

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES II

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE #11 from 24 August 1947, Vasarnap. pg.3

The last rush to complete the reconstruction of the cathedral

by the time of its rededication

What will the temporary interior of the cathedral look like?

In general, our mental images of cities are not panoramic views but snapshots of individual details that convey the essence of a city more powerfully than birds-eye views. When you say Paris, I think of Eiffel Tower. When I hear the name of Rome, the mighty silhouette of St. Peter's cathedral emerges. Mention Prague and I see the Hradzin on a hilltop. The spirit of Athens is embodied in the Akropolis. This is how world-famous cities could be photographed; and what about Szombathely? As a prisoner of war, in a bitter moment of homesickness it was natural that I scribbled some lines about the cathedral into my diary. It was not a coincidence. It was an instinctive act at that time, but now I understand: the city of Szombathely, whether we look at it from far or close, from past or future, zoomed in or zoomed out, is the cathedral, and the cathedral is Szombathely itself. That this is not just an idea born out of benign and vague musing, is proved by the fact that after March 4, 1945, when the church collapsed with the horror of a dies irae, we are now getting ready for the feast of September 7-8, 1947.

After three years, a heroic epoch of reconstruction, the church is again standing as the symbol of unity between the city and the cathedral.

In the weeks preceding the national celebrations of the rededication, many visitors of the cathedral ask whether the work can be completed in time. We asked the most competent person, the abbot Dr. Elek SÁGHY, who gave the following information.

The scaffolds are gone and only those parts of the walls need plastering that are within easy reach. The surfaces are simple and smooth, highlighting the lines of the architecture. There are no ornaments that would distract the viewer who can now focus on the enormous size, on the harmony between columns and vaults, and on the entire magnificent structure.

The side-altars are not covered by plaster and will remain in their unornamented simplicity. Nevertheless, the altar-tables will be refurbished so that masses can be celebrated by them.

The sanctuary is completed. The plastering is mildly colored in order to match it with the red marble that survived the bombing. The old benches will be put back, as well as the canonical stalls and the copper chandeliers with light bulbs, in the same order as we got used to them in the old, splendid cathedral.

New lights will be installed behind the columns for lighting the altarpiece, Magnificat by Dorfmeister, on loan from the Benedictines of Kőszeg. It is smaller than the original painting, so the remaining space will be covered by drapes. The plastering and finishing of the choir is still to be done. The floor will be plain concrete, it will be covered by stone tiles at a later time. No benches will be present in the main aisle, partly in order to facilitate the attendance of the celebrations by as many people as possible, partly because the benches would be too costly. The old benches were all destroyed when the enormous ceiling collapsed.

Forty people are at intense work so that everything will be completed in time. According to the agreement, the contractor will transfer the church to the owner by the end of August, in order to have at least a week for cleaning and decorating the cathedral. The organization and work has already started in the church community centers, people are preparing paper decorations and embroidered banners, and the work intensifies as the great day is approaching, which will surely be a feast of joy for all citizens of Szombathely, catholic and others alike. (jp)

(Mihaly Posfai for his father Jozsef Posfai)

Ref: 1947. augusztus 24. Vasarnap – pg. 3 NYUGATI KIS UJSAG

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE #12 Vas Nepe, March 4, 2000

Bereavement day in Szombathely

The city was struck by an American aerial attack 55 years ago today – The survivors recall their experiences.

On that Sunday, March 4, 1945, nearly 260 tons of bombs fell on Szombathely in twenty minutes. The Royal Air Force and the 15th Army-Air Corps, namely the British and American Air Forces (as we understand it today) bombed the city eighteen times in the course of the Second World War. They targeted the airport most frequently, and it was the Americans who released their murderous cargo of their planes over the city most often. Assessing all the war damage, Szombathely placed fifth among the 52 Hungarian cities. There were 423 civilian casualties as well. On that particular Sunday 55 years ago, 118 American B-24 bombers dropped 259.6 tons of bombs on the city. The areas East of the Perint Creek were systematically destroyed. The planes arrived in five waves (some remember four), and circled over the city for a long time. The first wave released its bombs over the railroad station at 12:40 P.M. We asked a few of the decreasing number of survivors to recall their own experiences of the indescribable suffering by the civilian population.

There was deadly silence

Kosztolányczy Tibor experienced the events as an 11 year old. The retired engineer analyzed the aerial attacks directed against the county seat in a book, *Emlékkönyv II Szombathely 1944-1945*.

This book is no longer available even after a second printing. He remembers that certain March 4th thus: "It was a lovely sunny Sunday, a little breezy, a little nippy. The sirens sounded around 11:30 A.M. Since the city has not received an attack for a long time, my mother and I decided that it was unnecessary to go to the bomb shelter. Instead, we stayed home to have lunch. My father was at the airport at the time. We lived together with my grandparents and my father's uncle. Our lunch was not even warm yet when the bombers arrived with great rambling noise. We have been watching and waiting in the yard to see what will happen. They have been circling for a long time than the first wave turned towards the city at 12:40 P.M. They were flying low, and continued on towards East of the Reich machine factory toward their target point.

The planes were flying in a Northwest direction per our observation from our yard at Eredics Ferenc Street 23 (Szinyei Merse Pál Street today). We rushed down to the cellar because the bombs

were already whizzing by us. When the attack ceased, we came up from the cellar thinking that the bombing raid was over, and looked toward the city from the street. We asked our neighbor about what he is seeing through his binoculars. The second wave arrived in a few minutes. Looking from our yard, they seemed to fly closer to the chimney, and the explosions sounded much louder. My father arrived in the meantime, who previously observed the gathering of many airplanes from an open field. He jumped on his bicycle to warn us about the danger. He suspected that we remained in the house. Every time there was a pause in the bombing, we came up from the cellar, and together with my father, observed the planes flying more and more towards the West in the direction of the city, bombing from East to West. This meant that we would also be hit in a short while. It was possibly the fifth wave that made us run to the cellar again, prompting father to urge us to pray! I understood then the enormity of the danger and the possibility of dying. My parents ordered me to stand under the only arch in the cellar; even if the cellar collapsed, maybe I could survive. We all started praying aloud. First the swishing, followed by the shrieking sound of the bombs could be heard, as we sat in terrified expectation. Then the entire cellar started rocking amidst the enormous explosions, and sitting on the ground hunched up, we awaited the next wave. This portion of the bombing lasted several minutes. A large number of bombs exploded 600-800 meters from us. I have not yet mentioned the loud roaring of the engines that seemed to cause the air and homes quivering. I have been hearing this sound in my sleep ever since. When this wave departed, we jumped on our bicycles and rode out to the bomb shelter outside the city.

After the airplanes left, we looked back towards the city from Jégpince Street. By that time, it was covered by brownish-reddish dust, which was the consequence of all bombing raids that pulverized the buildings.

There was deadly silence. People were standing around in a state of shock. Soon, the people fleeing the city arrived. There were wounded among them; some bleeding from the ear, others from the nose as a result of the bomb blasts. They told stories of their survival and what they witnessed. We did not dare go home for a long time because due to the lack of electricity, the sirens signaling the end of the raid could not be activated. So we survived the deadly attack, but others were not so fortunate”.

Lamentation, wailing and woe

Dr. József Lelkes, a retired diocesan assistant: “ We woke to a sunny Sunday that certain day. In all probability, no one suspected that four-engine Liberators are approaching Szombathely with their deadly cargo.

A Special mass was celebrated in the cathedral in honor of Pope Pius XII. The sirens started booming at the end of the mass, signaling the approach of enemy aircraft. I was the cathedral’s parochial vicar at that time, so I moved the Eucharist down to the safety of the crypt underneath the church. Then I hurried to the cellar of the main parish hall, where 8 of us gathered and prayed together. In about half an hour, enormous rambling noise and explosions could be heard. ‘Our hearts trembled, like the trees in the woods tremble from the wind (Isaiah 24:19). Certainly, the hero was anxious then’. When I emerged from the shelter and opened the gate, I was stunned to see the City Hall lying in ruins. It occurred to me that we were 15 meters away from death. I proceeded towards the Bishop’s Palace, and reaching the corner, my heart sank. Through the debris and dust-cloud, I could see that our beautiful cathedral and its art treasures were also destroyed. The tower’s clock stopped at the time the bombs hit, indicating 12:47 P.M. Looking at the painful destruction, I was reminded of the words of Madach: Man either builds or destroys, but always does something. Just now, he destroyed. The canon house at János Szily Street 5 also received a hit. Dr. Lajos Kis diocesan representative, and Canon József Pintér died under the ruins of the house. A bomb also damaged the East Wing of the Bishop’s Palace, and two priests seminarians rushing down its stairs were also killed. The house at Ernő Hollán Street 6

was also bombed, as was Number 2, where my parents lived. We discovered the body of Mrs. József Pávó under the cathedral's quire loft while clearing the debris. She came to the church to pray for her husband who died two weeks earlier. They were both from Szeged.

I would be negligent if I did not mention all the civilian victims and their families who remember his day with tears in their eyes and pain in their hearts. I knew a father who was downtown during the bombing raid. His wife and three daughters remained in their family home. A bomb destroyed their house, and all four died. When the father discovered the bodies, his hair turned gray within minutes. No one has seen him smile since. An engagement party was held in the corner house of the Várköz that day. The bride-to-be and her parents all died; only the groom-to-be survived. I remember a mother with red eyes, who came to tell us that their house was bombed, and her daughter died under the ruins. This girl was the cashier at the Martineum bookstore.

If the chronicler wanted to describe the day of this calamity and unfurl the scroll of remembrance, he would experience what the prophet had: 'It was then I saw a hand (of the Lord) stretched out to me, in which was a written scroll which he unrolled before me. It was covered with writing front and back, and written on it was: Lamentation and wailing and woe!' (Ezekiel 2, 9 and 1)''

All our possessions lost

Dr. Ernő Fodor, a retired attorney: "We lived in the so called Klonkay-house at Vörösmarty Street 3 which is at the corner of Kisfaludy Street. The sirens sounded about twelve thirty- twelve forty-five. We went down to the bomb shelter located in the cellar, where approximately ninety of us assembled. Other people joined us from the street and elsewhere. During the bombing raid, the portion of the house facing Kisfaludy Street was totally demolished. Our survival in the bomb shelter can be considered miraculous. Towards the end of the war, some government institutions were relocated from Budapest to Szombathely. I remember two embassies; the German embassy was housed on János Szily Street, and the Japanese in the seminary. They most likely intended to bomb these organizations. I have horrific memories from the aftermath of the bombing raids. All my parents' precious possessions that they accumulated with diligent, honorable work throughout their life, was lost in thirty seconds. Nothing was left of our apartment, but that was a matter of very low priority at the time. I saw the dead body of my elementary school principal in Kisfaludy Street, as well as other acquaintances. I was 19 years old. My father-in-law rescued some employees from under the ruins of the Palace Hotel. Many people died. Some family members of Dr. Miklós Pintér were killed by a bomb on Ernő Hollán Street, as they hurried from the cathedral towards their home. That day demanded a lot of victims. The memories returned many years later. I had some clients later, who asked how much they owed me for my services, and I replied: 'I am indebted to you for a lifetime, because when we became homeless, you helped clearing the debris of our home, consoled us, gave us a slice of bread and clothing.' I recall that we took temporary shelter in the Hodászy-house in Kálmán Széll Street. We had nothing, but some people welcomed us."

Némethy Mária

Vas Népe, March 4, 2000 (Saturday)

Translation by: Elizabeth Magay

**With one million forint expense
The cathedral in Szombathely was rebuilt.**

It will be rededicated today by Cardinal Mindszenty

The biggest and most destructive bombing raid in Szombathely took place on March 4th, 1945. A large part of the city center was destroyed and Szombathely's pride, the cathedral, was in ruins.

The explosive bomb, dropped at 11:45 noon, penetrated the barrel-vault in the nave in front of the pews and exploded on the floor. The big destruction is therefore understandable. The faithful saw the sight when after repeated waves of attack they finally could come out from their basements. First it looked like the whole huge church was destroyed. The ceiling totally caved in, revealing the blue sky above.

The destruction of the pride of Szombathely, one of Hungary's most beautiful baroque churches caused much pain to the people. But the pain was soon replaced with holy fever for a wish to live, and the creative energy of reconstruction began. "Build the Cathedral" was the slogan from Bishop Sandor Kovacs. His faith and determination echoed back from thousands of believers. Already on June 10th 1945, work started to clean the debris from the site. This was followed by rebuilding. First it was all volunteer work: The citizens of Szombathely, regardless of rank or status, worked together to erase the results of the bombing. They had to remove 900 cubic meters of rubble from the church. Everyone worked hard because they believed that the church must fulfill its function as soon as possible.

After the volunteers, professional workers and engineers took over the work. Contractor Ferenc Beer's name will be forever written in the history of the church.

The reconstruction was on such a large scale that it looked like it would never be finished. They had to take down half of the facade with all the columns and statues. They had to scaffold the whole nave, in order to rebuild the whole barrel-vault. To construct the roof they used 120 cubic meters of wood and 90,000 pieces of roofing tile. For the scaffolding only they used 750 cubic meters of wood. They used 140,000 bricks, 6 railway cars of lime and 5 railway cars of cement. By the summer of 1946 the facade was completed and by winter the church was again under a roof.

This year work started again on April 9th. The Cathedral is finished on time for today's rededication ceremony. The work cost nearly 1,000,000 forints. One fifth of this came from government sources, both national and local, and the rest came from the faithful.

The Cathedral is standing again. Only a few such reconstruction projects come close in size to the one in Szombathely, and none were churches. The reconstruction is not totally finished. The side altars and side walls are unfinished, and there are no pews in the church, but the church is ready to hold services.

Possibly from Vas Nepe, Sept.7.1947 Source: National archives of Szombathely. Writer unknown.
Translation by: Edina Andraskay

Reminiscences of Lajos Kuntár About the Bombing of Szombathely

....My best remembered, most frightening experience of the war is tied to Szombathely: On March 4, 1945, the city was bombarded by several bombing raids. The aerial bombing of populated areas left the deepest impression in me, since death was so close that I could only save my life by fleeing.

The biggest and most modern printing office of the city published not only the news about Vasvár county (in the newspaper of the same name) but also took over the news from newspapers that were salvaged from Budapest. Thus the workload was overwhelming. The news about the military were confined to the Sunday editions. This is how it happened on March 4, 1945, the day of Szombathely's mourning. With private Zoltán Németh, a printer, we were busy in the basement printing the latest edition of the Hungarian Military newspaper, when the rumblings of the planes overhead became ever more loud. I ran to the backyard: By looking towards the Cathedral, I noticed several planes coming towards me. Upon hearing the intense roaring of the released bombs, I ran back to the printing office, and having no other alternative, I hid under a typesetting machine. My instinctive sense of impending danger drove me to do that. Afterwards we heard some more crackling sounds, and the room was filled with glass shards and soot. After a few minutes of what seemed an eternity, everything grew silent and we went up to the backyard. The sight before our eyes was horrific: All the houses along the Post Office lay in ruins.

There were other people working in the plant, so five or six of us looked at each other's sooty, bloody face. My ears were ringing, still I heard sounds from the ruins of the neighboring house, whimpering sounds. We went to their rescue, freeing two persons, but then we heard more approaching planes, and their roaring made us run for safety once more. At the suggestion of István Koroknay, I ran with him towards the air-raid shelter of the Premontreian monks. The close to 100 meter dash would be considered a meritable performance even by racing standards. We were running for our lives. By the time we arrived to the bank (later department store), the ever louder roar of the approaching planes almost paralyzed us. I almost felt the swish of the Grim Reaper, when garnering my last strength, I made the last yards across the width of Széchényi street. Perhaps I lost consciousness, the blast of the explosion struck me to the ground at the gate of the Premontreians. We made it into the shelter amidst the screaming roars. We were greeted by the sounds of crying, wailing, loud praying. This impression gave me a feeling of the most intense panic, such as I never ever felt again at other shelters, or even at the front.

On this sunny day Death reaped an enormous field. Hundreds of dead removed from under the rubble lay spread out on the sidewalks. By Monday morning nature eased the pain of the survivors by laying a blanket of snow over the victims...

*

Death, who at the Russian front as well as here in Szombathely was so close, has up to now eluded me, but still has been merciless: One month before my birth he took my father, later on many of my close relations: my mother, my brothers and sisters, my wife, and my only child. With my 89 years, it can arrive at any time. I am fully aware of this, but until then I will keep on working, creating, so that I may leave as many vestiges as possible after my passing. This short reminiscence is also an expression of that.

Source: Vas Népe, ANNIVERSARY, March 4, 2003. (Tuesday) Huntár Lajos
Translation by: Elizabeth and Otto Avvakumuits

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE #15 *Új Ember* 1947. SZEPTEMBER 14.

A Note from the Project Manager: This article was found in the original newspaper that was kept in the private collection of Mária Ekler, a Szombathely resident and member of the cathedral. The original is well discolored but in reasonable condition despite these many years. No English translation is available at this time. You may read the article in Hungarian by clicking on the "Hungarian Link" of the "Introduction page" (previous page). A translation would be welcomed and credit will given to the translator at the end of this work. Please notify the Project Manager at the below e-mail address so that I may stop duplicate efforts by unknown visitors to this web site.

The text is actually the major portion of the address by Cardinal Mindszenty that was given in the Főtér on September 8, 1947 with over 100,000 persons in the Főtér of the city. There may be additional information in Toronyi's book (Chapter III) "Mária Ünnepe" that will be provided on this web site shortly. A photo of the Front Page can be found below as well as a photograph of the Lapel Pin that I believe was worn by the men in their lapels of their jackets this day. It is unknown how the pin was obtained and perhaps a reader can provide additional information on it origins, distribution and other pertinent information. The pin is approximately 10 mm long and was photographed with a coin that provides a reference as to its size.



Lipótlap

III. évfolyam a 27. sz.

* KATOLIKUS HETILAP *

1947 szeptember 14

Magyar ember a világ pariatáinak élén • A valláshód és létekezmenyél • A világtól visszafordítás viszshangjal
Népessé-egyezmény és a külföldi szociális magyrok • Veszélyben a magyar termőföld és a kabirkosság enye
Keresztény hitokletatás és antiszocializmus

PENZES BALDUIN:

Mit akar az ember, ha magyar?

A VALÁSTÁRSÁG élén • A köztársasági parlamenti tisztségviselői levélükben az embereknek azt írták, hogy a magyar embernek a világ pariatáinak élén kell lennie. Ez a világ pariatáinak élén lenni azt jelenti, hogy a magyar embernek a világ minden országában, minden nép között, minden körülmény között, minden időben és minden helyen, mindenütt jelen kell lennie. Ez a világ pariatáinak élén lenni azt jelenti, hogy a magyar embernek a világ minden országában, minden nép között, minden körülmény között, minden időben és minden helyen, mindenütt jelen kell lennie.

MELŐTT az új népi demokrácia felépítésének érdekében a magyar embernek a világ pariatáinak élén kell lennie. Ez a világ pariatáinak élén lenni azt jelenti, hogy a magyar embernek a világ minden országában, minden nép között, minden körülmény között, minden időben és minden helyen, mindenütt jelen kell lennie.

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