

Title of this story:

“From the bottom of an old storage box”

Written by M.Sc. Henning Schultz, Denmark.

(This story tells the history about the Hungarian freedom fighter Erika Kornelia Szeles (1941-1956))

PREFACE.

This long story is about how the young, poor and fatherless cook apprentice ERIKA, after 50 years oblivion, became the Hungarian nation's revolution icon.

CHAPTER 1. THE STORY TAKES ITS BEGINNING.

In 1996, my wife and I bought a house in Kongens Lyngby north of Copenhagen in Denmark. We were expecting a baby, and therefore we needed more room than in our old two and half bedroom apartment.

Shortly after we had moved to our new house, my father asked me to come and pick up three old and dusty storage boxes, that he had kept in their basement since I moved away many years ago. I picked up the storage boxes and put them in a corner in the basement of our new house.

In the beginning of 2006, I started to tidy up in our basement. We wanted to throw out a lot of the old stuff including the old storage boxes. I looked into the boxes. There was nothing of interest in the first two boxes, so I threw them away. In the third box, I found some old school books from 1956, from the time I went to school at Øregård Gymnasium in the town of Hellerup. One of the books was entitled “Danish grammar for high school students”. It was the school book that I hated the most, so I threw in the waste bin right away. Beneath the school books, there was a large number of old Danish newspapers from October and November 1956 that my father had collected 50 years earlier and later had forgotten all about. These newspapers, I have later donated to the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest.

BUT THEN - right down at the very bottom of the third storage box I spotted **three old numbers of the picture magazine “Billed Bladet” from 1956**. Considering their old age, they were in a good state, only slightly faded. The magazines contained a lot of photos from the Hungarian uprising 50 years ago.

This story takes its point of departure in these three magazines, especially one of them.

The story about Erika Kornelia Szeles started in 1956, when I was a young carefree teenager, who lived in the town of Hellerup north of Copenhagen in Denmark. We were a family of six persons. My father was the General Manager of the Danish Civil Defence. So, in my family we discussed

both national and foreign politics every day. Especially East- West relations were often one of our issues.

We had a daily subscription to two newspapers and we had two radios, but we did not get a television until 1958.

At the Yalta Conference in the USSR in February 1945, the four belligerent Superpowers from the Second World War had divided the postwar Europe into two spheres of interest. Denmark was placed in the western US dominated sphere, whereas Hungary became a part of the USSR Eastern Europe sphere.

The division of Europe did not lead to a peaceful postwar development. First of all we had the Berlin blockade in 1949, then the uprising in 1953 in east Berlin in the DDR, then the riots in Poznan, Poland, and then on **October 23rd 1956**: The Hungarian Revolution.

I experienced an unpleasant tension in my own family during this uprising. We listened to the radio and read the newspapers, but we missed out pictures of the events. At that period, there were almost no photos in the Danish newspapers, and as mentioned before, we had no television. Therefore, I bought three numbers of the Danish weekly picture magazine "Billed Bladet" for my pocket money from the nice man at the local tobacco shop on the corner of Maglemosevej and Strandvejen in Hellerup. At that time, Billed Bladet was the leading weekly picture magazine in Denmark at the price of 75 øre.

The Hungarian uprising against the communist dictatorship had the unanimous support of the West, but they didn't dare to intervene – for fear that breaking the Yalta-agreement could lead to nuclear war. This fear was present despite the fact that the Soviet Union had broken the Yalta agreement with the Berlin Blockade in 1949. When the Suez crisis came along, at the same time as the Hungarian revolution, the West quickly lost their commitment in the Hungarian Revolution. Oil from the Middle East was more important than a revolution in the eastern bloc. This gave the Soviet Union great freedom, when it came to fighting the Hungarians, which they did with great brutality.

A very regrettable outcome of the then geopolitical situation.

And what about the Billed Bladet magazines I had? I soon forgot all about them. My teenage life was filled with other things...

CHAPTER 2. FEBRUARY 22nd 2006.

Now we job forward in time to February 22nd 2006. The scene is the basement under my house. I was looking down in the bottom of the third old storage box earlier mentioned. I was speechless. I stared at the three picture magazines. "Well, well, wasn't that the girl with the submachine gun from the Hungarian Revolution?...", I thought. I ran up the stairs and called on my wife.

"Hey. Look here Ida! Do you know this girl?" I was pointing at the front page of one of the magazines.

“Oh... yes I do. I have seen that picture before”, my wife said, “She was in my history book in the primary school. I think it was 5th or 6th grade. She left a deep impression on me”

I was standing with Billed Bladet of November 13th 1956 in my hand. On the front page there is a picture of a 15 year-old Hungarian girl in a padded jacket. In the text below the picture it states that her name is ERIKA, she is 15 years old and will fight till the end. Over her shoulder hangs a loaded Russian PPsh 41 submachine gun. A revolver peeks out of her jacket. A stunning picture. You are met by two dark eyes that lock themselves deep in your heart. Her gaze is so breathtaking and engaging, that it stores itself in one's brain and heart forever. She had a Madonna-like charisma.

Now, fifty years after I saw the picture for the first time, it still had a strong effect on me. It was a strange experience once again, to read these almost 50 year old magazines.

I thought about how my buddies and I, back in 1956, were fascinated by this young and pretty freedom fighter with the loaded gun. Frank, Niels, Carl Christian, Haagen, Maurice and I starred at her. We were all 15 years old, just like Erika. She was something completely different from the Danish girls: She was both brave and attractive.

CHAPTER 3. “I WANT TO FIND ERIKA”.

Now I got the crazy idea, that I would try to find the girl in order to give her the magazine with her photo on the front page. She should be 65 years old by now, perhaps she had children and grandchildren.

She had to be somewhere in the whole wide world. So, I planned a global search...

Initially I thought that she must have fled from Hungary. Because of the famous picture with the submachine gun she was known around the world. Therefore she must have fled. The reconstructed Hungarian Communist Party, which was led by **János Kádár**, would have captured and executed her, if she had stayed in the country.

I sent out a request (with her front page photo addet) on the internet about any information that could be relevant for finding Erika. I tried in Austria, then in Germany, the US, Canada, Australia and lastly Denmark. I found nothing. Then I tried all the transnational search data bases that I could find online. Still nothing. No results at all. Meanwhile I was reading tons of books and newspapers hoping to find something. Still nothing. The Danish 6½ kg newspapers about the Hungarian revolution of 1956 from the bottom of the old storage box were read from start to end. One paper noted that Erika had died during the revolution, but they didn't mention any source. During this period I went to Budapest twice, to follow up on some clues I had found. Sadly, they too didn't lead to anything useful. The revolution in 1956 was forgotten. The superintendent of

the cooking school that Erika went to claimed, that she had never been a student there, and the hotel manager of Erika's Hotel Béke told me, that they didn't have an archive over previous employees and so he knew nothing. It was also most surprising, that The Historic-Military Institute and the so-called 1956-Institute in Budapest refused to take part in my investigation.

Then I contacted a couple of the biggest newspaper and TV stations in Budapest, but no one wanted to participate in my project to detect Erika. It was too long ago.

"We have moved on. Forget the past", was the general message

Only a small newspaper, Magyar Nemzet, found the project interesting. The Chief Editor Lukacs Csaba and I discussed the project thorough. Mr. Csaba was thrilled that such a project was underway and the paper brought an advertisement of loss. Unfortunately it only caused a few calls without substantial content.

As a curiosity, I will mention the following story: After the end of World War Two the organisation "Save The Children" had created a big program to help poor and starving children in Europe. A thorough look through their comprehensive archives in Denmark revealed that Erika had been to Denmark for three months in the summer of 1948 to gain some weight. She was part of a group of 500 Hungarian children. There came a total of three groups in the period 1946-48 each consisting of 500 children. Erika stayed at a Danish book printer on Roskilde Landevej near Copenhagen. It was exciting news but sadly it didn't lead anywhere. The book printer kept a contact with Erika's mother for some years, but the contact faded out and the book keeper died many years ago.

It was at this time that I decided to stop my long investigation. I was very disappointed with the missing results, but I didn't want to end like some sort of an idealistic Don Quixote. The three magazines would end their days in a dustbin outside our house.

CHAPTER 4. THE HUNT INTENSIFIES.

I had given up the hunt for Erika, when something quite unexpected happened at the end of 2006. In an old Danish newspaper from 1981 I found, by some fortunate chance, the name of a Danish man, who came to Denmark as a Hungarian refugee in the beginning of 1957. He seemed to know something about Erika. I traced him to Copenhagen.

One day I called him and asked, if we could meet to an informal chat about the Hungarian uprising 50 years ago. I had taken the "Erika-magazine" with me when I rang the bell. He immediately asked me, if I would like to drink a Unikum Zwack. We did so.

Now I showed him the Erika-magazine. He grabbed it and became clearly very moved.

"Oh, no, it is her, it is her, it is Erika.....", he stammered. His name was **József Árki.**

Then we had a very long conversation.

József was born in January 1941 in Budapest. His father was unknown and his mother had left him as an infant. So he was moved to a children's home, but was subsequently put out for adoption to different families in Budapest in his childhood. As a 14 year-old boy, he started as a cook apprentice at "Hotel Royal" in Budapest. Besides he went to Dobos C. József Catering School in the district Pest. Here he met the 14 year-old Erika with the red hair. She had also just started in the Catering School. They became very close friends. Also here at this school, he met his best friend through the rest of his life, **János Aracs**.

Parallel with the cooking school, Erika worked at "Hotel Béke".

József and Erika were sweethearts for some time, József told me with a little smile.

Erika was also born in 1941, he told, maybe in the winter or early spring. He didn't remember her family name. She was an only child and lived together with her mother in a little flat in a run-down district in Budapest. Her father had been executed by the Germans during the war in 1944. Her mother provided the two of them as a typist. The mother was a convinced Stalinist.

In the autumn of 1956 Erika had a boyfriend. He was 3-4 years elder than her, concluded József. But József knew more about Erika. I will return to him later.

CHAPTER 5. OCTOBER 23rd 1956.

On October 23rd 1956 the Hungarian revolution starts.

Peacefully a large crowd of people starts to move from the district of Buda and over the bridges to the district of Pest in direction of the Parliament. The communist regime in Budapest had allowed the demonstration. En route the demonstration increases spontaneously to 2-300.000 demonstrators. All unarmed. A part of the demonstration turns to the Heroes Square, where the crowd spontaneously starts to tear down and smash the hated statue of József Stalin. Another part of the crowd turns off in the direction of the state radio, while the major part of the crowd continues to the parliament.

In the crowd moving towards the radio house we find many youngsters, among those also Erika. This crowd surrounds the radio house shouting and yelling slogans against the building, which is guarded by AVO and soldiers.

I have come into possession of a historic very interesting article written by a person, who sat inside the radio house during the siege. This article was originally printed in the paper Szabad Magyar Rádió on October 31st 1956. This paper was published by the radio's Revolutionary Workers Board. This board was closed shortly after the Russian invasion in November. The article was found by Curator **Katalin Bognar Ph.D.** from The Hungarian National Museum in February 2016. She translated it to English and kindly sent it to me.

CHAPTER 6. A YOUNG FREEDOM FIGHTER EMERGES.

The unidentified person inside the radio house catches sight of Erika in the crowd in front of the radio house. The unknown person is standing together with other staff members in the Bródy Sándor Street Department of the radio.

During the long siege the unknown person writes a long epos to and about Erika. It is named **“THE RED-HAIR GIRL”** and starts:

“I would like to talk to you and shake your hand, ask your name and ask where you have got the strength from for the revolutionary braveness, with which you amazes all of us...”

This long epos is of historical interest, because it tells how the afternoon and evening proceeds, and how and why it all ended up in chaos. Later in the epos:

“You did not start the fight. We were inside the radio, we saw and heard everything.”

The crowd outside the building now demands, that the radio broadcasts the demand from the besiegers about a “FREE HUNGARY”. The leaders of the radio refuses this demand. Instead they broadcasts an old recording of one of the hated **Ernó Gerós’** most ashamed speeches. At that time Ernó Gerós was party chief of the Hungarian Communist Party, but also a soviet NKWD agent. In anger the crowd then tries to storm the radio house, but the soldiers inside the building throw teargas against the crowd. Yet, the crowd breaks through and in panic the soldiers attack the unarmed crowd with bayonets and kill one person. **THE REVOLUTION’S FIRST VICTIM.**

Shortly after the shooting starts and the crowd scatters. Later in the night a lot of people, among those Erika, return to the radio house. Many are now armed with rifles, submachine guns and hand grenades. Heavy fighting breaks out and there are fallen on both sides. Finally the soldiers and the AVO run away from the radio building. As one of the first person Erika enters the building with the Hungarian flag in one hand and a submachine gun in the other. She is strongly agitated by the fighting. This was the first military victory of the Hungarian revolution.

“We who saw you then, will never forget you. A nations freedom was burning in you”

The parallel to Jeanne d’Arc was clear. The revolution has started, and Erika takes part from the beginning...

The Swedish press photographer **Anders Engman** from the weekly magazine “Se och Vecko Journalen” in Stockholm, hurried to Budapest together with the journalist **Ulf Nilson**. Engman took a long series of photos of the beginning uprising. The two swedes (both 24 years old at that time) also met a red haired girl standing together with a

group of freedom fighters. Regrettably neither Engman nor Nilson no longer remember where exactly in Budapest they met her, but it was somewhere in the center of Pest, Engman remembers. The date is by all accounts October 25th, the day after the Russians and the AVO started to defeat the uprising.

“Suddenly I saw the young woman”, Anders Engman has told me, “she had a white pink in her fur cap and a submachine gun over her shoulder.” Engman took two pictures of her, but they didn’t talk together. So, he didn’t know her name. The two swedes were in Budapest for three days and they lived in the private home of their Hungarian interpreter. A Hotel wasn’t a safe place, the interpreter meant.

In October 2014 a 10 seconds long film sequence emerges on youtube.com. It shows Erika in 2½ seconds starring at the photographer and surrounded by a group of younger and elder men. They are all heavily armed.

Down to smallest detail, Erika looks exactly as on the two Engman photos. Therefore I assume, that Engmans photos and the film sequence are from the same day, and eventually taken within a very short time. On this sequence the young man with the cartridge belt (see page 19) is also visible!

Maybe this film sequence is false. There seem to have been some retouching around Erikas right elbow, and one could ask, why the film sequence hasn’t emerged before 2014. This mystery may be solved later...

The Danish press photographer Vagn Aage Hansen (42 years at that time) was in 1956 employed at the respected picture magazine Billed Bladet in Copenhagen. When the revolution started he hurried towards Hungary in his VW-car together with the editor Paul Raae, also from Billed Bladet. Somewhere before reaching the frontier to Hungary they picked up editor Barfod and journalist Per Andersen from the Berlingske newspaper house in Copenhagen.

The Hungarian revolution is violent, but rather short. It has three phases.

The first phase is from October 23rd to October 28th. The freedom fighters and the Hungarian army fight against the AVO, the stationed soviet soldiers and the hastily called in soviet armoured divisions.

The second phase is from October 28th to November 3rd, where the russians withdraw from the capital and most of Hungary. Now the Hungarian rebels hunted the rest of the AVO corps. These were being killed without sentence by the summary court (see page 14).

At last the period from November 4th and forward, where the russians return in a combined attack with 200.000 soldiers, 3000 tanks, a big arsenal of heavy artillery and 160 bombers. This was the greatest Soviet act of war after the Second World War. The military part of the Hungarian revolution is being defeated in about a week.

After a careful study of more than 70 of Vagn Hansen’s Hungary photos I think, that Mr. Hansen was in Budapest in the middle of the second phase of the revolution. Later Mr. Hansen told me, that he and his group were busy getting out of Hungary, before the invading Russians sealed the border to Austria.

In John Lindskogs biography from 2004 about Vagn Hansen’s colourful life, Mr. Hansen says the following about the meeting with Erika in Budapest: “By chance I took a photo, that went around the whole (western) world. I spotted a pretty young girl with very serious eyes, standing with an alpine cap and had a Russian submachine gun over her shoulder. She was only 15 years old and her name was Erika. She had just had work as a cook apprentice, and the submachine gun was

not a decoration. She wanted to use it and she knew how to use it". Right to the young girl there was a couple of young heavily armed male freedom fighters. They had formed a resistance group with a base at Hotel Royal, where young József Arki was working. One of the young men in the group was Erika's sweetheart. We don't know his name, but he was 3-4 years elder than her, and he had her admitted to the group. He had also taught her how to use a submachine gun. He is probably the man right to her on two of Mr. Hansens photos. Together with the rest of the group, they had hunted AVO-agents the subsequent days, Erika said.

Vagn Hansens photos shows with distinctness what happened to these hated Hungarian Stasi-agents. They were flinged up in the nearest tree with the head downwards and beaten to death without legal proceedings. The corpses stayed in the trees or in the gutters as eternal fear and horror, see page 14.

Vagn Hansen had his rolls of film sent home to Copenhagen, by contacting a swede, who was to fly from Vienna to Copenhagen. They were brought right to the editorial staff at Billed Bladet in Copenhagen.

CHAPTER 7. WHAT HAPPENED WITH ERIKA?

The next we hear about Erika is a feature article in the Danish leading paper POLITIKEN in 1981. It was written by journalist Per Andersen on occasion of the Hungarian Revolution 25 years ago. Per Andersen was in Hungary together with Vagn Hansen in 1956 (see page 11). Mr. Andersen wrote, that he also met Erika. It was on the very same day when Vagn Hansen "found" her. Mr. Hansen took one photo of Per Andersen talking with Erika's mother **Noemi Blumenfeld**, while Erika and some other persons were watching. Erika could speak some German and managed as an interpreter between the two persons. This photo disappeared in 1956 without a trace until I retrieved it in Copenhagen in 2014.

Per Andersen told, that Erika made such an impression on him, that he often thought of her – even 25 years after he met her.

We now jump 25 years forward to November 2006, where I met the Hungarian refugee József Arki in Copenhagen. He knew, as earlier mentioned, quite a lot about Erika.

When the Hungarian revolution started, he was a 15 year-old boy. A few years ago, I persuaded him to write down how he met with October 23rd 1956.

"THE DAY, THAT CHANGED MY LIFE" is the name of his dramatic narrative.

"I was in the cinema called Vöröscsillad (Red Star), to an afternoon performance. The cinema was neighbor building to Hotel Royal, where I worked as a cook trainee. As I came on the street after the performance I saw to my great surprise a lot of people in the street. Lorries were filled with young people, who waved the Hungarian flag. Hammer and sickle were cut out from the middle of the flag. They sang national songs and were filled of joy. People shouted, that all of us should go to the Heroes Square (Hősök Tere), where Stalin's statue stood. People yelled loudly: "Down with Stalin's statue. We want all Russian soldiers sent home. No more red stars. No more forced Russian language. No more Russian morning songs in the schools. Independent Hungary !!" They now began to cut with weld flames at (the 8 meter high) Stalin's knee. Some yelled, that

one should lay a watch in front of Stalin, and when he bowed down to pick it up, one should kick him in his arse so he would fall automatic. After an hour, he fell down from his (10 meter high) cement block. What a rejoicing !! I will never forget it !! Later the statue was dragged through the town to the Opera House in the center of the town. Here people attacked it with hammers in a fit of bad temper and shattered it into small pieces.

Later in the evening someone cried that the crowd should assemble at the radio building. This was under close guard by the AVO. There was posted a lot of police in a ring with their submachine guns pointed at us. It was alarming. Now they threw teargas grenades against us and began to shoot.

I started to run away together with the others. A man was hit and the blood ran down his arm and hand. Now people went completely berserk. Someone shouted, that the crowd had to get weapons from the weapon factory in the neighbourhood. Lorries drove after pistols and submachine guns. People took what they wanted !!

I do not remember when I came home, but it was very late.

Next day became a MIGHTY demonstration, and there was proclaimed an exit ban from the evening. The day after Hungarian soldiers started sharp shooting after Russian soldiers who were ordered to fight against the people.

I was met by a horrible sight. A lot of Russian soldiers laid in the streets. They were burnt. As a 15 year-old boy, it was an ugly experience !!!”

József and I talked for a long time about the Hungarian uprising and Erika. As earlier mentioned József met her at a cooking school in the northern part of Pest. He was then 14 years old. The two youngsters had a very close friendship.

I asked him if he knew what has become of Erika and her group of freedom fighters .

The group used Hotel Royal as their local resistance base, József told. Therefore he was very close to the group. Among others, he supported the group with food from the hotel. The group consisted of young people up to around 22 years. Erika was the youngest and the only female. They were very active during the first phase of the uprising. In the next phase the group quickly found out, that the Russians were bluffing. They only negotiated with Imre Nagy's revolutionary government in order to draw out the time. They used the time to assemble a mighty army consisting of roughly 200.000 soldiers, 3000 tanks and a big arsenal of artillery near the border of Hungary.

Erika was very young, so her group persuaded her to bring down her weapon and join the Hungarian Red Cross, József told...

On November 4th 1956 the Russian war machine came tumbling into Hungary. Among the soldiers there were some very rough Mongolian and Caucasian special units. The Hungarian “contra revolutionary uprising” was defeated with great brutality. After about a week, the Soviet army won the military victory in Hungary. The Hungarian army and the many freedom groups were wiped out!

The invading Russian soldiers were merciless. Budapest was eradicated. József Árkis Hotel Royal fell into ruins as the Russians became acquainted with the fact, that it had been a resistance base for several resistance groups.

After the military victory, it was, however, a little difficult for the Russians to reestablish the communist govern in the country. It took more than a year...

József continued his account: **“On November 7th, Erika’s group comes into heavy fighting with Russian soldiers somewhere in the center of Pest. A young man from the group, one of Erika’s best friends, is hit and deadly wounded by Russian bullets. His name was János. Appalled Erika runs forward to save him. She is dressed in a Red Cross uniform and unarmed. She lifts him and start to carry him in safety, but a Russian machinegun burst slay her. Shot down from behind. Killed !!”**, concluded József affected.

A little boy, who unluckily was in the neighbourhood of the shooting, was also hit and killed. His name was Toth Laszlo, József remembered.

Erikas group returned to their base at Hotel Royal, and told József their terrible story. They had lost both János and Erika. This was the last József saw and heard to her group. Erikas group was one of the last resistance groups in direct fight with the Russians. The Hungarian resistance groups were disbanded and the survivors fled to the West.

József ended our long and emotional talk by saying: **“Erikas mother looked after her daughter everywhere in Budapest following the days after November 8th. She seeked me out too, and asked weeping, if I knew anything about Erika. But I didn’t say anything. But a few days later, when I had gathered enough courage, I told her the truth. Her daughter was dead. She collapsed completely.**

I do not know anything for sure about what happened to her, but I think that she died in Budapest the same year. Of sorrow... So I heard.”

József Árki fled to the West 1½ months later.

200.000 Hungarians fled to the West. About 1.000 of them came to Denmark.

The subsequent time in Hungary was very hard. Therefore the Western World, including Denmark, sent comprehensive help to the Hungarian population. The Danish help was canalized through The Danish Civil Defence, The Danish Red Cross and Danish Women’s Readiness. This was supplied by a mighty nationwide collection through Radio Denmark.

CHAPTER 8. HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM.

The motive power in my project, to find Erika, came to an end with the awareness, that Erika was dead. She was in fact already dead and burried, as I saw her for the first time on the front page of Billed Bladet, November 13th 1956. Fortunately, I didn’t know this at that time.

However, I was aware, that the three magazines probably was a unique picture treasure.

Therefore I contacted the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest in order to hand over the magazines – if the museum was interested...

On November 17th 2006 I met witb curator, **Dr. Katalin Jalsovzsky** from the museum’s Historic-Photographic Department. She became very glad and thankful over my present All the photos were totally unknown for the museum, Dr. Jalsovzsky told me.

In the beginning of 2007 the Historic-Photographic Department decided to start a collection of important photos of the uprising in 1956, taken by western photographers. This initiative was a direct consequence of the Departments study of the three Danish picture magazines I had given to the Museum. **Dr. Beatrix Lengyel** from the Department therefore asked for my assistance to an attempt to try to catch 12 – 15 copies of the best of Vagn Hansen’s 1956-photos. They should be exhibited at the museum.

I started to look after press photographer Vagn Hansen in Denmark. When I found him, he lived in Frederiksberg (Copenhagen) with a beautiful view over a lake.

One Sunday morning, I rang (unannounced) his bell. The 94 year-old photographer opened the door and asked me: “**And what do you want, young man...?**”. He had a very big Havana cigar in his hand and blew a big cloud of blue smoke out against me.

We spent a long and very cosy Sunday morning together. Vagn Hansen was willing to sell 12 photos to the museum. The total price would be 18.000 DKK, corresponding to about 800.000 HUF (Hungarian Forint).

The museum was not able to raise this high amount. Therefore I asked Dr. Beatrix Lengyel for a description and a recommendation of the museum’s plans with this project. I wanted to use this project description in an attempt to find the necessary amount through Danish foundations.

Hereafter I applied all together 8 public and 3 private Danish foundations.

It all fell into place in April 2008, when two Danish private foundations consented to share the expenses. The foundations were The Alex Pitzner Foundation and The Velux Foundation.

Shortly after, Vagn Hansen and I chose the 12 photos for the exhibition in the National Museum. In June 2008 I traveled to Budapest (once again) for personally to hand over “The Photo Treasure” to the museum.

CHAPTER 9. THE EXHIBITION AT THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

On October 28th 2008 the exhibition opened at The Hungarian National Museum. The exhibition was sponsored by The Royal Danish Embassy in Budapest and The Danish Cultural Institute in Kecskemét (Hungary).

Deputy director of The Hungarian National Museum **Dr. Ferenc Szikossy** held the welcome speech.

The Danish **Ambassador Mads Sandou-Jensen** from The Royal Danish Embassy in Budapest held the welcome speech.

Associate professor Henning Schultz M.Sc., Copenhagen, held the welcoming address.

Curator was **Dr. Katalin Jalsovszky** of the Hungarian National Museum.

After the opening there was a reception at the museum. The same evening the Danish Embassy invited to a gala dinner in the magnificent ambassador villa up in the Buda mountains.

Vagn Hansen, Jakob Andersen (photographer and lifelong friend of Vagn Hansen), my wife and I lived as guests of honour in the museum’s honorary residence during the whole stay in Budapest.

CHAPTER 10. ERIKAS GRAVE.

A scientist working at The Military History Institute and Museum in Budapest contacted me shortly after the opening of the photo exhibition at the National Museum in 2008. She had been inspired by the exhibition and by my paper "The Erika File". She told me, that she in 2006 found in a death file with Erikas name. The file told, that Erika Kornelia Szeles was born on January 6th 1941 and lived in Bezered Utca (Street) no. 11 in Budapest's 8th district. The file also told, that Erika died in Peterfy Street Hospital in Budapest's 7th district on November 8th 1956. The cause of death was "shot in the neck". Besides the file told, that she was buried on Kerepesi Cemetary on December 14th 1956, more than 5 weeks after her death...

On January 2nd 2009 János Aracs finds Erika's grave. Janos is József Arki's eldest friend and he also knew Erika. The grave is very neglected. It lies on place 21/1/24 on the large Kerepesi Churchyard in the middle of Pest. On her gravestone is written; **"My dear little girl, my Erika, never to be forgotten. 1941.1.6 – 1956.XI.7"**.

He left a wreath of flowers with the names: Henning Schultz, József Árki and János Aracs on the grave.

Did Erika die during the fight with the Russians on November 7th, or did she die the day after at the hospital?? The question has come up, because the hospital says, that Erika died on November 8th, while her freedom fighter group tells, that was shot and died on November 7th. On her gravestone is written November 7th.

Maybe she was only deadly wounded during the fight with the Russian soldiers on November 7th (see page 21), and then brought to the Peterfy Street Hospital, where she died the day after by her bullet wounds. Another theory could be, that the Russians or the AVO traced her to the hospital on November 8th and executed her there by shots in her neck. The impression "shot in the neck" normally means "liquidation" ...

I have contacted Peterfy Street Hospital. Dr. Vendégh Zsolt, Ph.D., Manager of Science and Education told me, that the secret police, AVO, rubbed all medical documentation from the hospital's archives just after the revolution. **"Unfortunately, we have no information about the further history of our medical documentation robbed from our hospital by the communist ÁVH. Furthermore we are not familiar with the documentation used the scientist from The Military History Institute, thus we don't know where these case reports or any other written medical or additional reports originate from, and where they are available today. This Hungarian Revolution is very dubious and consists of uncountable and inexplicable details."**, Dr.Vendégh has told me.

A death file emerged recently (page 30), but the file tells nothing about the cause of death. Well, there are still things to clear up...

CHAPTER 11. USED AND ABUSED.

In October-November 2011 The Danish Cultural Institute in the town Kecskemét held an exhibition with Vagn Hansens photos. The town lies on the Pusta southeast of Budapest.

Compared to the exhibition on the National Museum, this exhibition was extended with a lot of information about the Danish diplomat Povl Bang-Jensen, who played a certain role in connection with the Hungarian Revolution.

My wife, our son and I were invited from Denmark to the opening of the exhibition. This exhibition was a great success, and a lot of school classes came to see it.

The iconic photo of Erika with the submachinegun (see page 15) was not only used. It was also abused. On the internet Erika flourish in many connections expressing attitudes she never had. In 2011 the Hungarian fascist party Jobbik held big open election meetings in Budapest. Here she performed as one of their heroes on big posters. She was at that time already so well known, that she also became a "tramsteamer star" (excuse me for the word)

CHAPTER 12. ERIKA BECOMES AN ICON.

60 years after the Hungarian Revolution the Hungarian post-office authorities published a moving and dramatic memory stamp in 90.000 copies. It was a 800 Ft stamp. In the middle of the stamp is Erika, surrounded by four other heroes from the revolution. This stamp was released on October 21st 2016 to be ready for release on October 23rd, the day where the revolution started 60 years earlier

I am proud but also humble, that my 60 year-old picture of little Erika rose from my dark and cold basement to become the Hungarian nation's revolution icon.

Hungary was close to the heart of the Danes. United Nations asked Denmark to receive 1.000 Hungarian refugees in 1956. They were received with open arms here in Denmark. József Árki was one of them. The refugees were easily integrated in the Danish society, and it was an advantage both for them and for Denmark.

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Henning Schultz

Associate Professor, M.Sc.
Hollandsvej 53
DK-2800 Kongens Lyngby.
Denmark.

Mail: henning53.dk

The West unanimously supported the uprising of the Hungarian people against the communist dictatorship in the country, but they dared not intervene militarily as they feared that