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## Does Utopia Attract Utopia? Freemasons in Hungarian Artists' Colonies

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### 1. Definition of the Topic

At the beginning of the 20th century there were several artists' colonies in Hungary. At the same time, Freemasonry reached its peak not only in Hungary but across Eastern Europe. This fraternal, arcane organization also pursued utopian ideas with a will to change the world for the better. Some artists who lived and worked in artists' colonies joined Freemason lodges. In this article I will answer several questions: Who were these artists, and what was the connection between the Freemasons and the artists in the artists' colonies? Why did they join this organization, and did doing so influence their work?

### 2. Freemasonry

Freemasonry was established in England early in the 18th century, but its origins can be traced back to the local fraternities of the 14th century. When modern Freemasonry began, the organization had the support of the authorities. This changed with the French Revolution, whose ideological principles<sup>1</sup> – namely liberty, equality and fraternity but also

<sup>1</sup> On the philosophy of the Freemasonry cf. G. DiBernardo and W. Hess, *Die Freimaurer und ihr Menschenbild: Über die Philosophie der Freimaurer*, Wien, 2012. For a brief history of Freemasonry see H. Reinalter, Die historischen Ursprünge und die Anfänge der Freimaurerei. Legenden-Theorien-Fakten, in *Geheimgesellschaften: Kulturhistorische Sozialstudien / Secret Societies: Comparative Studies in Culture, Society and History*, ed. by F. Jacob, Würzburg, 2013, p. 49–85.

tolerance and humanity – were established by Freemasonry. The majority of lodge members stood on the side of the Revolution, and some were even involved – Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle authored “La Marseillaise”, for example.<sup>2</sup> Freemasonry was regarded as a threat to the existing political system and as a melting pot uniting intellectuals and the middle class on a spectrum of thought that ranged from progressive to radical revolutionary. Modern Freemasonry spread quickly across the continent: the first Freemason lodge in the former Hungarian Kingdom was founded in Brasov in 1749, well before the French Revolution.<sup>3</sup> Freemasonry subsequently expanded from Brasov and Bratislava, whereupon Hungarian aristocrats began to join lodges.

Freemasonry had always been more politically active in Europe’s eastern half than it was in Great Britain, Germany, the United States or Scandinavia. In 1795 Emperor Franz I ordered the lodges to stop operating because some Austrian and Hungarian brethren were thought to have been involved in the uprising against Austria. The suspected rebels were executed, and Freemasonry was entirely forbidden. This era of prohibition lasted for more than seven decades.

In 1867 the political situation improved, and Hungary became a kingdom with self-rule over internal matters only. Hungary also formed a proper parliament and government in addition to the central one. The first prime minister, Baron Gyula Andrassy, himself a Freemason, overturned Franz I’s ban after 72 years. Thus Freemasonry started to organize itself freely once more. The ‘Einigkeit in Vaterland’ (Unity in the Motherland) Lodge was established and recognized as regular by the British Grand Lodge, followed by lodges in Sopron, Temesvár, Bratislava, Buda and Pest.<sup>4</sup>

In 1886, the two Grand Lodges of the English and French Rites united and became the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary. The politician and National Museum director Franz Pulszky became the Grand

<sup>2</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, *Szabadkőművesek* [Freemasons], Budapest, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> F. Arató, *A szabadkőművesség* [Freemasonry] Budapest, 1902, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, *Szabadkőművesek* [Freemasons], Budapest, 1988 p. 50–52.

Master of the Grand Lodge of Hungary. This marked the beginning of Hungarian Freemasonry's biggest boom.<sup>5</sup> With the establishment of a Hungarian Grand Lodge, Freemasonry started to evolve. A temple was built and, in 1896, consecrated in an important ceremony attended by the Grand Lodges of Portugal, Egypt, Java, New York, North Carolina, New Hampshire and Belgium.<sup>6</sup>

The Grand Lodge supported virtually all the positions that mattered to the liberal and radical bourgeoisie and particularly for the Social Democratic Party. The main subjects were the policy of civil rights and liberties, the financial conditions of teachers, the law regulating the workforce, reform for religious operatives, the division of the state and the church, ways of instituting a secret and free voting system, free education for everyone without religious discrimination, women's rights, and agricultural reform.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the First World War, the Freemasons of Hungary were operating 86 lodges and 11 circles, 30 of them in Buda, with a total brotherhood of six thousand men.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the First World War, Freemasonry had such power that the government asked the lodges to take part in negotiations to obtain better terms for Hungary in the Paris peace treaties. At this time the radical wing of the Freemasons ascended to the administration in the Grand Lodge. This radical wing was receptive to social reforms, and during the Aster Revolution in November 1919, it supported the establishment of the Social Democratic Hungarian National Council, founded by Mihály Károlyi. Many Freemasons were part of the new Károlyi government, prominent examples being Oszkár Jászi, Lajos Bíró and Zsigmond Kunfi.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, *Szabatkömvesség a XX. században* [Freemasonry in the 20th Century], Budapest, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> J. Balassa, *A szabadkőművéség története* [The History of Freemasonry], Budapest, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> Editorial, *Kelet* [East; official Hungarian Freemasons' journal] 1918, vol. 30, no. 1, and Zs. L. Nagy, op. cit., p. 56.

On 21 March 1919, a communist counterrevolution and subsequent Romanian occupation completely changed the political balance. Freemasonry was once again forbidden, and the lodges ceased their activity. Then, on 14 May 1920, the army of Miklós Horthy ransacked the building of the Grand Lodge. During the years from 1920 to 1938, when Freemasonry was dormant in Hungary, Hungarian brethren were active in several lodges established in Czechoslovakia and Vienna. In the short period from the end of the Second World War until 1948, the Freemasons re-organized themselves. The communist regime declared that communism and far-left ideas were incompatible with Freemasonry, and on 12 June 1950, Freemasonry was forbidden once more. Since 1989, however, lodges in Hungary have become active again.

### 3. Freemasons in Artists' Colonies

My first explorations of the National Archives of Hungary revealed who the Freemasons in the artists' colonies were. The names that emerged as a result of my research were sometimes surprising, as these documents often had remained unnoticed or been quite unknown. The only artists' colony where no Freemason artists were identified is in Gödöllő. However, Mason artists worked in other colonies – in Szolnok and particularly in Nagybánya and Kecskemét. The artists who both worked in artists' colonies and joined Freemason lodges include Tibor Boromisza, Pál Jávör, József Pechán, Tibor Pólya and Perloth Csaba Vilmos<sup>10</sup>, the names Nándor Honti and Gyula Glatte appear in this respect too, but it is hard to say who was a member of any artists' colony and who was not. The circle of members of artist's colonies can be defined narrowly or widely. I am not an art historian, so my overview is focused on the relevant literature.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> M. Dömötör, *A Magyarországi Szimbolikus Nagypáholy főhatósága alatt dolgozó szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora* [Register of Members of Lodges Operating under the High Authority of the Grand Lodge of Hungary], Budapest, 1920.

<sup>11</sup> J. Murádin, *Nagybánya 100 éve* [100 years of Nagybánya], Miskolc-Nagybánya, 1996; Gy. Sümegei, *A kecskeméti művésztelep: (1909–1944)* [The Artists' Colony in Kecskemét: (1909–1944)], Budapest, 2011; I. Réti, *A nagybányai művésztelep* [The Artists' Colony in Nagybánya], Budapest, 1994.

**Tibor Boromisza** (1888–1960) had a very interesting life in which freemasonry is a sparsely detailed chapter. He started his adult life as an officer but then abandoned this career to follow Károly Ferenczy, one of the founders of the artists' colony in Nagybánya. Boromisza joined a group of young artists called Neos and spent ten years of his life in Paris and in Italy. After the First World War he became a Buddhist, joined the artists' colony in Szentendre, and worked there for the rest of his life (Plate I).

His biographer, Katalin Török, wrote:

According to the current state of research based on the scattered notes in his property only so much can be proved about Boromisza's Masonic past, that he was a member of Kőlcsey Ferenc Lodge standing under the auspices of the Symbolic Grand Lodge by 1915 and until 1918.<sup>12</sup>

But this information is imprecise because there were two lodges with the exact same name. One was situated in Pápa, in Western Hungary; the other was in Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare), in the north-east of the former Hungarian Kingdom. Boromisza did military service in both places. As a child he attended Ludovika Academy's renowned military school. As noted, he served in the military in Pápa, but this was ten years before he allegedly joined the lodge. The archival materials of the Freemasons hold additional information. After 1920, the army of Miklós Horthy confiscated not only the Grand Lodge building but also the documents in its library. The former minister of the interior, Dömötör Mihály, who had banned Freemasonry in the Hungarian Kingdom, published a list of names of Freemasons based on these confiscated documents.<sup>13</sup> According to this list, Boromisza became a member of the Kőlcsey Lodge during the First World War. I found no information about Boromisza in the documents of the Kőlcsey lodge in Pápa, but further research in the Hungarian National Archives showed that during World War I he was a member of

<sup>12</sup> K. Török, *A Nirvána-feledésen innen, a pokoli vérfarsangon túl: Boromisza Tibor festőművész és az első világháború* [From the Oblivion of Nirvana to the Bloody Carnival: The Painter Tibor Boromisza and the First World War], *Artmagazin*, 2014, vol. 6, p. 58–63.

<sup>13</sup> M. Dömötör, *A Magyarországi Szimbolikus Nagypáholy főhatósága alatt dolgozó szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora* [Register of Members of Lodges Operating under the High Authority of the Grand Lodge of Hungary], Budapest, 1920.

the other Kölcsey lodge, located in Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare), where he was living and doing military service again. The request to admit Boromisza was read in the meeting of 25 September 1915. He was admitted on 20 November 1915 with the registration number 51.<sup>14</sup> After one and half years he became a Fellowcraft Mason.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, chroniclers of the Grand Lodge wrote about the charity of the freemasons and also about Boromisza's commitment in his annual report. For example, during the First World War when they were collecting money to rebuild destroyed villages in Subcarpathia, they reported that 'The painter Tibor Boromisza offered one of his precious paintings for our action'.<sup>16</sup> While in Szatmárnémeti, Boromisza also auctioned off one of his exhibitions for charity in 1918, donating all profits from the auction to war widows and war orphans in accordance with humanitarian principles.<sup>17</sup> It is unknown whether he remained a member of the Lodge after 1918. We do know that he held important posts in the Hungarian Soviet Republic: in Szatmárnémeti he became president of the Military Council and chairman of the Social Democratic Party. As the Social Democratic Party required its members to quit other organizations, it is possible that Boromisza complied and left the lodge. After the counterrevolution of Horthy, he was arrested and held until 1920.

Another artist Freemason was the painter **Pál Jávör** (1880–1923), a member of the artists' colony in Kecskemét. Several sources state that in 1911 he joined the Reform Lodge,<sup>18</sup> which was mainly concerned with national education. Jávör had close links to several Masons. He studied under Gyula Benczúr, and when he became a member of the Reform Lodge he also

<sup>14</sup> Kölcsey páholy [Lodge 'Kölcsey'], 1913–1919, *Hungarian National Archive* (MOL), P 1083 146 cs. 1–38-CXVIII.

<sup>15</sup> Kölcsey páholy [Lodge 'Kölcsey'], 1913–1919, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Kölcsey páholy [Lodge 'Kölcsey'], 1913–1919, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Kölcsey páholy [Lodge 'Kölcsey'], 1913–1919, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> [https://szk.miraheze.org/wiki/J%C3%A1v%C3%B3r\\_P%C3%A1l](https://szk.miraheze.org/wiki/J%C3%A1v%C3%B3r_P%C3%A1l) and J. Palatinus, *A szabadkőműveliség bűnei II: A magyarországi szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora 1868-tól 1920-ig*. [The Sins of Freemasonry II: Register of Members of Freemason Lodges in Hungary 1868–1920], Budapest, 1939.

married Margit Szalay, the daughter of a fellow Mason. His wedding was held in the building of the Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. This was an official mason marriage, as reported in the newspaper “Délmagyarország”.<sup>19</sup>

Wedding in the Masonic lodge. Budapest-correspondent messages: On Sunday morning Paul Javor, a talented and highly popular member of the young painter-generation, married Margaret Szalay, the daughter of the editor and metropolitan committee member Dr Michael Szalay. The wedding was held in the ceremonial hall of the Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge Palace. The interesting wedding attracted a large and distinguished audience in the lodge house in Podmaniczky Street, the assembly hall was packed and the ornamental choir was overrun by a group of local grande dames. After the Masonic wedding ceremony, Mayor Dr Stephen Bárczy solemnized the civil marriage and welcomed the couple in a vigorous speech. After the wedding, there was a rich buffet at the lodge house.

Starting in 1906, Jávör spent summers in the artists' colony in Szolnok and winters in the capital. He joined the Kecskemét artists' colony in 1911.

**Tibor Pólya** (1886–1937) was an impressionist painter and a graphic designer. After a time as a member of the artists' colony in Kecskemét, he became a member and leader of the artists' colony in Szolnok in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Intelligence reports reveal that in 1918, Pólya became a member of the Petőfi Lodge,<sup>21</sup> considered one of the most radical lodges in Hungary because it engaged in political activity and espoused a radical political view. Aiming to lead and supervise social evolution, it took up the key issues of reform of voting system and development of the middle class.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Esküvő a szabadkőműves-páholyban [Wedding in a Freemason Lodge], *Délmagyarország*, 14 June 1910.

<sup>20</sup> T. Pólya, In: Zádor Anna, Genthon I., ed. *Művészeti lexikon III. (L–Q)* [Art Dictionary], Budapest, 1983, p. 792.

<sup>21</sup> Zs. Berényi, *Iratok a magyarországi szabadkőművesség történetéhez, 1918–1950* [Documents in the History of Hungarian Freemasonry 1918–1950], Budapest, 2001, p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> P. Lajosné, D. Lászlólné, *A szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára: Repertórium* [Hungarian National Archive, Archive of Freemason Organisations. Repertory], *Levéltári Leltárak*, vol. 39, 1967, p. 61.

Alongside József Balassa, the unofficial Grand Master of the Hungarian Grand Lodge after 1920, Pólya was a member of a delegation to New York on the occasion of the dedication of a monument to Lajos Kossuth.<sup>23</sup> Kossuth was a hero of the Hungarian revolution who during his emigration had happened to join a Freemason lodge in the United States, in Cincinnati. When Freemasonry was banned, Pólya remained in contact with other members at Rotary Clubs. These were not Masonic clubs, but they were founded by Freemasons as were places where Freemasons could meet at times of illegality. Another artist, the sculptor Ede Telcs, was a member of the same lodge<sup>24</sup> as well as one of its founders. Telcs kept the contacts going after 1920 and may have been the person who supported Pólya's membership of the lodge.

**József Pechán** (1875–1922) worked in Nagybánya and Kecskemét after his studies. He then moved to Budapest and, during the First World War, lived in the province of Vojvodina. Here he became a Freemason, a member of the Jövendő (Future) Lodge of the nearby city of Zombor. This information is found in Dömötör's earlier mentioned book,<sup>25</sup> and Pechán's biographer Győző Bordás also mentions that he took regular trips to Zombor<sup>26</sup> with the writer Szenteleky – Pechán's friend and the first person to appreciate his art. It was probably even Pechán who recommended Szenteleky be admitted to the lodge. Szenteleky's Initiation Ceremony document was found among Pechán's belongings. However, Bordás's assertion that in 1910 József Pechán was a member of the Podmaniczky Lodge in Pest seems to be unsupported, as the Podmaniczky Lodge as such did not exist. Podmaniczky was the name of the first Grand Master of the Hungarian Symbolic Lodge – not the name of the lodge

<sup>23</sup> T. Pólya, *A nagy zarándoklat* [The Great Pilgrimage], Budapest, 1929.

<sup>24</sup> Zs. Berényi, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> M. Dömötör, *A Magyarországi Szimbolikus Nagypáholy főhatósága alatt dolgozó szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora* [Register of Members of Lodges Operating under the High Authority of the Grand Lodge of Hungary], Budapest, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> Gy. Bordás, *A Szenteleky–Pechán kapcsolatokról* [About the Szenteleky–Pechán contact], *Hid*, 2008, no. 8, p. 96.



itself. In the future it would be interesting to search the archival material of the Jövendő Lodge for more information about Pechán.

**Vilmos Csaba Perlrott** (Perlroth, 1880–1955) is the most interesting of all the Hungarian Freemason artists because he joined the Lodge Március (March) in 1919, a highly eventful year in which Hungary saw the Romanian-Hungarian war, the communist coup d'état against Károlyi's first democratic government, the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the coup d'état of Horthy and the so-called White Terror. Freemasonry was forbidden, first by the communists in 1919 and again in 1920 by the Horthy regime. Why did Perlrott, the co-founder of the artists' colony in Kecskemét, become a Freemason right at this turbulent and portentous time? Did he not sense that Freemasonry's days were numbered? Was freemasonry important to him?

Born in 1880, he was taught by the masters József Koszta, Béla Iványi-Grünwald and Károly Ferenczy, first-generation members of the artists' colony in Nagybánya. In 1906 he moved to Paris and – like many other Hungarian artists in the first decade of the 20th century – attended the Julian Academy, where he was Henri Matisse's first Hungarian student. He was also a frequent guest in Gertrude Stein's home, and began exhibiting in Paris in 1907. He distanced himself from the impressionists in Nagybánya by joining the group known as the Neos. These were artists with radical artistic views who were working to counter the naturalism of the Nagybánya artists' colony. The Neos – or, by another name, the Hungarian Fauves – moved to Kecskemét and in 1912 established an artists' colony under the direction of the old master Béla Iványi-Grünwald.<sup>27</sup>

After the counterrevolution, during Hungary's white terror, police raided the artists' company in Kecskemét – even though it was not politically active – looking for Perlrott, among other artists.<sup>28</sup> The police may have had two reasons for going to the artists' colony. Three years earlier,

<sup>27</sup> K. Benedek, *Perlrott Csaba Vilmos (1880–1955): alkotói pályájának főbb állomásai* [Milestones in the Creative Career of Csaba Vilmos Perlrott (1880–1955)], Békéscsaba, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> K. Benedek, op. cit., p. 26.

in 1916, the leftist activist, poet, painter and Freemason Lajos Kossuth<sup>29</sup> had stayed there while trying to win some artists over to his social-artistic projects. Some of the painters joined him, but others – Perlrott among them – were not interested in this activity. The other potential reason was that members of the colony had designed political posters for the Hungarian Soviet Republic.<sup>30</sup> Whether Perlrott’s Masonic activities played any part this activity is uncertain. Katalin Benedek, author of the latest biography of Perlrott, does not know anything about his Masonic activity.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, his name appears on the interior minister’s list and in the documents of the lodge where he became a member.<sup>32</sup> One important document proves Perlrott’s membership: an invitation to the Initiation Ceremony of “Perlroth”<sup>33</sup> and sixteen other people, which indicates he was admitted on 24 February 1919.<sup>34</sup> Musicians and actors who were also Freemasons took part in the celebration.<sup>35</sup> The documents of the lodge do not provide more information, but there is hope that more data can be found in documents sent by the Március Lodge to the Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge.

Another proven episode of Perlrott’s biography is his few years he spent living in Vienna, a centre of Freemason refugees after World War I, and his 1924 return to Hungary, where he joined the KUT (New Society of Artists) artists’ group. Thereafter he moved to Szentendre and became

<sup>29</sup> B. Szabolcs, *Nyugatos szabadkőművesek* [The Freemasons at the *Nyugat*], *ESŐ Irodalmi Lap*, 2009, vol. 11, no.3, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> G. Sümegi, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> K. Benedek, op. cit.; she also responded to my question about whether Perlrott was a Freemason.

<sup>32</sup> J. Palatinus, *A szabadkőművesség bűnei II: A magyarországi szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora 1868-tól 1920-ig* [The Sins of Freemasonry II: Register of Members of Freemason Lodges in Hungary 1868–1920], Budapest, 1939, p. 256.

<sup>33</sup> In this variant spelling.

<sup>34</sup> Március páholy [Lodge ‘Március’], Magyar Országos Levéltár (Budapest) (közread.). ‘Március páholy’, 1908–1919, MOL, P 1125 (1. tétel), Felvételi iratok, levelek, körözlvények, meghívók, a páholy kiadványai, MOL, P 1125 (1. tétel).

<sup>35</sup> These were Jenő Balassa, Sándor Fischer, Kladviko Vilmos, Polgár Géza, Dalnoki Viktor, Son Harry, Szikla Adolf and Béla Venczel.

a member of the artists' colony there. Both he and his wife omitted mention of the Masonic momentum of his life in their memoirs.<sup>36</sup>

On the basis of available sources, it is hard to say who brought Perrott to join the Freemason lodge. It is known, though, that other artists were in the Lodge Március too. For example, when Perrott joined, the painter Károly Kotász, the sculptor Vedres Márk and the painter Károly Kerntsek were already members of this lodge.<sup>37</sup> The latter two were members of the Nyolcak artists' community and, as fellow artists and Masons themselves, can be assumed to have influenced Perrott to become a Freemason.

## 6. Freemasonry – Artists – Society – Connections

Péter Molnos mentions the Hungarian Fauves in regard to their patrons:

Looking for supporters of the new Hungarian painting, we can find those associations, academic circles and companies who fought in the same way for the victory of the new ideas in their own territory just as Czóbel, Berényi and their friends had done in the fine arts. The small islands of progress make for a long list: the journal *Huszadik Század* "Twentieth Century", the Social Science Association, the Galileo Circle, the Association of Free Thinkers of Hungary, the Thalia Society, the most important forum for new music, UMZE or even a Masonic Lodge. However, the closer relations that had evolved between these companies and artists, characterize much more the story of The Eight, as of the "Hungarian Fauves".<sup>38</sup>

The group known as The Eight, led by Károly Kernstok, embraced early 20th-century radical intellectual movements that were reflected in both the literature and music of Budapest. They worked with writers and composers such as Endre Ady and Béla Bartók, who were both

<sup>36</sup> M. Gráber, *Emlékezések könyve* [Book of Remembrance], Budapest, 1991.

<sup>37</sup> Március páholy [Lodge 'Március'], Magyar Országos Levéltár (Budapest) (közread.). 'Március páholy', 1908–1919, MOL, P 1125 (1. tétel), Felvételi iratok, levelek, körözlvények, meghívók, a páholy kiadványai, op. cit., P 1125 (1. tétel).

<sup>38</sup> P. Molnos, *Kelet Párizsa a magyar ugaron* [Paris of the East on the Hungarian Fallow], in *Vadak: Magyar Vadak Párizstól Nagybányáig 1904–1914: kiállítás a Magyar Nemzeti Galériában* 2006. március 21 – július 30., ed. by K. Passuth, Budapest, 2006, p. 118.

Freemasons. This group also had close connections to other art or social progressive groups, so it is unsurprising that many Freemasons were in it, foremost among them Károly Kernstok, as well as Márk Vedres and Dezső Orbán.

Károly Kernstok was definitely an active painter-Freemason.<sup>39</sup> By the beginning of 1901 he had joined a Freemason lodge.<sup>40</sup> Then, with some other Freemasons, he co-founded the Március Lodge (the one Perlrott would eventually join) on 18 March 1909.<sup>41</sup> Kernstok sat on the Propaganda Committee of Hungarian Freemasons for the Support of the Achievements of the Aster Revolution and the ‘Hungarian People’s Republic’, the first Hungarian republic. After Freemasonry was banned in the Hungarian Kingdom, Kernstok worked for the Hungarian Fabian Society, an organization also founded by Freemasons, on whose premises Masons could hold meetings unmolested. Kernstok’s attitude, esteem and social activity were doubtless relevant for other artists deliberating over whether to join the Freemason lodge. Between the first and second exhibitions of *The Eight*, Kernstok gathered a group around him. The group, called the *Keresők* (Seekers), numbered not eight painters but a few more. Interestingly, in the Masonic vocabulary the term *Keresők* refers to candidates who are still awaiting initiation. No clear explanation of this correlation has yet been confirmed. Zsuzsa L. Nagy, the most prominent expert on Hungarian Freemasonry, also underlined the connections between Freemasonry and progressive political-intellectual life. In her book about Hungarian Freemasonry in the early 20th century, she refers to the group of the civil radicals that formed around the politician, social scientist and historian Oszkár Jászi, and his clique of reform-oriented artists associated with the periodical review “*Nyugat*” (The West) and *The Eight*.<sup>42</sup>

Another important component of Masonic influence were the organs of the Budapest press, which were the main force publicizing the new art. Progressive journals published the work of modern writers, and of

<sup>39</sup> Zs. Berényi, *op. cit.*, p. 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Március páholy [Lodge ‘Március’], *op. cit.*, MOL, P 1125 (1. tétel).

<sup>41</sup> Március páholy [Lodge ‘Március’], *op. cit.*, MOL, P 1125 (1. tétel).

<sup>42</sup> Zs. L. Nagy, *Szabadjóművesek*, p. 53.



The Lodge Building of the freemason lodges in Buda. 1913

critics of modern literature and fine art. Newspapers also had an interest in informing readers about the latest trends in arts. Journals like “Nyugat” – the voice of modern literature per se – as well as the previously mentioned leftist newspaper “Huszadik Század” (Twentieth Century), the “Budapesti Napló” (Budapest Daily), the “Világ” (Light) and other newspapers were founded or financially supported by Masonic lodges.<sup>43</sup> The editorial staff of the periodical review “Nyugat” comprised a large number of Freemasons who were highly influential in modern art and thinking about art, like the review’s co-founder Miksa Fenyő, a writer, member of parliament and industrialist; the other co-founder Ignotus, an editor and writer; and, in addition to Endre Ady – the father of modern Hungarian literature – other writers such as Lajos Bíró, Lajos Kassák or Endre Nagy.

There were also art salons and organizations that promoted art by establishing prizes for artists. Some casinos in Budapest often organized exhibitions and prizes; these casinos were under Masonic leadership, as well. For example, the casino in Erzsébetváros awarded Perlrott a prize of for his picture “The Models” in 1917. Obviously, Masonic connections could be a key to success.

Last but not least, Freemasons were customers as well. Lodgehouses were adorned with sculptures and paintings, and many a Freemason was portrayed by a Freemason painter. Károly Kernstock, for example, painted his Freemason brother and grand master of his lodge, Géza Goda, the textile factory owner Gyula Glatter and the mason Leó Goldberger. It is not known whether the painters got these jobs through their Masonic network, but it is certainly possible. Moreover, designer brothers of the lodges cast many medallions and badges featuring Masonic symbols or Freemasons.

Therefore, in answer to this essay’s title question, I can state that no, utopia itself is not a sufficient condition for another utopia at all costs, but it is – to complete the mathematical analogy – a necessary condition.

<sup>43</sup> I. Schön, *A magyar szabadkőműveliség hivatalos folyóiratai* [The Official Journals of Hungarian Freemasonry], *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 2000, vol. 116, no. 2, p. 176–189.



The ceiling of the Freemason Hall in London. 1933

However, as Molnos writes,<sup>44</sup> The Eight under Kernstok's leadership was more involved in Freemasonry than were the Hungarian Fauves, indicating that the artists' colony in Kecskemét was not the headquarters of The Eight. Nor can it be suggested that any one artists' colony accommodated a particularly large number of Freemasons, let alone that there existed a Masonic artists' colony. Artists were actually not that interested in social issues or in Freemasonry, even though a Freemason lodge was active near Nagybánya, in Szatmárnémeti. A possible explanation is that

<sup>44</sup> Molnos, *Kelet Párizsa a magyar ugaron*, [Paris of the East on the Hungarian Fallow], in *Vadak: Magyar Vadak Párizstól Nagybányáig 1904–1914* [Fauvists: Hungarian Fauvists from Paris to Nagybánya 1904–1914], ed. by K. Passuth, Budapest, 2006, p. 118.

the colonies were isolated and far from the capital – that is, the centre of progressive thought.

What we can know at the moment is that seven artists working in artists' colonies are proven to have been Freemasons. Some were more active than others in this network. But few art historians have devoted attention to these scattered, recently discovered bits of information. Documents kept by the lodges may provide more information about this context. The information discovered in my research indicates that Freemasonry undoubtedly played an important role in the complex cultural-social entanglements prevailing in the early 20th century.

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Z s ó f i a T u r ó c z y

## Ar utopija traukia utopiją? Masonai Vengrijos menininkų kolonijose

### *Santrauka*

20 a. pradžioje Vengrijoje veikė kelios menininkų kolonijos. Tuo pačiu metu masonybė pasiekė apogėjų ne tik Vengrijoje, bet ir visoje Vidurio bei Rytų Europoje. Kaip menininkų kolonijos ši slapta brolija vadovavosi utopiniais siekiais pagerinti pasaulį. Vengrijoje masonerijos plėtotė prasidėjo 1870 m., įkūrus Vengrijos Didžiąją Ložę. Baigiantis Pirmajam pasauliniam karui Didžiosios Ložės valdymą į savo rankas perėmė radikalūs masonų sparnas. Šie radikalai buvo atidūs socialinėms reformoms ir pajėgūs daryti įtaką politiniams procesams. Laisvųjų mūrininkų ložės taip pat traukė progreso atžvilgiu radikaliai nusiteikusius dailininkus. Taigi masonerija suvaidino svarbų vaidmenį Vengrijos inteligentijai ir buvo naudinga dailininkams, kadangi ložės juos rėmė. Kai kurie Nagybánya, Kecskemét menininkų kolonijų nariai įstojo į Laisvųjų mūrininkų ložes. Straipsnyje analizuojama, kas buvo šie dailininkai, kodėl jie pasirinko narystę masonų brolijoje ir ar pastaroji narystė paveikė jų kūrybą.