

NABER-NALB 1

LEGATION OF HUNGARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

November 28, 1947

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

It was a great honor and pleasure to have had a chance to speak to you again at Lake Success on the meeting of the United Nations Appeal for Children the other day.

It is indeed a great feeling to realize that the plight of the children of Hungary whose problem we discussed at Hyde Park in May, is still deep in your heart and that you have such a deep sympathy for their problems.

I have forwarded your good wishes to Mrs. Zoltan Tildy to Budapest and also your sympathy and good wishes for the cause of the Hungarian children. I know it will be a wonderful feeling for them to realize that you feel sympathy to their cause.

Referring to our conversation on Boys Town in Budapest and similar experiments in the social field in Hungary trying to solve the burning problem of juvenile delinquency, I take the liberty of sending you some material on that. I hope you will find it interesting. We think it is a rather important experiment in trying to set the idea of Boys Towns and Girls Towns into entirely different social environments, like that of Hungary, and make it work as it is. The number of boys and girls in those experiments is comparatively low, however, we hope

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will keep for  
Mrs. Roosevelt  
from Geneva -

copy of J. Nagy Budapest  
experiment -

J. Nagy

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that by those institutions we can set an example which our neighbors and other countries in Europe with similar problems can use as well.

I should like to thank you again both for your sympathy and interest in the suffering children abroad and for the honor and pleasure you gave me in our conversation at Lake Success.

Very sincerely yours,

*Ivan G. Nagy*

Ivan G. Nagy  
First Secretary of Legation

IGN:phr  
Enc.

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Hyde Park, New York

## GAUDIOPOLIS - BOYS TOWN

### BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

#### HOW IT STARTED

During the Nazi invasion of Hungary and the siege which followed, the country for the first time in many centuries became the scene of warfare. Cities, communication lines, plants, were all destroyed and millions of homes were burned to the ground. The degree of destruction was almost unequalled in all of war-ravaged Europe. In that havoc it was the children who were the most innocent victims of warfare, being left without homes or shelter. The plight of the children in Central Europe, and also Hungary, after the hostilities ceased was extremely grave. Hungary itself underwent an almost unprecedented period of inflation, due to the fact that the Germans had removed from the country all of its raw materials, its railway systems, motors, lorries, and everything of use.

Thus, it happened that in a country of nine million people the number of orphans was 200,000. The parents of many of these children were killed during the war, or if they were Jews, were exterminated by the Nazis in concentration camps. In the critical economic situation of the country, where most of the prewar institutions for child welfare, like orphanages, were destroyed, there was no organization responsible for these children. As a consequence of this, by spring 1947 out of 200,000 children, 40,000 had already become juvenile delinquents. Boys from six up were stealing and committing all sorts of petty crimes. Girls of 11 and 12 were prostitutes.

The situation seemed to be almost beyond control, although the rebuilding of the country was accomplished so fast that it was almost beyond comparison in Europe. The country had a strong vitality - stronger than any other European community to rebuild the land - that was the opinion of all foreign visitors. However, no one seemed to be able to help these homeless children and no institutions were open to receive them. It looked as though it would have to fall on the conscience of the people abroad to try to help these orphans in some way. Still, people in Hungary feeling their full responsibility for the fate of this future generation, decided to try by their own initiative within their own scope to set up a series of institutions for that purpose. So it happened that Gaudiopolis the Boys Town in Budapest was built up. The original idea was taken from Father Flannagan's Boys Town in the United States.

Boys Town in Budapest was sponsored by the Pax Social Foundation. It is situated in a residential section of Budapest and occupies a large block of seven houses. These were once first class residences but they were almost demolished by the war. Hardly anything was left of them except the bare walls and the parks. However, the ingenuity of the population of Boys Town in Budapest built up their own State within this realm. With one horse and a homemade cart they succeeded in making their own workshops, shoemaker's shop, tailor's shop, and shops for making their own furniture. They already have their own school and sports stadium which is the pride of the town, and a hospital with twenty beds.

The population of Boys Town in Budapest is 256. The following individual cases of a few of the citizens of Boys Town are examples of how these boys got into Gaudiopolis in the first place. Most of them were picked up by the police or by some church.

Francis Lenart - 14 years old, a peasant boy from the county of Bekes. His father is a prisoner-of-war and his mother is dead. The child was taken to live with relatives at Bekes. They did not give him enough to eat. One day two watches disappeared from the house. Francis was accused. He escaped and went to Budapest. He had been roaming on the streets for several days when the police picked him up. On January 28, 1947, he entered Boys Town in Budapest. First he worked in the Tailor Shop. Later he did some odd jobs outside. He earns well, is happy and has a great sense of humor. His relatives from Bekes took him back after a few months. However, he wanted to return to Boys Town in Budapest. He is back now and training to become a baker.

Lewis Foldi - American GI's brought him to Boys Town in Budapest in September 1946 when he was picked up on the Austrian border. Although he is only 12 years old he has been roaming in four different countries since he was 8 and 1/2. He has been in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Rumania. He says he was looking for his father who is a prisoner-of-war. On three occasions he escaped from the care of the Hungarian Red Cross. He has been in Boys Town in Budapest for one year, going to school and training to become a shoemaker.

John Berger - His real name and age are not known. Being of Jewish extraction his parents were deported by the Nazis. All of his relatives were killed. Today he is a happy boy working in Gaudiopolis the Boys Town.

Andrew Dullo - 18 years old. One of the strongest men in Boys Town in Budapest. For two years he has been Attorney General. The reason he was elected is because he never takes the liberty of his strength. Slow-speaking and slow to come to a decision, nevertheless he has an excellent sense of justice. His father disappeared during the war. His mother died. He did not excel at his studies in Boys Town but it was soon discovered that he had particular ability at any handicraft. Today he is organizing the electrical equipment and plumbing systems of Boys Town. He wants to become a mechanic.

Ervin Nagy - 12 years old. After the liberation of Budapest he was found in what was left of a burned-out motor car. The police picked him up. He told them that the house in which he had lived with his mother had been destroyed. They had started to walk, in the hope of finding some shelter, when an air raid came along and he was lost. For a long time he was extremely depressed. However, today he is a happy citizen of Boys Town in Budapest. At first he was stealing almost every day but now he knows the distinction between public property and private. He is a useful member of the group and is training to become a cabinet maker.

These are only a few examples of the 256 citizens of Gaudiopolis the Boys Town in Budapest.

#### WHAT IS GAUDIOPOLIS ?

Here is a short summary of Boys Town in Budapest written by Adam Horvath, the Minister of Education, (15 years old.)

"Very few people know that besides all the known big states there is a small State called Gaudiopolis the Boys Town in Budapest. It is a republic. Its leaders are members of the Cabinet who are elected by the citizens and who work for the State representing the will of its citizens. Every citizen has his own profession. Besides doing their school-work, most of them have special training also. Each boy has his own choice of what to train for. Our purpose is to become self-reliant, conscientious people in the spirit of the Bible of Jesus Christ, with a sense of criticism in ourselves, and to become educated both in mind and in some practical training. We have a President in the Republic and a Prime Minister who is the head of the Council of Ministers. He is the responsible executive power. We have three members of the Cabinet, a Minister of Education, a Minister of Economics, and a Minister of Justice. Each Minister has one Assistant State Secretary.

"Our greatest pride is democracy. Whichever part of society a citizen comes from or whatever work he does, he is equal. We have complete freedom and we jealously safeguard it. It is our own Boys Town and its spirit is its greatest asset.

"We are just the same as any other children anywhere in the world. We love games and sports but we also love to work in our city. We have already learned what most grown-ups could never learn - to live in a community and love each other. We built our own city and our own houses. We planned it and we run it."

#### THE CONSTITUTION

Following are a few excerpts from the Constitution of Boys Town in Budapest:

THE AIMS

The aim of Gaudiopolis the Boys Town is "to educate people in the spirit of Jesus Christ, to abolish social distinction, and to try to become self-reliant, conscientious, skilled and useful citizens."

Boys Town in Budapest is a Republic.

Its President is elected for a three year term.

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers run the State. Its members are the Prime Minister, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Economics, the Minister of Industry, the Minister of Public Welfare, and the Minister of Finance. Each district is represented by one man in the Council.

The members of the Council are elected by a secret ballot.

The people of each district have their own candidates.

If any member of the Cabinet reports distrust in any official of the State the Cabinet takes a vote. If the majority votes against him he is relieved of his office and a new election for his office is held. If the person in question is the Prime Minister, and the majority votes against him, then every member of the Cabinet must abdicate at once.

Any boy up to the age of 18 may become a citizen of Gaudiopolis the Boys Town in Budapest, after living for one month in the territory of Gaudiopolis, provided he does not commit any offense.

In special cases the Council of Ministers decides about situations. All those who leave Boys Town in Budapest for good, or whose citizenship is taken away by the courts of Boys Town, are no longer citizens of Gaudiopolis.

### THE LAWS

The laws of Boys Town in Budapest are made by the Council of Ministers. Every Cabinet member in his own sphere has a right to issue orders, but they have to be approved by the whole Council. The President has the executive right to veto in both the fields of law-making and justice.

### JUSTICE

Boys Town in Budapest has three grades of courts.

First grade: Its president is the Minister of Justice. Its members are the Chief of Police and his Deputy.

The Secondary Court - The Court of Appeals - is headed by the President of the State and its members are the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice.

The Third Court is comprised of Boys Town itself.

All the courts have State and defense attorneys. The lower courts are public. Any citizen of Gaudiopolis has the right to ask for assistance, either legal or political, from the courts and from the police.

Boys Town in Budapest has its own press appearing on the wall, edited and written by its own citizens. They have also built their own stage.

The grown-up leader of Boys Town in Budapest is Gabriel Stehlo, a Lutheran Minister. He believes that it was God's will and help which

made it possible for Gaudiopolis the Boys Town to become a free and independent community in war-ravaged Central Europe. After surviving the postwar starvation period and the inflation, the work of the citizens of Gaudiopolis made Boys Town a self-running concern. The number of its citizens is very small compared to the number of juvenile delinquents in the country. However, as a moral and practical success it sets a unique example to all children, not only in Hungary, but in other states of Central Europe also.