen at the Lutheran Museum. We will lend it to Wittenberg for a week. There will be a Hungarian week organised there on top of the already mentioned, where I expect a lot of Protestant discussion. I am also invited to the discussion rounds with Mr. Eppler in Leipzig. Furthermore there will be hundreds of events organised by the communities, ranging from big concerts to placing stumbling stones on the squares of Budapest and many more similar events.

So the anniversary will not only be used for historical considerations.

We would like to avoid any historicism and would like to look at the anniversary as an occasion pointing towards the future in order to think about the inspiration given by 500 years of Reformation and 2000 years of Christianity. It will be about the Christian values and the evangelic character, and also about a discussion and communication culture that we should cultivate much more. This is coming from Luther over Melanchthon and we should preserve it and pass it on. If someone is on this or that side in the question of migration, it is not because that person is dumb or evil but because he or she has his or her reasons. These reasons should be examined from a political, moral and logical point of view too. But always keeping our values in mind. I am saying this concerning both the German and the Hungarian position. The Evangelical Church could contribute a lot more than before to establish the right communication climate and offer forums for discussions. People should rather be encouraged to speak to each other and not to condemn each other. This is the danger that I see with the German Churches, because they are too deep in the water of politics. However, an important exception is the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) chairman, with whom I have often had fruitful conversations in a brotherly atmosphere. The Churches, similarly to the situation back at the political turn three decades ago, could be playing an important catalyst role now again – during which they could even refer to Luther.

INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. REINHARD BETTZUEGE, FORMER AMBASSADOR OF GERMANY

“POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IS MEASURED BY HOW WE TREAT PEOPLE WHO THINK DIFFERENTLY”

Many US voters are hoping that the election of Donald Trump as President will finally see their opinion being represented in politics. The Hungarian government has also hailed this new era.

The fact that there is a new tone in international relations since his arrival can be seen in security policy aspects as well. Many of the disagreements are caused by the term “Political Correctness” – a phrase that threatens diplomatic relations with a rupture test. What does someone who not only taught but also lived in international relations and diplomacy think about these dangerous trends? Prof. Dr. Reinhard Bettzuege talks to The Budapest Times about the phenomenon of “Political Correctness”, the new challenges in diplomacy, multilateralism and why the European Union is more important than ever.

DORIS-EVELYN ZAKEL

Dr. Bettzuege, during your diplomatic and academic career you have dealt intensively with trans-Atlantic relations. What do you think about Trump’s policy in relation to Europe and the future of NATO?

The early weeks of his office were not very promising for Europe and NATO, to express myself diplomatically. Trump is striving for no less than to shake and delete the world order as we have known it since the end of World War II. The president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, lamented in his letter to the member states why 70 years of American

foreign policy and rational foreign policy, I would add, have to be questioned. This is just as regrettable as dangerous. This is the reason why the EU invited the American President to one of the EU summits: to understand his motivations.

Nobody should be fooled into believing that a weakened European Union, or even its fall, would result in more sovereignty for its member states. The consequence would much more be a fatal dependence on the three main actors of world politics: the USA, China and Russia. This cannot be the best interest of the Europeans. In politics it’s always easier to destroy something tried and tested than think about a better new method. This is why all over in Eu-

rope we are experiencing with a lot of worry that the values and political structures, which have been successfully defining our politics in Europe and over the Atlantic, are questioned without a plan or perspective.

What do you suggest the Europeans do in this situation?

In this era of emerging mistrust we should keep our cool and rely on our own strength. Isn’t Europe the destination for millions of people, are they not all dreaming about the European dream? Why is that so? Because Europe is a more peaceful and friendlier continent. I am surrounded by young students and I know how perfectly well the young



people know what they have in Europe. This is why at the Brexit referendum the majority of young people voted for staying in Europe. They are looking at Europe not only as the place where they are safe but also the place of their values, rules and traditions; they already have a European identity.

Mrs Merkel said that Europeans have their fate in their own hand. This is true. We should make a virtue out of necessity and confront all those, within Europe too, who think that the time has come when they can reject human rights, the division of powers, the rule of law and the freedom of media. At the meeting of the EU government leaders in Malta in February the call of unity was timely and the realisation that Europe (finally) has to clarify its role

in the world for itself. Since it’s still a fact that cannot be replaced by any alternative facts: Europe will only house 4% of the global population by the middle of our century. At the beginning of the 19th century this ratio was almost 20%.

If someone believes that a looser union of European national states could be successful in mastering the challenges of the 21st century, he will be sourly disappointed and has to take the political responsibility for a depending, dependent Europe. Whoever believes today that multilateralism has served its time and advocates for bilateral national relations instead is behaving in a politically short-sighted way, which is irresponsible as well. Even George W. Bush learned the lesson when during his second term he had to

return from the unilateral practices (the war in Iraq, for example) to the multilateral solutions. Trump will learn similar lessons, I am sure about that. In the meantime the US Vice-President, Mike Pence, and the US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, both expressed their strong interest in a united Europe, which is a ray of light.

You have been the German representative in NATO for five years. How do you see NATO’s future? Also in relation to Donald Trump, who described NATO as “obsolete” during his campaign.

The introduction of the North Atlantic Treaty laid the foundations of the world order after World War II. It’s clearly said in the treaty that



this community is based on the principles of democracy, freedom of the individual and the rule of law. Furthermore, the Transatlantic Pledge was made to unite efforts for the preservation of peace and security. Taking into consideration the threats of Islamic terror, violations of international law in the South China Sea and Putin's aggressive policy with his neighbours, we can see that the existence of NATO is vital.

However, the point that Trump and many before him criticise is right: Europeans are not doing enough for the strengthening of relations. It's a scandal that has only been realised, even by Mrs. Merkel that the defence efforts have to be increased significantly, namely to the agreed target

of 2% of gross domestic product. In the meantime Trump agreed to participate at the NATO summit on 26-27 May in Taormina, Italy, and he has not repeated the word "obsolete" about NATO ever since; he rather talked about his "strong support". Furthermore, he will be joining the G20 meeting in Hamburg in July, where he has to explain what he means by "global governance".

Many people celebrate Trump because of his promise to put an end to "Political Correctness". What does the term mean to you, as a diplomat and political scientist?

Trump said in his campaign: "I refuse to be politically correct."

Actually the term means to use a non-discriminative language. However, the concept is more than that. Political Correctness is for me first of all: predictability. It's also trusting that the agreed commitments will be fulfilled, that contracts such as the North American Free Trade Agreement will not be updated as a surprise, that international law will not be questioned or compromised and the global partners will not be discredited or whole countries will not be made subject to general condemnation.

Political Correctness is measured by how we treat people who think differently; this is why American courts turned down

Trump's immigration decree for a reason. I am sure that it's against the constitution. It proves that healthy democracy rules in the USA that this happened and that thousands went on the streets to protest against it. Even a lot of Republicans were looking at the White House with horror. This is why I would not bet on Trump serving his entire term.

Did you notice any changes in international diplomacy after Trump entered office?

The most important change for me is that most Europeans, except for a few exceptions, have seen Trump's questioning of the present world

order as a wake-up call and know that unity is needed more than ever now. I also see a return to the values that constitute our democracy and a readiness to fight for this more vigorously than before.

You have represented Germany in some European countries as an ambassador. I suppose that the work of diplomats is not really simple in restless times such as today. What would be your biggest challenge if you were the German ambassador in the USA right now?

You should not overestimate the role of ambassadors. They are only representing the policies made at home. This is easier for them when

they can base their arguments on European unity in their host countries. What would I do? Inform people, lead discussions, organise discussion events all over the country, present at universities, organise business meetings, engage myself with the public, encourage parliamentary meetings, involve foundations, non-governmental organisations and think-tanks – so I would do everything that diplomacy can do, including using the social media. In diplomacy you have to convince other people. The reference of 70 good transatlantic years should be helpful in that.

As a German ambassador I would not even pay attention to rejecting Trump's adventurous accusations according to which Germany is just using the EU as a tool for reaching its own interests. Germany, in my opinion, is by far the largest net contributor to the income of this community, on the other hand the country has called back a number of representatives from the European Parliament in order that they are not overrepresented when compared to France or Great Britain. Trump would never think that the reason why we are doing this is that we do not want a German Europe, but we want to become a European Germany.

I would also vehemently oppose Trump's allegations that Germany is trying to manipulate the currencies. Germany is criticising the expansive policy of the European Central Bank, which is weakening the euro, as strongly as any country. The ECB is supranational and independent anyway. Furthermore,

I would contradict his reproaches that we do not buy American cars. Are all the Fords and Opels that you see people driving here not American cars? I would also point out to him that the Germany automotive industry is securing 33,000 jobs in the USA.

As for his mockery of the reception of refugees, this is an act of solidarity with politically persecuted and war refugees. Mrs. Merkel is cleaning the mess that irresponsible US policy with Iraq and Syria caused.

Finally I would quote President of Germany Joachim Gauck, who was forced to live most of his life in a dictatorship and this is why he said: Freedom and democracy are the decisive political values of our times.

Are American diplomats having a hard time right now all around the world?

Yes, it's bad for them. The fact that more than a thousand ambassadors wrote to the State Department after the regulations about entering the country were published, says a lot. This is a unique event in US history.

From this summer semester you will be teaching the “Diplomatic case studies” seminar at the Central European University (CEU). The university has been a government target in the campaign against the US billionaire and philanthropist with Hungarian origins, George Soros. What do you think about the possible threat by Fidesz to dissolve the CEU?

I can only refer to the open letter written by Michael Ignatieff, the CEU rector, pointing out that the CEU has proven itself with a quarter of a century of academic education. CEU is a Hungarian institution that is recognised internationally, not only in Central Europe. It accommodates students from 117 countries, 20% of whom are Hungarians. CEU employs around 700 Hungarian citizens and spends almost HUF 10 billion in Hungary each year. It can refer to 14,000 graduates all over the world. The rector pointed out in his open letter that CEU was able to work together with every Hungarian government in a positive way in the past 25 years. I cannot imagine that any Hungarian government would like to change this tradition.

TEDx RETURNS FOR CONFERENCE OF IDEAS

CONNECTION AND DISCONNECTION

An eclectic array of speakers will gather for TEDxDanubia in the iconic Mupa building on May 4. The theme of this year's event is “Alone or Together?”, a question with increasing relevance in the 21st century.

The theme is inspired by our everyday reality and will address a major contradiction of our times: despite being more connected than ever before, many of us are more isolated and alone than ever. Are we alone or together? As the 21st century unfolds, the question's relevance only continues to grow.

The TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) brand has thousands of “talks” on YouTube addressing a broad range of topics, from the news industry and biotech to politics and “selfies”.

Launched in 1984, the idea behind TED was to create a nonprofit that

would spread ideas through conferences, and the “talks” have evolved over time, with high-profile figures such as Bill Clinton and Bill Gates speaking.

TED has become something of a phenomenon, inspiring locally organised spinoff TEDx events covering all four corners of the globe.

Budapest, a city with an ever-increasing reputation for its start-up culture and dynamism, jumped on the TEDx bandwagon in 2010, and this year's event will be the city's seventh. Scientists, artists and entrepreneurs will address the audience in both English and Hun-

garian, covering science, arts and business topics.

Local speakers will take part, such as biotechnologist and sustainable energy enthusiast István Kenyeres, whose research and development team addresses the challenges posed by urbanisation, global warming and water crises, attempting to reuse organic matter and waste in densely populated urban areas.

German doctor and author Giulia Enders will discuss the importance of knowing our bodies, as she dives into the internal workings of our gut. Enders is the bestselling author of “Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ”, and a veteran on the public-speaking circuit. Her talks have gained millions of hits on YouTube.

Gingger Shankar, world-famous singer, violinist and composer, the only female in the world to play the 10-string double violin, will perform.

Sticking to the theme of “Alone or Together?”, the event will address collaborative business models and collective networks.

The TEDxDanubia Conference on Technology, Entertainment and Design will be held in the Mupa building in Ferencváros on May 4.



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INTERVIEW WITH WEST BALKAN EXPERT ATTILA GALAMBOS

“THESE COUNTRIES ARE WAY MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN THEIR REPUTATION”

“The West Balkan is still an economically underestimated region.”

This is Attila Galambos’ firm belief, and as such it is the foundation for his consulting company Communautrade-Europe Kft., which calls the attention of potential investors to this region and advises during their further activities.

JAN MAINKA

Galambos came into contact with the region in a rather indirect way. The diplomat and economist used to work for a socialist foreign trade company. First he was responsible for the countries of the Far East, including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Finally, thanks to a coincidence, he met the general director of a newly founded Albanian bank at a reception in Budapest.

They both liked each other right from the beginning. This is how Galambos started to focus his attention on Albania, a country that was just waking up from Stone Age communism.

Targeted search for the chance

Reorientation took some time, while he made himself independent and founded his own commercial company.

While most of his colleagues at that time were struggling to become part of the booming east-western trade, Galambos deliberately chose to place his bet on the underdog, Albania.

“I was sure about it right from the beginning: there is potential here.” This is why he started to investigate diverse possibilities. He travelled to Albania once a month for this aim. Time passed by. However, the decisive deal was not knocking on the door yet. After a year and with growing anxiety he finally booked a little success: his company won the tender of the Albanian national bank, where they were looking for suppliers for the establishment of a commercial banking system.

This business had a good volume and it was implemented with success. However, the contacts made at the relevant trainings were far more important than the resulting income. Numerous bankers, who played an important role in the Albanian financial world in the upcoming years, met Galambos at that

time and found that he was a fair and reliable person. This was supposed to pay off sometime. In the next period many different foreign trade businesses sought his advice. Finally this was how he found the “business of his lifetime”.

This was a rather unspectacular but a much demanded export good: frozen poultry from Hungary, which was a very sought-after article in Albania at that time. “Within a short time I became the largest Hungarian exporter of this product,” Galambos remembers. Business was going amazingly well in the mid-1990s. He delivered more and more products to the markets of ex-Yugoslavian countries. The fact that the business was going so well was not only explained by the quality of the Hungarian poultry products, but also by the attractive subventions paid by the Hungarian government back at that time on a bilateral basis for agrarian exports, and more than that, the government was actually able to pay these sums.

New orientation after Hungary’s entry to the EU

However, this practice was ended in 2004. When Hungary entered the EU, the system of bilateral export subventions was finished in an instant. This meant that the attractive Albanian and ex-Yugoslavian market was lost for the Hungarian animal breeders.

Galambos delivered the last batch of poultry in 2007. As this business opportunity was finished, he started to look intensively for new opportunities again, which were still abundant.

“In any case, I wanted to stay loyal to the region. This was the only way to profit from my expertise on the region, which has grown significantly in the meantime, and my local network.” In the following years he acted as a consultant for the bus manufacturer Ikarus and OTP, the largest Hungarian bank, and many others during building their export businesses in the region. Finally he engaged himself in the booming residence and hotel construction in Albania, this time already as an investor.

Furthermore he started to market his regional knowledge as a consultant on this region in a growing tendency. More and more companies were interested in working with this region. As for the most important benefits of the West Balkan countries Galambos immediately mentions the labour force conditions, which are much better than in Hungary. Additionally none of the six countries – Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia – are expected to become EU members in the near future, meaning that the EU labour market won’t be opening to them anytime soon.


In consequence the labour markets of the region are not expected to bleed out towards the western EU countries as much as the ones of the Visegrád countries did. Considering the working culture it has a positive effect that there is someone in almost every Yugoslavian family who has spent a few years as a guest worker in Europe and therefore has relevant experience.

The countries of the West Balkan want to join the EU

Although the EU entry of these countries is still a question of time – Serbia is considered as the first candidate to enter in about five years – all of them are willingly working for their EU membership. This means among other things that the national legislation is being adapted to the EU standards step by step, but also that these countries are striving to have good relationships with relevant EU countries. This could result in good and reliable relationships with the foreign investors for them. According to Galambos some of the six West Balkan countries have already developed a veritable investor network. The governments are trying to outdo each other in offering as attractive local conditions as possible.


In this context these countries can still benefit from the fact that their EU membership is missing:





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**WEST BALKAN EXPERT
ATTILA GALAMBOS:
“I HAVE A GOOD
RELATIONSHIP WITH
ALL THE GOVERNMENTS
OF THE COUNTRIES IN
THE REGION.”**

their governments can act in a much more flexible way during the definition of investment aids than the ones of the EU member countries. “The ones who benefit from their competitiveness and a near,

but not yet existing EU membership are the investors in any case,” Galambos is sure about that.

Specifically looking at the more and more precarious Hungarian labour force situation he could imagine that Western investors active in Hungary, which are not able to grow, or at least not to grow at the wished pace, might find a way out from their misery in a West Balkan country. At the same time, the fate of the Hungarian jobs could be secured (because the companies are not necessarily forced to leave Hungary completely) and there could be a logical division of labour applied, for example dividing their activities into simpler and more complicated jobs.

Using cultural similarities

In case any Western company active in Hungary would decide to invest in any of “his” countries, Galambos advises them to take this step not directly by the parent company, rather indirectly over the Hungarian branch and if possible, under the supervision of a local manager. The reason is a certain cultural similarity, which makes co-operation between Hungary and their southern

neighbours so much easier. Furthermore, according to the experience of Galambos, Hungarians have a high reputation in all of these countries regardless of any historical or other resentments.

Besides the daily work of many Hungarians in and with these countries, the general constellation of the countries should also be the reason for this positive reputation. “The non-pervasive and therefore relatively open Yugoslavia used to be clearly more developed as most of the countries in the Eastern Bloc. We noticed the free Yugoslavia with its full shop windows. The civil war demolished this advantage. In the meantime a lot of ex-Yugoslavs turned towards Hungary, which worked its way up nicely from a relatively bad original situation after the political turn. Hungary is regarded as an example in many countries of the region and enjoys a good image,” Galambos explains.

In addition to his general experience the consultant is also able to support his clients with a variety of contacts to decision makers in the

region. “I have a good relationship with all the governments of the countries in the region,” he claims. His growing regional network is fed not only by his own economic activities, but also some further connection points. One of them is for example the Honorary Consul of Hungary in Macedonia and the president of the West Balkan region in the Hungarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce. His partners in the consulting company are among others Gábor Gérvényi, another foreign trade professional, whose name should ring familiar to many Germans with active business activities in Hungary, since he has been working on German-Hungarian relationships for more than a decade.

**Treating others
with respect**

“Don’t your partners in the regions find it offensive that they are grouped under the pejorative term West Balkan?” we finally asked Galambos. “No, not at all,” he explained firmly. People living in this

region are neutral towards this terminology and for sure no way as negative as we are. Especially since the term “West Balkan” is not even correct and is more of a political category created by the Westerners during the solution of conflicts following the ex-Yugoslavian civil wars. “Even if the people do not care much about the term ‘Balkan’, the partners are very vulnerable when they are being treated in a patronising way due to the development state of their countries,” Galambos warns.

In general there are still many negative prejudices and stereotypes about the countries in “his” region, which are often made up by people who have never even been there. He advises not to take such opinions seriously, rather visit the place and make your own impression about the people and the possibilities without relying on prejudices. There is one thing he can share upfront in any case: “The countries in my region are way more attractive than their reputation.”

You can find more information on his website: www.eu-balkan.eu

Balkan states in numbers

	Area in km2	Inhabitants	Economic growth (2015) in %	GDP in billion USD (2015)	Consumer price index (2016)
Albania	28,748	3,215,988	3.2	12.10	1.2
Kosovo	10,908	1,824,521	3.3	6.50	0.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	51,197	3,829,000	1.8	16.90	1.0
Montenegro	14,026	620,029	3.0	4.20	0.2
Macedonia	25,713	2,107,523	2.7	10.49	0.3
Serbia	77,474	7,186,569	2.6	37.70	2.6
TOTAL	208,066	18,783,630		87.89	

QUIRKS COMBINE WITH COMMONPLACE FOR DISTINCTIVE RESULT

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE OFFBEAT

Artist Marcus Goldson's paintings cover a lot of ground when it comes to Budapest icons and character. Whether it's the Gellért Baths or Keleti Railway Station, grumpy commuters or chain-smoking old ladies in fur coats, he captures the characters and scenes with flair, humour and a touch of irony.

CARMEN CRACKNELL

Goldson has been resident in Budapest for almost 25 years, and his work hints at his familiarity with and affection for the city. Born and raised in Kenya, Goldson later trained in sculpture at Winchester School of Art in England. He moved to Budapest in 1993, close on the heels of his Hungarian wife.

Although the vast majority of his work is now centred on Budapest, he has also spent time in Cairo and Damascus, among others. "My work is like a visual diary, a passage through time, a reflection of where I am," Goldson says.

But he says he didn't always paint people and places. In fact before moving to Budapest he was working with an entirely different medium. "If you had asked me in 1990 if I'd be doing this, I would have laughed myself to death. I was doing huge abstract metal sculptures," he says.

He switched from sculpture to painting, believing that it would be easier to sell painted works. Initially he wasn't sure where or how to begin, but the streets of Budapest provided plenty of inspiration.

"I walked the streets and thought, wow, this place is kind of exotic, so I drew people or whatever it is in my sketchbooks not knowing what to do with them. Eventually I scanned them and sold a lot and decided to sell them as postcards." He also started a company in the process.

While his work is sometimes compared with artists such as Beryl Cook, known for her portrayal of nightlife and bar scenes, he doesn't identify with any specific genre or style. He considers himself a draftsman or illustrator more than a painter, and admires Englishman David Hockney as well as various sculptors.

All of his characters and scenarios are drawn from real life, such as the five ladies in "Wolfpack". It's hard not to be a bit mesmerised by these old-timers, who while looking somewhat otherworldly, are also familiar to all of us who have spent time in Budapest.

"I draw characters, quirky people like you would have anywhere, but with some traditional values thrown in. For example the five ladies in the

metro, I saw them on the metro. They were actually wearing leopard print, for me it was a shock. So I sketched them," he says.

A key element to his work is humour. "I like humour and I think a lot of art lacks it. I like it in my work, simple as that."

The small details in the scene are equally important – a certain type of beer or a packet of local cigarettes for example, can contribute to the portrayal of the character and the sense of time and place.

Many of his works contain trademark Hungarian objects, whether it's Modiano's familiar smoking man with monocle hanging on the wall of a bar, a lángos being doused in salt, or a copy of Népszabadság being intently read by a worker.

Like any city, Budapest has of course changed over time. Goldson says the capital is a very different place now from how he remembers it in the 1990s, and his work has evolved to reflect that. "At the time (when I first came), Budapest felt like a provincial city. It doesn't feel that way now. One thing I liked is that families lived in the centre before. It's changed, especially in the past six years."

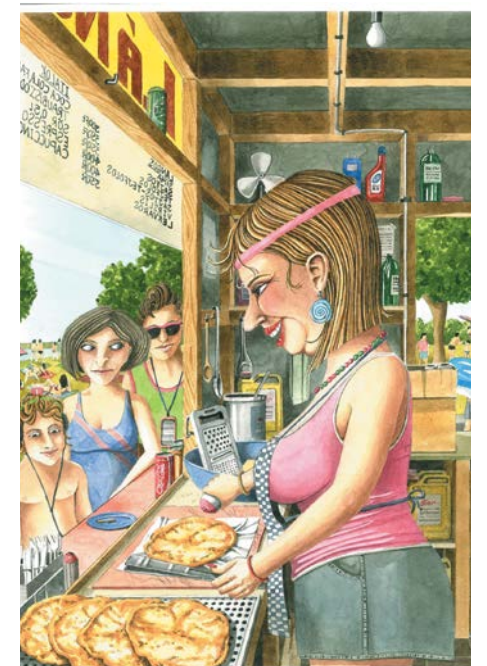
With the exponential rise in tourism to Hungary in the past ten years, tourists have become part of the landscape too, at least in the city centre.

"There are a lot more foreigners and the city is more cosmopolitan now, not so many visible Hungarian stereotypes, they've moved out. So I paint foreigners in Budapest as well."

I wondered at the reaction of locals, who can sometimes be sensitive about how their small and globally

relatively unknown country is seen by outsiders.

"Generally people either love it or hate it. It's a grey area. Generally I've had positive feedback, although sometimes people will say you make us look like ... shrivelled-up cucumbers, but that's not at all the point. Hungarians have got a big sense of humour, also pretty sophisticated sense of humour," he says.



In addition to his own work, Goldson works on commissions for magazines such as "Forbes" and "Time Out".

Budapest provides the perfect surroundings for being an artist, Goldson says, and he has no plans to leave any time soon. "I like it here – the quality of life, it's much more sedate. You have time to walk or bike around town. I would never live in London again after this."

Goldson's work can be seen at <http://www.marcusgoldson.co.uk/> and can be purchased in many bookshops and cafes around Budapest.



DEUTSCHE TELEKOM AT THE MOBILE WORLD CONGRESS

EASY PARKING WITH HELP OF 5G

The annually organised Mobile World Congress in Barcelona is the most important event for the branch. Two thousand three hundred exhibitors presented themselves at the trade fair this year for the audience of more than 108,000 visitors. The network has been getting more attention in the past years at the fair, and this year the central topic was the mobile network technology of the future, 5G.

“5G is going to change the digital eco-system more compared to every former technology,” said Srini Gopalan, European president of Deutsche Telekom AG. “With time, 5G is going to increase the global GDP up to USD 3 trillion between 2020 and 2035. 5G is a big chance for Europe to catch up to the USA and Asia, which needs to be used.

“In order that the 5G may be launched with success the impacted providers, industries and administrative authorities need to co-operate closely,” Gopalan stressed.

Tailored solutions

The communication method of the next generation played an important role at the stand of the Deutsche Telekom Group too. Under the motto “5G FOR GOOD” Telekom presented to the visitors how the new technology gets from the laboratories to the users: “5G raises connectivity to a next level,” Tim Höttges, chairman of the board at Deutsche Telekom said. “Besides billions of people at least 50 billion things will need network connection in the future.

“Many areas of daily life will need their tailored networks: enormous bandwidth will be eaten up by entertainment, by the super-fast reaction time of cars (connected cars) or robots and the long-lasting narrow band connection for the parking sensors and the street lights,” he added.

These examples show that 5G is not only about speed. It's the guaranteed latency (meaning the delay time) where 5G differs significantly from other technologies. “5G is more than transfer speed,” Claudia Nemat, President for Technology and Innovation at Deutsche Telekom, emphasised. “You can compare 5G with decathlon – nobody can win with a single sprint.”

Hungary is in a leading position by 5G-applications

Users will already be able to gain experience with the networks developed for sensors, since the Telekom Group is launching the narrowband network in eight countries (besides Germany also in Hungary, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland, Austria, Slovakia and Croatia) this year.

The so-called NarrowBand-IoT is the first step towards 5G tech-



nology, which enables the connected sensors to exchange data with each other over the narrowband connection.

In Budapest Magyar Telekom has already tested their technology developed for public parking spaces with the help of NarrowBand-IoT (NB-IoT). The company also launched the network development program NB-IoT.

For establishing the smart parking places the concrete sensors have to be built close to the electric supply. They contain a module, which is based on the mobile technology NarrowBand IoT. The sensor is inactive, and only sends a signal once a car is standing on top of it.

This will enable the clients to navigate to a free place with the help of a mobile application.

► MT

FROM SMOKIE TO SYMPHONY

Chris Norman was the man who sang the Smokie hits when the band found fame in the 1970s. Now he has searched out the old Smokie musical scores in his house and sent them to Budapest in preparation for performing them with the Óbuda Danubia orchestra on April 22.

Smokie's successes include “Living Next Door to Alice”, “If You Think You Know How to Love Me” and “Don't Play Your Rock 'n' Roll to Me”. When Norman performs his hits in Tüskecsarnok, it will be with his own band partly aided by the Óbuda Danubia Symphonic Orchestra.

It will be the first time the songs have been given a public airing with an orchestra as large as the Óbuda Danubia, which shows 40-plus musicians on its website. Norman had a top 10 US hit in 1978 with “Stumblin' In”, a duet with Suzi Quatro. He left Smokie in the early 1980s to start his solo career, and “Midnight Lady” became a hit throughout Europe in 1986. His popularity has been greatest in Germany, where his hits in the late 1980s included “No Arms Can Ever Hold You”, “Sarah (You Take My Breath Away)” and “Broken Heroes”. In 2015 he released the solo album “Crossover”.

On a personal note, Norman has five children and four grandchildren. His eldest son died in a car accident and he said he would never get over it. But his wife of 47 years and the whole family was brought even closer by the tragedy, which he said made it possible to live with the pain in their hearts.



Theatre captured for the big screen in Urania National Film Theatre



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7.00 pm

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WIDE VARIETY OF CULTURAL EVENTS FROM HOME AND ABROAD

CITY SPRINGING BACK TO LIFE

Tables and chairs are appearing on the pavements again, and to reinforce the end of winter the 37th Budapest Spring Festival is under way, until April 23.

The annual event is one of the largest cultural gatherings in the country, with top Hungarian and international performers in dance, theatre, contemporary circus, visual arts and music in the classical, world, opera, jazz and folk genres.

A multitude of venues comprising the leading cultural institutions of the city are participating, including Műpa Budapest, Liszt Academy, the Hungarian State Opera, the Bálna, the Vigadó, Budapest Music Center, Várkert Bazár (Castle Garden Bazaar) and other theatres, cultural institutes and museums.

Two **Korean Cultural Days** in the Bálna Budapest Event Hall on April 8 and 9 aim to answer the questions of what defines the everyday life of Koreans, what are the characteristics of the Korean frame of mind, what are the most typical dishes and what do friends do to pass the time?

The Korean Cultural Centre will bring together representatives of the country's gastronomy, music, dance, sports, visual arts and artisanship to show and celebrate their heritage. This also involves passing on some of the knowledge,

so visitors can learn various artisanal techniques, can try Korean games and dances, and become introduced to the Korean language, with food kiosks on hand.

To be presented twice, "Sim Cheong" is a play that tells the story of a father and his daughter, featuring such characteristic elements as the Sword Dance and the Peace Dance. The sung story is presented by a 30-strong company, live music and lavish visuals.

The Lapland Chamber Orchestra, founded in 1972, has the distinction of being not only the most northerly professional orchestra in Finland but indeed in the entire European Union. Based in somewhere called Rovaniemi, this regional orchestra regularly tours the Province of Lapland and elsewhere in Finland, but in recent years has also appeared in Algeria, Austria, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, the UK and Germany.

It will be at the Vigadó on April 12.

The A38 Ship will host Lebanon-born singer, songwriter and actress **Yasmine Hamdan**, who made a sell-out debut in Budapest two years ago. Described as the iconic diva of Near Eastern

sounds, Hamdan is said to be the muse of American independent film director Jim Jarmusch, and had a cameo appearance in his 2013 vampire film "Only Lovers Left Alive".

She is the former singer of Soap Kills and will sing the songs of her latest album, "Al Jamilat". Hamdan's music melds electronica, trip hop and Arabic influences. She will also have a guest, Hungarian/Swedish singer-songwriter and musician Antonia Vai.

The **Shanghai Quartet**, which will perform at the Liszt Academy on April 22, is said to be renowned for its passionate musicality and impressive technique, and has become one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles.

Formed by students of the Shanghai Conservatory in 1983, the quartet comprises two violinists, a violist and a cellist, and has performed all over Asia, North and South America, and several European countries. It has often performed pieces outside the quartet repertoire by teaming up with such artists as the Tokyo, Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets, Yo-Yo Ma, Lynn Harrell, Wu Man and Peter Serkin.

Long-time champions of new music, they have collaborated with composers such as Bright Sheng, Carl Vine and David Del Tredici. The quartet has released over 30 albums, recording, among other works, Beethoven's complete string quartets, and, with Rudolf Buchbinder, Schumann's and Dvorák's piano quintets.

In Budapest, they will play Beethoven's: String Quartet No. 6 in B flat major, Op. 18/6, Schubert's String Quartet in D minor, "Death and the girl", and a selection of Chinese songs

"Treasures Under the City, Novelties from the past – Revealing the archaeological heritage of Budapest 1867–2005–2015" is an exhibition in Budapest History Museum from April 15 to September 15.

This is based on the premise that Hungarian archaeology owes its genesis to the economic boom that followed the Compromise of 1867, and the attendant urbanisation. It was in this context that archaeological relics began to be collected and excavated systematically in what were still three distinct cities: Pest, Buda and Óbuda. Soon the capital established its first museum, the predecessor of today's Budapest History Museum.

By now, thanks to the excavations that have not ceased since then, Budapest has one of the richest troves of archaeological finds among the European capitals. The exhibition presents the most important finds and results of the most significant

**YASMINE HAMDAN
PLAYED A SOLD-OUT
SHOW TWO YEARS AGO**



excavations of the past ten years – works whose roots run back to the post-Compromise period.

In addition to representing the finds and excavations of 150 years ago, the exhibition shows some 2000 valuable finds that have been recently uncovered at around 100 sites, most of which have not been on display before.

The **3rd Budapest Photo Street Festival** on April 21-23 will present all that is related to the art of photography by turning the pavement of District VI's Nagymező utca into a special exhibition space where the displays will be complemented with open-air screenings, book launches, dedications, performances and guided tours.

The street is home to Mai Manó House, which is also known as the

Hungarian House of Photography, and the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Centre, the former introducing today's visitors to old photographic technologies and methods, and the latter training its viewfinder on the present and the future.

Add in **Henrik Nánási and the Orchestra of Komische Oper Berlin, Daniele Getti and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Budapest Art Week, a Feast of Hungarian Jazz, tributes to Kodály and Beethoven, the Badora Dance Company** and many more, and Budapest Spring Festival is here.

The festival is a co-operation between Műpa Budapest, the Budapest Festival and Tourism Centre, and the Hungarian Tourism Agency. See <http://www.btf.hu/events> for the full list of programs.

MANAGING THE RISK OF HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS AND SURVIVE

Despite increasing awareness, only 54 percent of women recognise that heart disease is their number one killer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States. Even more disturbing is that almost two-thirds of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease have no previous symptoms.

What’s happening?

Cholesterol, a fatty material, combines with calcium and other substances in the blood to form plaque, which can collect in arteries, harden and cause a condition called atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is a major cause of heart attack.

Fainting could be a sign of pulmonary embolism

In the past, fainting had not been considered high on the list of signs and symptoms pointing to clots, also called pulmonary embolisms, which can lead to cardiac arrest and death. But researchers in the PESIT (Pulmonary Embolism in Syncope Italian Trial) study used a diagnostic workup to assess the presence of the embolism and found it was present in about one out of six, or 18 percent, of the patients. Although there is clear evidence that women experience ischemic heart disease (IHD) differently from men because of both sex and gender differences, significant gaps in scientific knowledge of the risks, mechanisms,

assessment, interventions and symptoms for women with IHD remain. Tremendous progress has been made in building the science of how women experience IHD, but much remains to be done to translate the science into practice and education, and to continue to expand the science.

Prevention

Lifestyle habits such as not smoking, regular exercise, diet and weight management play a role in reducing heart disease risk. But so does genetics. Research published in the “New England Journal of Medicine” found there might be a way to at least partially help those people with high genetic risk. Across four studies with more than 55,000 individuals, researchers found that among participants with a high genetic risk for cardiovascular disease, maintaining a “favorable” lifestyle was associated with a nearly 50 percent lower relative risk than those with an “unfavorable” lifestyle. Not surprisingly, the “unfavorable” lifestyle included the usual suspects:

smoking, obesity, lack of exercise, diabetes and poor diet.

Danger for women

Women should “Know Your Numbers”. By this, it means women should know the numbers that can indicate a risk for heart disease and stroke, and work to manage that risk, if needed. They are: blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and BMI (body mass index). Cardiovascular diseases claim the life of one woman every 80 seconds in the US, but the truth is these diseases are 80 percent preventable by education and action. Remember: all women should know their numbers to reduce risk.

FirstMed private health clinic carries out cardiovascular risk assessments designed to give a basic result of heart health and uncover possible risks that may require additional monitoring.

FirstMed locations:

Hattyú utca 14, 5th floor, District I
Húvösvölgyi út 181, District II
24-hour telephone: (+36-1) 224-9090
www.firstmedcenters.com

“THE TUNNELS. THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE ESCAPES UNDER THE BERLIN WALL” BY GREG MITCHELL

BRAVERY BENEATH BERLIN

No matter that East German leader Walter Ulbricht dubbed the wall built on August 13, 1961 to divide Berlin as an “anti-Fascist protection barrier”. To the free world it was an affront to human dignity and freedom, and entrapped East Berliners promptly began to attempt to go over it, through it or, eventually, under it.

Early escape attempts involved fake IDs, people smuggled under car seats and dashboards, 200-yard swims under rifle fire across the Spree river, jumps from windows onto mattresses, sprints through the death strip and other brave attempts, sometimes with fatal results.

Oddly, perhaps, many of those who turned to tunnelling after the Wall was strengthened were West Berliners, usually students, who dug into the East, rather than vice-versa. Needless to say, whichever way they went it was dangerous work with rudimentary equipment, an added hazard being the many East German Stasi informers spying on them.

Author Greg Mitchell is described by his publisher as “a critically acclaimed history writer”, He does not speak German so he needed assistance to use long-secret but now-declassified documents from the Stasi archives, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the Library of Congress.

Mitchell also found and interviewed many of those involved in the tunnelling, and he says all his reprinted

conversations and information are as were because he never extrapolated. A good proportion of his gripping book centres on two tunnels in particular. US television networks NBC and CBS heard about the secret projects, and raced to be first to air a spectacular “inside tunnel” special. The money the networks gave to some of the diggers in return for exclusive rights to film the escapes both helped and hindered.

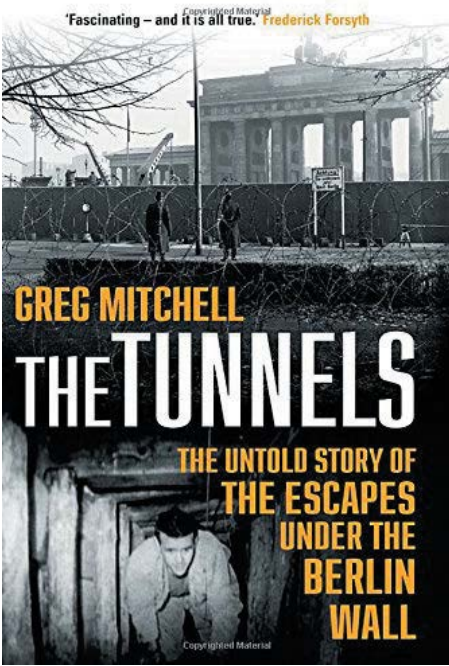
US President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, wary of anything that might raise Cold War tensions and force a military confrontation with the Soviets, manoeuvred to kill both documentaries. The US administration considered its politically controversial interference with press freedom to be acceptable at a time when the communists were delivering nuclear weapons to Cuba and there was a real threat of nuclear war. In the event, the “CBS tunnel” was betrayed by a Stasi informer, as identified by Mitchell. NBC’s documentary was delayed but eventually aired to wide interest.

Mitchell reveals the young East Berlin mother who escaped with her

baby on hands and knees through the crude underground passage, eventually divorcing her husband and marrying a tunneller.

One tunneller was an engineer who later worked on the English Channel tunnel. Among the diggers and helpers were a legendary German cyclist and an American student from Stanford. Another had already served four years in the East German gulag.

There is plenty more in this rich story.



GERMAN-BORN COMPOSER HAS GROWN TO LIKE THE SPOTLIGHT

ZIMMER CONTINUES TO SCORE

Hans Zimmer, Hollywood's most in-demand and innovative film music composer whose 100 scores have helped make over USD 24 billion at the box office, will be returning to Europe this summer following his very first US and Australian concerts. On 1 June he will perform at Papp László Budapest Sportaréna.

Zimmer, whose music can currently be heard in BBC 1's "Planet Earth II" and the Netflix success "The Crown", will be backed by his 15-member studio band, plus an orchestra and choir bringing the number of musicians on stage to over 60.

His first ever tour, "Hans Zimmer Revealed", opened with a sold-out two-night booking at London's Wembley Arena last year, the start of a 33-city schedule that included shows in Paris, Berlin, Munich, Prague, Geneva, Dublin, Vienna and Budapest.

The tour received positive reviews in each city and one result is that the 2017 sequel will see him performing in Scandinavia in May for the first time.

The concerts will be in two parts: the first being some of Zimmer's classic movie scores including "Gladiator", "The Lion King" and "Pirates of the Caribbean", and the second featuring re-imagined versions of some acclaimed scores such as "The Dark Knight" trilogy and "Inception" with special guests from the rock and pop world.

"Performing a concert series like this is something that I have always wanted to do, and I am thrilled to kick off these US West Coast dates, visit Australia and return to Europe where we had so much fun playing last year," Zimmer said. "I am very excited to get some of my very talented friends together and give our audiences an experience unlike any concert they have ever been to before."

Tickets for the Budapest show are available via www.livenation.hu and all are seated.



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20th April 2017, Bratislava

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WHAT’S ON IN APRIL AT THE OPERA?

All-singing, all-dancing

If you were fortunate enough to see the hauntingly beautiful ballet “Manon” during its brief run at the Opera House, you will have a chance once again to experience the wonderful score of Massenet as the heart-wrenching “Werther” returns to the stage. Additionally, Verdi’s “Nabucco”, a première of “Le Corsaire”, “Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci”, together with an enticing Easter weekend of shows ensure April will be a bewitching theatrical month on the opera and ballet stages.

KIÁRA ÁRGENTA

“Werther”

“Werther” has to be one of the saddest and most intense operas ever created. Massenet based his work on Goethe’s novel, “The Sorrows of Young Werther”, which details the lamentations of a depressed poet.

When “Werther” premièred in the Opera House in October 2015, it had

not been performed in Hungary for 30 years. It is risky as a production because “Werther” could all too easily be tediously depressing if the fragile Werther’s torment and lovelorn situation were his alone.

But what makes the opera so compelling and spellbinding is that the four main characters all have a nobility, a sensitivity and they too suffer anguish to varying degrees.

Werther and Charlotte’s downward spiral progresses through the seasons as the opera commences full of summer hope and ends in the

harsh chill and despair of a winter blizzard. This isn’t a story of vengeance or brutality, no one is evil or violent

and it is for this reason the audience is drawn into an opera that is all too real with genuinely likeable characters.

The opera also touches on sentiments that exist within so many of us. The most salient question “Werther” throws out is why is timing such an enemy when it comes to love?

Even if the outcome is not death, the themes of love whether realised too late or love for a forbidden per-

son are as relevant and painful today as when Massenet composed his masterpiece.

The tragic love duet between the dying Werther and heartbroken Charlotte is sweet and savage combined, whispering hope yet moaning despair. Werther spends his last moments with the person he loved more than life itself. Sensational but so heart-breaking.

“Le Corsaire”

“Le Corsaire” ballet premières on the Opera House stage on 21 April and great anticipation surrounds this long-awaited production. Literally translated as ‘The pirate’, “Le Corsaire” is a dramatic sweeping story full of danger, shipwreck and the perils and soaring highs of love with an uplifting finale.

The production is an immense collaborative effort as choreography credits after Marius Petipa and Konstantin Sergeyev are jointly shared between Anna Maria Holmes and Tamás Solymosi, while the composition credits belong to Adolphe Adam,



„NABUCCO“

Pyotr Oldenburgskiy, Cesare Pugni, Leo Delibes and Riccardo Drigo.

With a list of such top quality names, you can be assured the première will be something akin to perfection.

There exist many versions of “Le Corsaire”, and Anna-Marie Holmes has great experience to bring to this première. She choreographed her own version for the Boston Ballet, as well as staging a production for The English National Ballet several years ago.

In Budapest, with set designs by István Rózsa, “Le Corsaire” is set to be the glittering tiara of the season’s ballet productions.

“Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci”

“Cavalleria Rusticana” and “Pagliacci” only have three performance dates in April but these two short operas are unmissable. Masagni’s “Cavalleria Rusticana” is a classic tale of Sicilian love, betrayal and vengeance in one act, a concise sharp opera set on an Easter day.

Its power lies in the emotions that still resonate through contemporary society and its haunting musical score. “Cavalleria” is always paired with Leoncavallo’s “Pagliacci” where illusion and reality become horribly distorted.

“Pagliacci” (clowns), set in the deep south of Italy, is a compact drama within a drama with similarly intense emotions as “Cavalleria Rusticana”: love, betrayal, vengeance and tragedy.

There is a darkness, a sinister dimension to clowns; beneath the veneer of comedy flow dark undercurrents that Leoncavallo weaves into his opera.

As the opera unfolds, the troupe leader, Pagliaccio (Canio), is whipped up into a jealous frenzy due to his unfaithful wife Nedda (or Columbina as her stage persona).

Canio’s mournful aria “Vesti la giubba” as he paints on the mask of his Pagliaccio persona sets the mood for the inevitable tragedy. As the action grows ever more dramatic, the village audience is swept away by the circus troupe’s wonderful acting, not realising that a very real darkness is unfurling under the night sky.

The final closing line is a violent shock back to the real world: “La commedia è finita! – The comedy is finished!”

“Nabucco”

Verdi’s rich and dramatic “Nabucco” is perhaps the opera that ignited the composer’s career. Based on historical events surrounding the troubles of the Jews as they are

exiled from their country by King Nabucco, the opera contains wondrous music and an intense romantic storyline.

The audiences of Verdi’s time were so enamoured by this production that at the composer’s funeral, the crowds in the streets sang “Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate”, echoing the most famous piece of music from “Nabucco” which is “Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves”.

Literally it translates as “Fly, thought, on golden wings”. This encapsulates everything taking place on the opera and ballet stages; flying, soaring ambition and ideas, aiming to reach the chandelier through the immense power and beauty of song or dance.

And at once, we are also a bit closer to heaven itself.

“WERTHER”
UNTIL 6 MAY

“LE CORSAIRE”
UNTIL 30 APRIL

“CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA AND
PAGLIACCI”
UNTIL 17 APRIL

“NABUCCO”
UNTIL 30 APRIL

OPERA HOUSE, DISTRICT VI
ANDRÁSSY ÚT 22

ERKEL THEATRE, DISTRICT VIII
II JÁNOS PÁL PÁPA TÉR 30

TICKETS AND INFORMATION:
WWW.OPERA.HU/PROGRAMME
(THERE ARE ALTERNATE CASTS
FOR EACH PRODUCTION, SO
CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS)

INTERVIEW WITH FAUSTO ARRIGHI

“THERE IS A REVOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL RECIPES GOING ON IN HUNGARY”

If there is someone who knows how good food should taste, it’s Fausto Arrighi, the former director of the Italian version of “Guide Michelin”. The passionate restaurant tester has been on the road for over 30 years to find the best of the best and to award them the renowned Michelin star. The Hungarian Dining Guide team managed to convince him to help select the best Hungarian restaurants this year at the Volkswagen-Dining Guide gala in February. We asked him about Hungarian products, his favourite Hungarian dish and his prognosis of the local fine-dining culture.

DORIS-EVELYN ZAKEL

How did the team of the Volkswagen-Dining Guide convince you to come to Hungary and test the best restaurants here?

This was very interesting, since first I have to understand how the gastro-nomic scene of the current country is built up, before the testing can begin. I also have to get an overview about the regional gastronomy. When I got the invitation, I only thought about it for a short time and then I decided to come. This invitation was a really big honour for me.

And now that you have tried the dishes at the best Hungarian restau-

rants, what is your impression about the Hungarian cuisine?

Its main strengths are the very simple and traditional recipes. I think that the modern restau-rants are very interesting, since the products used are often very simple and original, so typical for Hungary, yet the experience is very avant-garde.

So did you find that the Hungari-an products are a very good basis to be used for modern recipes?

In my opinion there is a revolu-tion of recipes going on in Hungary right now, since the modern cuisine is more characterised by light dishes and is less fatty than the traditional

Hungarian kitchen. In this context yes, the products are very good for this, it’s only that they have to be pro-cessed in a different way than before.

You have already been in Hungary a couple of times and you have already tested many restaurants. Was it possible for you to get to the end of your long list, or do you have to visit again?

Well yes, let’s put it like this: I have already tested the most inter-esting restaurants but there are sim-ply too many of them. Furthermore, I have also tried to visit some of the good restaurants outside Budapest, in the countryside. There is a large selection of these restaurants and they are completely different from the ones in the city.



FAUSTO ARRIGHI (SECOND FROM RIGHT) AT THE AWARD CEREMONY OF THE VOLKSWAGEN DINING GUIDE

Now that you have tried so many modern and traditional restau-rants too, what is your favourite dish in the Hungarian cuisine?

What I really like are the little bit sour dishes in Hungary, since they are so very different from the other dishes in Europe and for that reason they are very special. Sometimes they were too sour for me personally, but I still found that they were interesting. From the traditional dishes I like the goulash the best, especially when it’s prepared in a little bit lighter way.

During your career you have dealt with the Italian cuisine most of the

time. Italians have a long tradition on the fine-dining scene, of course. Do you think that Hungary might be on the right track to develop a high-er level of gastronomy?

There are differences, of course, since in Italy there is a long tradi-tion of high-level eating culture, which is still in its infancy in Hunga-ry. In a few years you will surely find here a similar quality as in Italy, but for the moment there are still large differences. Still, Hungary is on the best track to get there.

At the gala evening the best Hungarian restaurants were awarded in many different cate-gories. What is the importance of the evening to you?

I have been working for the Guide Michelin globally for 36 years and at the gala we saw the result of one year of intensive work. The new guide is the result of a fantastic co-operation and joint effort of the Hungarian team and myself. Of course, it’s the most exciting for the chefs, who wait spellbound to find if their work is going to pay off and to see if they got better in comparison to last year.

PRIZE AWARD GALA OF THE VOLKSWAGEN-DINING GUIDE

The Best Hungarian Restaurants

They are the Oscars of Hungarian gastronomy: the prizes awarded each year by the Volkswagen-Dining Guide, primarily the “Golden Frying Pan” for “Restaurant of the Year”. This year’s winner is Costes, the first Hungarian restaurant to win a Michelin star, in 2010. Other successes at the recent prize-awarding ceremony included “Best Chef”, “Most Innovative Kitchen” and “Most Promising Restaurant”.

KATRIN HOLTZ

The event centre TEREM Budapest was packed for the gala evening, with everyone who is anyone in the Hungarian gastronomy scene there to hang out with the best of the best.

Costes is Restaurant of the Year

Earning 93 of the possible 100 score in the evaluation by Hungarian and international testers, including Italian chef and Michelin tester Fausto Arrighi, Costes improved on its sec-

ond place last year. The prize, which comprises a framed certificate and a golden frying pan, was received by chef Eszter Palágyi, who has been leading the kitchen of the Michelin star restaurant for almost two years.

Several other awards were distributed, sponsored by companies from the gastro industry and the financial sector. MÁK was named most innovative kitchen, sponsored by household appliance manufacturer Neff. Ádám Garai from gourmet restaurant Olimpia won the title “Young Talent of the Year”, from the Gyulai Pálinka distillery.

“Chef of the Year”, sponsored by Nespresso, went to Ákos Sárközi, of Borkonyha. Babel Budapest was selected as “Most Promising Restaurant of the Year”, awarded by Unicum-Riserva.

For the first time this year a one-time gastro-nomic group performance was awarded. The prize sponsored by financial services provider K&H private banking was handed over to the Hungarian team that made it to the finals at the latest Bocuse d’Or chef competi-

**COSTES
CHEF ESZTER
PALÁGYI
RECEIVED
THE GOLDEN
FRYING PAN**



tion, comprised of chef Tamás Széll and Szabina Szulló, Zoltán Hamvas, Kevin Szabó and Frigyes Vomberg.

One of the biggest surprises at the gala was the winner of the “Best Streetfood” title, sponsored by Staropramen Brewery. Kemencés Pizza Pizzeria, which has been only known to insiders so far, scored in this category. At first look the restaurant in District XV is not a real eye catcher, but its paper-thin pizzas layered with high-quality ingredients won over the hearts and bellies of the jury.

Hungary’s top restaurant guide

After the distribution of prizes the guests at the Volkswagen-Dining Guide gala had the opportunity to test the culinary arts right there. Catering for the evening was done by MÁK, Olimpia, Costes Downtown,

Márga Budapest, Onyx, Platán from Tata, St. Andrea Borbár, Tábla, Laci Konyha! and Fricska Gasztropub, which all presented gourmet bites.

Where there is such a wide selection of high-class restaurants with their own special character as in Hungary, it is especially important to have a clear overview for diners. This is provided by the Volkswagen-Dining Guide TOP100 Restaurant Guide this year again, which was also presented during the gala evening. This is on sale at certain book stores, newspaper stores and service stations for HUF 1690.

The book has more than 300 pages ranking the best 100 restaurants in Hungary plus a wide selection of further restaurant and streetfood recommendations. For every restaurant there is a description in Hungarian and English, with notes on the atmosphere, price level and kitchen.

THESE ARE THE TOP10 HUNGARIAN RESTAURANTS OF THE YEAR:

1. COSTES
2. BABEL BUDAPEST
3. ONYX
4. BORKONYHA
5. COSTES DOWNTOWN
6. OLIMPIA
7. SALON
8. ST. ANDREA BORBÁR
9. ARANY KAVIÁR
10. MÁK



HELLO HAL IN DISTRICT IX

FIGHTING THE CURRENT

As many sushi bars have opened in Budapest recently as sand by the sea. However, not a lot of people have heard of a fish bar, and Hello Hal in Ráday utca will be a real discovery for all those who are brave enough to let go their traditional images of fish dishes and are ready to try something new.

DORIS-EVELYN ZAKEL

Hello Hal surprises its guests with innovative creations made of fresh sweetwater fishes from domestic stock of high quality but without flaunting the overdriven flair of many fish restaurants.

Culinary weapons against prejudices

Did you ever hear of a meat-free version of “kolbász” or of a typical Hungarian “paprikás” that is fully made without using chicken meat? The Hal’a carte (“hal” is fish in Hungarian) of Hello Hal offers these

kinds of surprises thanks to the concept of the business manager and the creative mind of the fish bar, Szabolcs Horváth.

The passionate fisherman, who is really dedicated to catching and preparing the fish, set an ambitious goal: “I would like to prove with my concept that Hungarians should not

be scared of consuming domestic sweetwater fishes.”

According to his opinion, there is a broad-spread scepticism against fish, and the consumption of domestic fishes almost completely disappeared from Hungarian tradition. Horváth believes that the reasons for this are mainly people’s lack of trust in the quality, high process, lack of knowledge about the right preparation methods and the fear of bones. He fights with all the culinary tools to smash these prejudices.

Innovative fish creations: gyros, burgers and carp chips

And he does it with success. Not only because you will not find any bones in the fish at Hello Hal. When you look at the Hal’a carte you will immediately notice how much at-

tention to detail was put into creating the selection of dishes. You can find everything that lives in domestic waters: ranging from carp over catfish up to zander – prepared in the form of new, innovative fish creations.

Besides the appetisers, such as the crispy and paper-thin carp chips, or the smoked catfish bites, which he says are the absolute favourites of the guests, the menu offers a colourful mixture of fish soups, streetfood variations and classic fish fillets.

The streetfood variations are a real culinary rarity. For example there is the gyros plate, which is made with the same spices as the classic version but instead of lamb or poultry it uses catfish. Still, it’s no less delicious than its meaty predecessor.

Burgers, which are enjoying a boom period in Budapest right now,

look just the same in Hello Hal as a traditional burger – the only difference is that they contain minced fish meat. The favourite of the British, fish and chips, is not to be missed from the menu card here either.

Even the lunch menu, which is changing each week, shows a lot of creativity. Sometimes they offer fish filled with cabbage leaves, just like at Christmas, at other times spaghetti bolognese, which contains catfish instead of the traditional minced meat. The dishes that enjoy success on the weekly card sometimes make their way to the regular Hal’a carte.

Domestic sweetwater fish – always served fresh

Even if you like less creative solutions and you “only” desire to



enjoy the pure, undisturbed taste of fish, you will not be disappointed at this fish bar. The carp, catfish and zander fillets come from domestic breeding, the majority of them from the area of the river Tisza.

Regular delivery guarantees freshness, enabling the fish to arrive at the doorstep of Hello Hal every second day without having to travel long routes or having to be handled by distributors.

The manager, whose mother comes from the Tisza region, knows that fish from there represent very high quality: “I have been fishing in the Tisza River ever since I was a kid, and I know that there are excellent sweetwater fishes.”

You can feel Horváth’s passion for fish and their preparation not only at his fish bar, which he opened in August 2016, wanting to bring something completely new to the gastronomy scene in Budapest. Besides Hello Hal the fish lover manages a fish snack stand in Tiszaörvény, near Tiszafüred.

As he is very self-confident about his business and wants to bring the art of correct fish preparation

closer to the Hungarians again, he also offers seminars about filleting and cleaning the fish, he gives cooking courses and appears in cooking shows.

Horváth anxiously follows the continual decline of fish consumption in Hungary; according to the latest statistics, 49% never buy fish and 42% do not eat it in general. These figures compare with 17% and 13% in the European Union, respectively.

Hungary, then, is lagging far behind the continental averages. However, if Horváth has his way, this will be changing soon. He wants to encourage a return to this healthy meat alternative, which contains vital omega-3 fatty acids and more.

“People should give fish a chance,” he says, adding with a smile: “And me too.”

Evaluation

Hello Hal fish bar is the right choice for those who would like to enjoy quality and creative fish dishes in a casual atmosphere. The interior is reserved and pure by intention, reminding us of a

HELLO HAL

DISTRICT IX, 5 RÁDAY UTCA
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FROM 11.30 TO 22.00

RESERVATIONS AT
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Nordic bistro – nothing should distract our attention from the most important thing: enjoying the food.

The most demanding of clientele should find nothing missing in the high quality of the dishes. Everyone will find something that is right for their taste – and their purse. Hello Hal is namely also quite convincing when we look at the price-performance ratio.



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THE CAPITAL WITH THE EYE OF AN EXPAT

MORE THAN A COSMETIC FIX

Social media has been agog lately with video footage of a homeless Spanish guy who was given a make-over by an upmarket salon in Palma celebrating its third anniversary in business. They transformed him from scraggy, grey-haired, bearded tramp to hippy hipster, and no doubt changed his life for the good.

MARY MURPHY

José Antonio has been homeless and living on the street for the last 25 years or so. He earns a few bob as an unlicensed parking attendant. Last week, his make-over went viral. He cried when he saw the transformation. I cried when I saw it, too.

More than a few lifetimes ago, my then boss advised me to invest in my hair, nails and glasses as these are accessories I wear every day. I took this advice to heart and pay over the odds for my hair and glasses, preferring to cut my budget in other areas to compensate for these extravagances.

I have that option. For many though, particularly those who are jobless, homeless and fighting to keep their families together, haircuts and manicures are an unaffordable luxury. And yet, if they want to have any hope of getting a job that will lift them out of the cycle of poverty in which they are spinning, they need to look the part. Salons, like the one in Palma, are fleeting ministrations to an all-too permanent need.

Ten years ago, Magdolna Rózsa was working in a posh beauty salon in Brussels opposite the European Parliament, styling the rich and famous. Today, she's a social worker in Budapest's District XIV ministering to the not-so-rich and even less famous. She's still cutting hair, doing nails and giving make-overs, but she's doing it at no cost to her clients, many of whom are jobless, homeless and looking for a way to get back on track.

So, what's new, you say? MASNI (Munkaerő-piaci Aktivizálást Segítő Nőbarát Iroda) has been doing this in District VII for ages. There, social workers work alongside hairstylists, manicurists and beauticians to prepare women for work. Magdolna ... she does it all.

A qualified hairstylist, beautician and nail technician, she also holds a Bachelor's in Social Work and is studying for her Master's. Her clients don't just go to her for a chat and a make-over. They bring their issues, their problems, their needs. And she's eminently qualified to dish up help and advice while putting the

finishing touches to that French polish or dying those roots.

Since inception, in January 2017, Tükörkép Műhely, a project proposed and sponsored by the district's Deputy Mayor, Rebeka Szabó, has seen about 150 clients: men, women and children alike. Employed full-time by the Zuglói Családsegítő Központ (Family Care Centre), Magdolna opens shop in a small, two-room salon funded by the Önkormányzat (Mayor's Office), located at Erzsébet Királyné útca 89 for two days each week.

Unlike a traditional beauty salon or barber shop, often portrayed as gossip centres and meeting points, Magdolna sees just one client at a time. Her clients are sent to her by way of a voucher from the Family Services Centre entitling them to an SOS makeover (hair and make-up as preparation for a job interview) or the full works (hair, face and nails) as a mental health need we all have, that emotional fix for when life gets too much to handle without help.

For the other three days, Magdolna works purely as a social worker.



Photos: Krisztián Kaszás

Her goal, though, is to work the social salon full-time. She wants to set up a foundation to make it happen, to offer these services, free, to people in need from all over the city, not just from Zugló. She wants more beauticians and stylists to get the basic qualification required to work in social work so that this particular blend of skills can be put to good use. [And she's in need of a pro bono book-keeper.]

During the conversations she's had with her clients, Magdolna has seen other needs emerge. A clean shirt. A smart jacket. A pair of decent shoes. Even a bus ticket to get to the job interview. Some clients are hungry for nutritious as well as cosmetic sustenance. They have kids who haven't had a new toy in years. They're in temporary housing hoping against hope to get a job that will right their world. Magdolna does what she can.

Crammed into her two-roomed salon are clothes, shoes and toys, all donated for her clients. They can come here, find an outfit, get a new look and leave with hope in their hearts and a spring in their step.

A single mother of two, Magdolna has first-hand experience of how life can knock you over. Her 10-year-old son celebrates two birthdays. One is the day he was born, the other the day he was reborn. Three years ago, he had a bone-marrow transplant and is currently symptom-free. Yet it will take another two years for doctors to certify that the leukemia has left his body for good.

What spare time she has when not looking after her kids, working full-time and attending university for two days every other weekend, Magdolna donates to homeless shelters and other temporary homes. She regularly organises job-seeker events with the district, preparing

her clients mentally and physically for meetings with potential employers at mini job-fairs.

Hair dye, hair products, nail polish and creams don't come cheap. Magdolna works with local suppliers and distributors, often translating product information from English to Hungarian taking payment in product. Recently, the charity arm of the Irish Hungarian Business Circle, in recognition of what she is accomplishing, has offered to help out. Members will soon go to redecorate the salon and kit it out with shelves, mirrors and wardrobes. Check the IHBC Facebook page for details.

This is how we change the world: one small project at a time.

Mary Murphy is a freelance writer, public speaker and a member of the Irish Hungarian Business Circle. Read more at www.unpackingmybottomdrawer.com

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Fax: +36-1-240-7583

E-mail: editor@bzt.hu

Internet: www.budapesttimes.hu

Managing Editor: Attila Leitner

Writers/editors: Christopher Maddock, Mary Murphy,
Karin Holtz, Doris-Evelyn Zakel, Carmen Cracknell,
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Translator: Edina Nagy

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WHAT'S ON?

Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum: Saturday chamber music
recitals in museum with reconstruction of the compos-
er's last Budapest flat containing his original instru-
ments, furniture, books, scores, personal objects and
memorabilia. District VI, Vörösmarty u. 35. [www.lisztmu-
seum.hu](http://www.lisztmu-
seum.hu)

Budapest Congress Centre:
Occasional pop and ballet shows.
District XII, Jagelló út 1-3. www.bcwtc.hu

Budapest Jazz Club: Regular programming of mostly
Hungarian jazz. District XIII, Hollán Ernő u. 7. www.bjc.hu

**ARCHIV | Exhibition by the Students of the Applied Art Depart-
ment, Sopron University:** This series is organised in Múcsar-
nok#Box, which introduces the various institutions of uni-
versity art education, was launched more than a year ago.
Sculptor and medallist Tamás Soltra E., the curator of the
exhibition, will present his analysis of form foundation cour-
se and the 'archive' that has been built during the course.



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STARRING BAD BOYS OF DANCE

Rock the Ballet

7TH MAY 2017 19:00 BUDAPEST → ERKEL THEATRE

The idea is as simple as brilliant: the world-class dancers are dancing in front of exciting video projections to the biggest rock- and pop hits.

The idea of 'Rock the Ballet' came from Rasta Thomas and his wife, Adrienne Canterna. The American Rasta Thomas is an exceptional talent who won prizes at almost all of the famous ballet competitions all over the world. In 2007 he founded his own company - he wanted to put the whole spectrum of dance on the boards. His idols are not only the classical ballet dancers like Michail Barisnikov, but also the pop legend Michael Jackson and the actor and kung-fu fighter Bruce Lee. 'When I founded the group, I wanted to create something unique that has never been seen, yet.' - he describes his own dream. Since then he has only worked with such young dancers who do not want anything else but to 'live the dance and to breathe the dance'.

Since 2008 'Rock the Ballet', the multimedia dance performance has continuously toured on 4 continents - more than 2 million fans have seen the show during 750 performances in more than 20 countries of the world.

'Rock the Ballet' mixes the classical ballet with the new dance styles in a very creative way. All of the 7 dancers danced previously at big classical ballet companies, they performed in Broadway- and Hollywood shows,

and they all received an outstanding classical ballet education at the renowned schools of the United States of America. The 'Bad Boys of Dance' is composed of such cool guys whose belief is that the ballet should be as sexy and entertaining as a pop concert. Assorted songs from the international hit lists, charismatic dancers, breathtaking choreographies, great video projections and sexy costumes: 'Rock the Ballet' is a performance with great hits and outstanding dance.

The company of Rasta Thomas received fantastic critics and standing ovation at the stages of the USA and Europe. It is guaranteed that the spectators will see a real catharsis on the stage. The performance will be an unforgettable experience for every age group.

'Rock the Ballet' is touring Europe again, this time it is also coming to Hungary for a short tour - with the hits of Rihanna, Queen, David Guetta, Beyoncé, Coldplay, U2, Michael Jackson, Prince and similar big stars.

**THE SHOW WILL COME TO BUDAPEST (ERKEL THEATRE)
ON 7TH MAY 2017 AT 19:00!**



★★★★★
'AMAZING. GREAT DANCERS. BRAVO!'
The New York Times

★★★★★
'PHENOMENAL. UNFORGETTABLE.'
The Washington Post

★★★★★
'THEIR TECHNIQUE IS IMPECCABLE'
New York Magazine

★★★★★
'THE SHOW CONQUERS THE WORLD'
SonntagsZeitung



ENERGY, SEXY.
POTENT, AMAZING!



FARMER'S BRUNCH

On this brunch at Brasserie & Atrium we bring organic freshness straight from the country right to your table. We richly piled our buffet table with dishes good for you and the environment. Crisp, sweet fruits, delicious vegetables, immense selection of artisan farmer sausage full of flavours and hand-made cheese from the Bükk Mountains. Sustainable and superior.

Date | 9th April, 2017, 12.00-16.00

EASTER BRUNCH

Our Easter Brunch brings together modern customs and old traditions to celebrate the coming of the spring and the rebirth. A giant bunny and Roy the squirrel welcome our guests with chocolate, sprinkle the ladies and offer a glass of pálinka. Eggs, ham, lamb and other delicacies call our visitors to our special Easter buffet. A salon band's live music composed for this event accompanies the delightful brunch, where the little ones may even embark on an egg-hunt adventure.

Date | 16th April, 2017, 12.00-16.00



MATYÓ BRUNCH

Let us introduce you to Hungary's famous handicraft the Matyó needle-work, which is characterized by colourful, floral patterns. Our Matyó style buffet offers delicious, honest and diverse dishes that match the lively ornaments. We serve a rich selection of house wines, Hungarian beers and Hungarian sparkling wines next to the food. Salon music by the Csicsó Band elevates the mood of the afternoon.

Date | 23rd April, 2017, 12.00-16.00

ROYAL BRUNCH

We came up with the idea of Royal Brunch to celebrate and commemorate the heritage of Grand Hotel Royal. On this occasion, we invite you to a time travel. Brasserie & Atrium transforms to an exhibition room and we start our journey in 1896. While having your brunch prepared from the best of our traditional and contemporary cuisine, you are going to be given a glimpse into the present days of Corinthia. Your guide is our Senior Manager on Duty, Tibor Meskál, who started his career in the hotel in 1962.

Date | 30th April, 2017, 12.00-16.00



Location | Brasserie & Atrium Restaurant

Price | HUF 10 500 per adult (except for the Easter Brunch, which is 11 500 HUF).

50% discount for children between 6 and 12 years old and complimentary for children under 6.

Please note that a 12% service charge will be added to your final bill. The entire service charge is distributed to our employees.

For further information and bookings, please contact us on +36 1 479 4850 | cuisine.budapest@corinthia.com

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