

BIOGRAPHY

Albert Wass de Czege, or Szentgyedí és Czegei gróf Wass Albert, or, Count Albert Wass de Czege and Szentgyed, (and more widely known to Hungarians simply as Wass Albert) was born January 8, 1908 in Valaszút, Hungary, near Kolozsvár, the capitol of Transylvania province, of an old aristocratic family that traces its lineage to 1047, a date not long after the first King of Hungary, St. Stephen, was crowned (1000).

He grew up on the family estate, Szentgotthárd, in the county of Szolnok-Doboka, on land that had been granted to the family in 1142 by the Hungarian king.

He became an avid hunter at an early age and developed a life long passion for the hills, forests, lakes and mountains of his homeland. He became a keen observer of its people of all walks of life. His understanding and respect for the people who lived in the villages and worked the farms and forests whether they spoke Hungarian, Romanian and German is clearly evident in his prolific writings. His writings capture the beauty of the region, the hardships and dilemmas of living in a complex world, and the failures and triumphs of character. Although most of his works place people in this familiar setting, his themes are universal and timeless.

In December, 1919, Transylvania became a part of Romania and Albert Wass de Czege began his formal education in Kolozsvár, now renamed Cluj, soon after. He later completed his baccalaureate degree in Agriculture at Debrecen University in Hungary and advanced degrees in forestry and wildlife management at Hohenheim in Germany and landscape architecture at the Sorbonne in Paris, France.

In 1932 he returned home from school due to the illness of his father. He was immediately drafted into the Romanian Army and served one year in a cavalry regiment. He assumed the management of the family farming operations in 1934 and was married to Eva Siemers of Hamburg, Germany the next year. She was the second daughter of his favorite aunt, Ilona, who had brought her children back to her childhood home many summers over the years. Their first child, a son Vid, was born in 1936.

His writing career began early. His first book, a volume of poems (*Virágtemetés*), was published in 1927, at age 19. While a student in Germany and France he worked as a special staff writer for the "Debreceni Újság", "Budapesti Hírlap" and the "Ellenzék". His second book followed in 1930 and his first play was produced in 1931 Marosvásárhely.

In 1934, his first novel, a best seller titled "*The Wolf Pit*" or "*Farkasverem*" in Hungarian, earned him the "Baumgarten Literary Award" and membership in several literary societies. The book gives a partly tragic and heroic, partly satiric picture of the Transylvanian nobility of his day, who, along with almost 4 million other Hungarians, became subjects of foreign occupations after World War I. Old families, their estates confiscated by the Romanian regime, still in their old castles, try desperately to keep up a gracious way of life and ancient traditions while barely scratching enough food out of their vegetable gardens to avoid starvation. Meanwhile the young and talented step deftly into a new industrialized world and rapidly rise to leading positions.

His short stories began appearing in many literary magazines. Other novels published soon after, brought him more honors, among them membership in the Kisfaludy Society, the literary branch of the Royal Hungarian Academy, and the Transylvanian Helikon, an honor society of Transylvania authors, of which he was the last surviving member when he died.

After the death of his grandfather, Béla, in 1936, Albert Wass de Czege replaced him as a lay official in the Hungarian Reformed (Calvinist) Church of Transylvania. This church was established in 1526 partially through the efforts of his ancestors to obtain freedom of religion in Transylvania. One of the first places in Europe where this principle was established. Religion was important to him all of his life. Later during his refugee years, he would serve as a lay minister in Germany and on board a refugee ship bound for the United States in 1950.

Beginning in 1937, as Hitler's National Socialism began to attract adherents throughout Europe, the Romanian National Socialist Iron Guard was formed. This put increasing pressure on the Hungarian, German and Jewish ethnic minorities throughout Transylvania. Being a member of a minority group became more and more dangerous as Romania entered the war on Hitler's side.

The "Treaty of Vienna" signed on August 30, 1940, between Romania and Hungary, as a result of Italian and German arbitration, returned to Hungary a neighboring portion of Transylvania where Romanians were a minority. Because this included the Wass family estates, this was good news, but it also unleashed a chain of events causing Albert Wass de Czege and his father to be tried as war criminals several years later, after the Soviet "liberation" of Romania and their departure from Transylvania. At this writing, there is still a cloud over the now famous author stemming from these occurrences.

On 10th September 1940, withdrawing Romanian troops ransacked the family home, took with them all live stock and killed one herdsman and wounded another. On the next day, Hungarian soldiers arrived at the estate, which was now adjacent to the new border. They requisitioned four guest rooms and space for a temporary command post for their officers, since there were no other near by accommodations. Martial law was declared in the border counties until January 1941, when civilian administration was re-established.

Long prior to these events, Mr. Anton Mocsonyi de Foen, Royal Huntmaster to the King of Romania, had engaged him as a wildlife management expert for the Carpathian mountain region in the vicinity of Szászrégen that he knew so well. Thus on the 14th of September he was able to travel to meet Dr Jonel Popescu, mayor of the city of Szászrégen, and also assistant to the Royal Huntmaster.

By the next evening he arrived at the mountain village of Rátosnya and departed the next morning on horseback to the lodge called Dealu Brad further up in the Carpathians.

About two weeks later, he received a message from home that his second son, Csaba, then three, was seriously ill with meningitis. Upon arriving home on October 2nd he found his son had died on the 29th of September. After the funeral, the next day, he spent a few days at home and took his wife back up with him to the solace of the Carpathians.

During his stay at home he learned of the incident for which he would be branded a war criminal several years later.

The Hungarian security forces had arrested five people in the local village for being "politically unreliable." The border guards brought them to the family house where their security officer, a Captain Pakuts, had his command post, and locked them in the cellar of the farm granary. One of them was the village mayor, whom the elder Count Wass was able to convince the captain to release, but guards would not release the four younger people. This included the daughter of the Jewish shop keeper and her cousin. The security officer ordered the prisoners taken to the county seat. Several miles away the guards shot the prisoners for allegedly attempting to escape. The full facts never surfaced but the Captain was punished and the family suspected he harbored feelings of revenge because some Romanians had killed his parents some years before. But the villagers blamed

members of the family for pointed out who in the village was "politically unreliable." A military investigation into the incident was underway before Albert Wass de Czege returned to the mountains until November.

In January 1941, the Hungarian authorities appointed him "Hunting Inspector" for the region of Transylvanian Hungary. While continuing in this position, he was asked to be the literary editor for the Kolozsvár newspaper "Ellenzék". Thus his time was split between these two positions and still helping his father manage the farming operations on the estate. In August of that year his third son, Huba, was born.

This was also a fruitful period for the writer. After his first novel he had managed to publish six more books in short order. But in 1942 and 1943 he published two cosequent historical novels that would earn more honors, "*Mire a fák megnőnek*" or "*As soon as the trees grow*" and "*A kastély árnyékában*" or "*In the shadow of the castle*".

The hero of this two volume story is the simple Transylvanian farmer who tries to uphold the tradition of honesty, sincerity and good will under the double pressures of outside oppression and inside decadence. The story of one Transylvanian family is set between the 1849 defeat of the Hungarian Liberty War, the unsuccessful attempt by Hungarian reformers to establish a democratic republic, and 1919, the Romanian occupation following WWI. The book chronicles the effect of outside forces on the people of Transylvania – oppressed by Hapsburg imperialism, plundered by their own government in Budapest, wavering between national pride and democratic ideals and finally destroyed by a war which, on the surface, seemed to have started because of the murder of Transylvania's worst enemy, the Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand but in reality leads to dire consequences for the population and the region in general. This work was awarded the Klebersberg Literary award, the Zrínyi prize, and earned for the author an honorary doctorate from the University of Kolozsvár.

Thus while the world was at war and German, Hungarian and Romanian Armies were by this time deep into Soviet Russia, Albert Wass de Czege was not yet involved. Then in May of 1942 he was called up for three months of military retraining and returned to civilian life. Because of his education and previous military training with the Romanian cavalry, he was given a reserve commission in the Royal Hungarian Cavalry.

He was able to continue with his civilian pursuits for almost a year after this training. His fourth son, Miklós, was born in January 1943. In March, the editor of his newspaper was called into the Army and Albert Wass de Czege was asked to replace him until a suitable replacement was found. However, on the 1st of July, two German Gestapo officers invaded his office, flashed their authorizations to censor the newspaper, upon which he simply walked out of the office and went up to his mountain retreat.

Two weeks later, an old family friend, General Lajos Veress, commander of Hungarian forces in Transylvania, sent him a message saying the Germans were "looking for him" and advised him to volunteer for active service. He was assigned to the Royal Hungarian 9th Cavalry regiment, then fighting the Soviet tank forces on horseback in the Ukraine. He experienced several months of desperate fighting as the German forces and their Hungarian and Romanian allies were pushed back. By Christmas his regiment and their horses, no longer existed.

By April 1944, he was appointed aide-the-camp to General Veress who was at that time the secret leader of the Hungarian anti-Nazi underground. The same month his fifth son Géza, was born. His general was at that time involved with the secret negotiations between the Hungarian Government and the allies to secure an agreement to keep the Soviet forces out of the Carpathian basin in return

for turning against the now retreating German forces. As the general's personal staff officer, Albert Wass de Czege became involved in these eventually unsuccessful negotiations.

By September, General Veress was arrested by the German Gestapo and his aide with him. Because of his low rank, he was released and continued in the same position with General Veress's successors, Generals Kovács, Fónagy and Tilger for the remainder of the retreat from Transylvania into Hungary.

From October 1944 on the retreating forces fiercely fought the Soviet Armies from village to village, often recapturing territory only to view the atrocities committed by the "liberating" communist hordes. Just before the enemy forces reached Szentgotthárd, his family left with only personal baggage and traveled out of reach of the fighting ahead of the retreat across Hungary.

By March of 1945, the retreat had taken them to the town of Sopron, near the Austrian border. There Albert Wass de Czege was reunited with his wife and sons at the home of family friends. He also discovered that his old commander, General Veress, was imprisoned at Kőhalma nearby. Obtaining permission to visit, he discovered that the General was still able to stay in touch with the underground which was beginning to organize for the coming Soviet occupation. He offered to send his family to German relatives and join the underground. The General convinced him that, as a writer, he was of greater value alive telling the world about the dangers of both national socialism and communism, until a just peace could be obtained for the Hungarian people.

The escape from the shadow of the Soviet Armies to the advancing American Forces in German Bavaria was narrow and harrowing. Through the underground's connections, he was ordered to help escort a train-load of refugee families out of Hungary. The train left Hungary under artillery bombardment, probably the last one to do so.

By April, after dodging through retreating German rail traffic in Austria and Czechoslovakia, the train crossed into Germany through the heavily forested "Bayerischer Wald" and ran out of fuel in the little village of Bleibach. After a day of reconnaissance, Albert Wass de Czege found two vacant rooms with the Rabb family at a nearby hamlet called Plarnhof. The Rabb family farm needed workers since the sons were still off to war somewhere. That night the family of Hungarian aristocrats walked penniless up the long hill to Plarnhof under the dueling artillery of the American forces coming from the west and the German forces still fighting on their east.

In a few days the Americans arrived at the Plarnhof and took the Hungarian cavalry officer prisoner. After a short stay in a prisoner of war camp, he was released when his wife Eva appeared outside the camp, speaking English and demanding to see the camp commander with three small boys at her side and a baby in her arms. The Americans saw no reason to hold him. The family lived there in those two small rooms in the Rabb farmhouse until May of 1949.

While life just after the war in the Bavarian country side was a test of character, it was far better than living in a refugee camp. In fact, it was wholesome and fulfilling in many ways. The Hungarian nobleman, wasted no time rolling up his sleeves to work with his hands. He worked for the American military government for a short while as a surveyor but mostly he helped the Rabb family take in their crops. He also planted a large vegetable garden, even that first spring. In a third of the garden he planted tobacco. The vegetables fed not only the family but supplemented the Rabb family diet. The Hungarian refugee family received milk and butter in return. The tobacco crop was as good as gold in those days. That fall and winter, after the crops were in, Albert would depart the farm in the morning with a large empty knapsack and a small full box of cigarettes he had rolled the night before. He would return in the evening with the knapsack full of bacon, ham, cheese, bread and other necessities -- the product of his bartering. In the summer the family gathered mushrooms and blue berries in the forests. Some was preserved and some was sold at market. Albert also hired

on occasionally as a wood feller to earn cash. He also served as lay minister to a scattering of Hungarian protestants living nearby in similar circumstances in mostly catholic Bavaria.

But he also had time to write and spend time with his children. One of the treasures he was able to bring out with him was his typewriter. He published several novels during this time. The stories he told to entertain his sons turned into books of children's stories. But he also wrote his "*Adjátok vissza a hegyeimet*" or "*Give me back my mountains*". Translated from the Hungarian into German, Spanish, Dutch and English it was a best seller in post war Europe. This is the story of a young Transylvanian mountain lad. Persecuted first by the Romanians, then the Germans and finally by the Russians, he finds himself as a displaced person in Western Europe, without a family, without a country and without a future.

It was during this time that the family was joined by Ágnes Moldován, a middle aged spinster from Transylvania, who had been the "nanny" to the children of a formerly well to do Budapest family. Her employers had emigrated to the United States, leaving her stranded in a refugee camp. Ágnes "Néni" was a godsend to the family of small children and thus joined them in the two rooms of the Rabb house and remained with the family the rest of her life.

By May 1949, enough reconstruction of the bombed out properties belonging to his wife's family in Hamburg had occurred to provide better accommodations. The family moved into an apartment in a large complex known as the "Klinker" which was still largely in ruins. The author was hired as the night watchman for his brother in law's construction company. This paid for the apartment and basic necessities. It also allowed him to write between making his security checks of the building site. He managed to write at least four more novels that were published in Europe between 1951 and 1956 - "*A tizenhárom almafa*" or "*The thirteen apple trees*", "*A funtinelli boszorkány*" or "*The witch of Funtinell*", "*Elvész a nyom*" or "*The trail is lost*" and "*Az antikrisztus és a pásztorok*" or "*The Antichrist and the Shepherds*".

Here, again, he found a small congregation of Hungarian protestants to serve as lay minister on Sundays. In Hamburg he was unsatisfied with the opportunities available to him as a writer. He was also concerned about opportunities for his sons in Germany, now burgeoning with German refugees from Central and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, a sixth son, Endre or Andreas, was born in August 1950. Further, to be true to the purpose for which he was sent to the West, he needed to emigrate to the United States.

The US emigration process was lengthy and thorough, requiring health and background investigations to exclude persons with communicable diseases or unsavory Nazi and communist backgrounds. The family moved to a processing center for displaced persons near Hamburg, in a converted barracks called Camp Wentorf. The one room family accommodations were sparse and meals were taken in a common dining facility but the stay was usually short. Albert again found protestant refugees in need of a lay minister. This time his congregation also included Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians.

But, for several reasons, the family stayed at Camp Wentorf almost a year. First, the mother, Eva, was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. This meant she could not emigrate with the family. After much deliberation the decision was made that Albert with Ágnes "néni" and the four older children, now 14, 9, 7 and 6 would continue on with the processing, and Eva, with the baby Endre, would stay with her family and follow after the mother's cure. The other reason for delay was the extensive investigation of the father who had been more than an ordinary citizen before and during the war.

The family, excluding Eva and Endre, arrived in New York harbor aboard the troop transport USS General Muir, on September 21st, 1951. During the lengthy passage Albert served as lay minister for the protestants and as the editor of the ship's news paper. The family was met by their sponsor, Mr.

W.G. McClain of Bellaire, Ohio and his daughter Elizabeth Fay with her son Joe. Albert was employed to manage the McClain Dairy farm. The trip to Ohio, in two cars and a pick-up truck carrying the family baggage, was an adventure. The children who had been taking English lessons with their father during the months of processing had many questions. The McClains had decided to take the family into their large country home on the farm until the mother could join them. Elizabeth, a warm, motherly divorcee and school teacher by profession, cooked, kept house and took the boys under her wing.

Soon after arriving, Albert was offered the opportunity to write short weekly radio scripts on agriculture and life in the United States to be broadcast into Hungary by Radio Free Europe. He was paid the sum of \$50 per script. Although his duties on the farm required long hours he was also able to write a novel about people caught up in the war in Korea entitled "*Why*". This pacifist book was precipitated by the enlistment of Elizabeth's son Joe. The book was translated to English with Elizabeth's help and published to a meager reception.

The McClain farm had been acquired before the depression when W.G. McClain had been a successful banker and because the farm had been in his wife's name it remained in the family when the banking business failed. When the wife died, it was inherited by the two sons and three daughters who shared in any profit the farm made. Mr. McClain and his daughter Elizabeth earned their income from a small dairy supply business they jointly managed without other employees. The farm had been managed by a succession of incompetent people and family politics made it difficult to recover to profitability. Albert's recommendation after the first year was to sell it. The sale took place in the early fall of 1952.

In the meantime Eva's cure had been delayed and Albert and Elizabeth had fallen in love. Albert filed for divorce in January 1952 and married Elizabeth in May of that year. After the sale of the McClain farm, the new couple, the bride's father, W.G. McClain, Ágnes Moldován and the four sons drove to Florida. Mr. McClain was having health problems and was told he would not survive another northern winter.

In Florida they settled into a house in the small village of Astor, on the St. Johns River and in a remote part of Lake County surrounded by the Ocala National Forest. Albert still had his small income from Radio Free Europe and Mr. McClain and Elizabeth moved their small dairy supply business with them. Mr. McClain bought a larger house on about 10 acres of land in neighboring Astor Park where the family could have a garden and some livestock. Albert and the boys hunted and fished in the forest. The boys milked two goats and later a cow. The property came with a small orange grove that provided the "Christmas money" for the family.

Elizabeth's two married daughters, Anne Sanborn and Patricia Roush eventually also moved to Florida with their families and thus Albert and Elizabeth had around them a large, active and growing extended family that has remained close to this day.

The village of Astor had no newspaper, no fire department and no police. The nearest law was twenty some miles away. The principle business was accommodating hunters and fishermen. This was supplemented by illegal fishing and an illegal "moonshine" liquor industry hidden throughout the forest. Albert and Elizabeth started a boy scout troop and a small newspaper to promote citizenship and lawfulness. Albert's editorials touched many subjects and were occasionally picked up by the larger newspapers in central Florida.

In 1954, Eva and her son Endre came to the United States after she was cured of TB. She wanted to reconcile and hoped to set aside the divorce. A settlement was reached in court and Eva and Endre returned to her family home in Hamburg. The sons thus were separated for many years since Endre grew up with his German cousins.

The family finances were meager and many other approaches to earning a living in the Ocala national forest were tried. The dairy supply business was not profitable in Florida and was thus sold. The money generated was invested in a restaurant venture in Astor converting their first Florida home. The cooking was done by Elizabeth, Ágnes did the clean up and the boys waited on tables. Albert acted as the host, retreating to the back room to write whenever he was not needed. This venture ended after a couple of years, in the latter period of which it was opened mostly on weekends. In the meanwhile Albert was hired to teach mathematics and Latin at a boys boarding school about 20 miles away. In the fall of 1956, Elizabeth found employment as a primary school teacher in Ft. McCoy, about 20 miles in the other direction.

In January 1957, Albert was offered a position at the University of Florida, managing the language laboratory, teaching French and German to graduate students and testing PH.D. candidates on their foreign language requirements. (This was the same month that he and his sons finally achieved US citizenship in the Federal Court of Orlando, Florida.)

The family closed the restaurant, sold that property and first moved to a log cabin in the forest near Elizabeth's school and within commuting distance of the University for the remainder of the spring semester of 1957.

By the Fall of 1957, Albert and Elizabeth were able to purchase a large, but not so well maintained, home in the older part of Gainesville. During the first anniversary days of the Hungarian Uprising of 23 October through 5 November 1956, father and sons wore black arm bands to school, publicizing the plight of the peoples behind the iron curtain. Albert became an often-requested speaker in civic clubs on the dangers of communism and national socialism and began serving as faculty advisor to the Young Americans for Freedom. One of his speeches of the time was published in "Vital Speeches" a national publication.

During his twelve years on the faculty of the University of Florida, two of his sons, Géza and Miklós, graduated from the University and Huba graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point and began a career as an officer in the US Army. In the fall of 1959, after his son, Huba had been appointed to the Academy, Albert, in characteristic fashion, had the boy work for six months as a laborer for a construction firm to give him an appreciation for the common every day people he would someday command as an officer.

During this time he also published several books in Hungarian and English, went on speaking tours throughout the United States and Canada, established the American Hungarian Literary Guild, the Danubian Research and Information Center and the Danubian Press.

After his retirement from the University in 1970, he returned to Astor Park with Elizabeth and concentrated full time on the missions of the last three organizations. The purpose of the first was to maintain Hungarian literary classics in publication, provide a source of good Hungarian literature to the Hungarian exile community world wide and to publish selected cultural classics in English to help second and third generation Hungarians maintain an awareness of their heritage. The purpose of the second organization was to make important facts known to future policy makers by collecting and publishing scholarly works for research libraries on the histories, politics and social and economic challenges of the Danubian countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The Purpose of the Danubian Press was to publish and market his books and those of other authors. Whenever he had an opportunity he would publish information about the brutal treatment of minorities by the now infamous Ceausescu regime in communist Romania.

During this time he became the first president of the Transylvanian World Federation composed of 134 Transylvanian exile groups from all over the world. He also served as vice-president of the

American-Hungarian Federation, director of the Polish-Hungarian World Federation, Member of the Árpád Academy, Knight Templar and Knight of St. László.

This period of his life, especially the twenty-five years from age 62 to 87, were tremendously productive. Beside the work alluded to above, several excellent pieces of literature were created. Most noteworthy among these was a two volume fictionalized 1000 year saga of his own family in Transylvania from the middle ages to the present, entitled the "*Sword and scythe*" or "*Kard és kasza*" in Hungarian. These works were published first by the American Hungarian Literary Guild in 1974.

In the late summer of 1979, a letter appeared in the Gainesville Daily Sun accusing Albert Wass de Czege of being a war criminal and hiding in the Ocala National Forest. This article was followed by articles in several Central Florida newspapers featuring interviews with neighbors, undisclosed sources at the US Department of Justice, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Vienna and with Albert Wass de Czege himself. It seems that a professor of entomology from the University of Florida had been to a conference of entomologists in Bucharest, Romania.

Albert Wass de Czege and his political allies had been lobbying to deny Romania most favored nation trading status until it improved its civil rights record. The Romanian government revealed to the Florida professor and months previously to the Simon Wiesenthal center and the US Justice Department, selections from trial records of 1945, in which Albert Wass de Czege and his father had been sentenced to death for inciting atrocities in connection with the border incident of September 1940. *(The records, since then made available, indicate that 65 prominent property owning citizens were tried and convicted to death in absentia on 13 July 1945 in a one-day trial that scorned all the principles of jurisprudence. He was accused of crimes he could not have committed because he was not even present but which were attributed to him by witnesses under pressure or with ulterior motives. This was the period after Romania had allied itself with the USSR and Soviet Forces were prominent throughout the country, helping civil authorities re-establish control since hostilities had ended only a few months before. While a communist government had not yet been established, communist cadres were in the countryside agitating against the middle and upper classes in preparation for the inevitable triumph of socialism in Romania.)*

The Department of Justice did have a file on Albert Wass de Czege but because of higher priorities, would not get to his case for some time. Son, Huba, at that time serving as a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army, had his father prepare witness statements about his whereabouts during the alleged crimes. Together they traveled to Washington to meet with the Justice department taskforce conducting the investigation. They appealed to the taskforce to expedite their investigation to clear the author's name and to expedite the granting of a Top Secret clearance pending for the son. Huba soon received his Top Secret clearance and the case was subsequently dropped by the US. But the issue is yet to be settled in Romania due mostly to current ethnic policies and immature legal processes in that country. While Romanian nationalists are accusing him of being a war criminal the family is working with a team of people to uncover the truth in this matter and to rehabilitate his name. This will take some time and effort but is important for the future of Transylvania.

Elizabeth who was a strong supporter of Albert Wass de Czege's work died in March 1987, leaving him alone at age 79 in the remote central Florida Village of Astor Park. He lived a quiet life with his writings during the week but always had visitors on the weekend. He had many local friends, belonged to the Astor Kiwanis Club, and Elizabeth's daughter Anne or son Géza visited nearly every weekend. Vid visited often from Virginia but the other brothers saw him less frequently because they lived on the West Coast of the USA or in Europe. He telephoned and corresponded with many Hungarians world-wide.

Nearly four years after Elizabeth died, at age 83, Albert Wass de Czege married again. His new wife, Mary, was a good companion to him for the remainder of his life.

In the meantime his sons became established in their own careers. Vid became the proprietor of a cleaning service in Roanoke, Virginia. Huba was by the late 80's a US Army Brigadier General, serving in the NATO headquarters in Brussels, advising the Secretary General and the Supreme Allied Commander on the design and implementation of the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) Treaty that would soon contribute to the fall of the iron curtain. Miklós became a financial resources specialist in California. Géza founded an environmental consultancy in Ft. Myers, Florida. And Endre, or Andreas, became a professor of economics at the University of Hamburg specializing in the problems of transforming communist command economies into capitalist market economies.

Whereas the sons and daughters of other Hungarian exiles grew up fluent in their parent's mother tongue, those of the famous Hungarian author did not. What the four American sons have retained is due to the insistence of old Ágnes "néni" until her death in the late 70's that she understood no language but Hungarian. From the day of their arrival in America they became part of an American household. The first crucial months they were guests in the McClain house and conversing in either German or Hungarian in the presence of their hosts would have been very impolite. The boys learned English very rapidly, so by the time Albert and Elizabeth were married and established a household in Florida, the pattern was set and English was the most comfortable language. There were attempts at having "Hungarian days" and having extra lessons in Hungarian but these failed for two reasons. First, both Elizabeth and Albert believed that the boys would be better ambassadors for Hungarians behind the iron curtain if they were model Americans first. The second was that in spite of Albert's best intentions, his writing and other professional pursuits absorbed his attentions to such an extent that the actual raising of the boys devolved to Elizabeth.

Meanwhile Endre grew up in Hamburg. In the late fifties, Albert's father, also Endre, was able to leave Hungary due to his advanced age. He tried living in the United States with his son but found the cultural adjustment too difficult. He instead settled with his favorite niece, Eva, and her son. Thus he became a considerable influence in his grandson's life. During young Endre's teen years, Eva was able to take him to visit relatives in Hungary and Romania. In Transylvania he met and later married his wife Ágnes, also from an old aristocratic family now living a very simple life. In addition, Eva was able to provide room and board for Hungarian students studying in Hamburg. These contacts became important in shaping Endre's life. He became more aware than all the brothers of the true conditions behind the iron curtain and he and his mother began helping the few people they could with the resources they were able to bring on each trip. In the end this added up considerably.

In May 1991, their mother Eva passed away in Hamburg. This tragic event united the brothers, as nothing before. Their modest inheritance made it possible to pool resources to expand on the projects Endre and his wife had pursued for some time in Transylvania. The communist regimes in both Hungary and Romania had suppressed the writings of "class enemies" and authors active in the west. Of course Albert Wass de Czege fit both categories. Thus the reading public in those countries had not been exposed to his works for more than forty years when the iron curtain dissolved in 1989. The change of governments in Hungary and Romania also opened up the possibilities for the publication of their father's works in Romania and Hungary.

Already in 1987 and 1988, some of Albert Wass de Czege's books were beginning to appear in Budapest. In December 1989, after the Berlin Wall fell and liberalization was well on the way in Hungary, he received an offer from a Californian businessman to publish all of his work. This relationship produced only small results. Two books were published in 1990 and nothing more for several years.

After 1991 he began making his own arrangements to publish and by 1994 three more books appeared in Budapest. In 1995, at age 87, he signed over his publishing rights to the Dr. Count Albert Wass de Czege Foundation of Florida on the advice of his Florida Hungarian friends. His

hope was to get his work before the public and to form a responsible caretakership for his legacy. The foundation was not successful in bringing out any books.

The author by this time began to appreciate the work of his sons in Transylvania. They were helping the Hungarian community in the Maros valley in various ways. In 1996 his sons, with the permission of the author and the foundation, published "*Kard és Kasza*" or "*Sword and scythe*" in Transylvania. They were using their income from this book and additional private funding for various projects. The first major project in 1996 was a dormitory for 60 Hungarian students from the villages of the region in Régen. In 1998 followed the first orphanage for Hungarian students in Régen and planning began for the second in Holtmaros. The main idea for these orphanages is to bring children out of the large infamous Romanian orphanages into several small ones in Hungarian communities where they will receive more special care and cultural education. They had also provided numerous "micro loans" to start businesses and helped needy families.

In order to facilitate their father's vision, the sons founded the Czegei Wass Foundation, a not for profit corporation, with branches chartered in Hungary and Romania. In the summer of 1997, the Dr. Count Albert Wass de Czege Foundation of Florida transferred its copyrights back to the author who then transferred them to the Czegei Wass Foundation. In this way he assured that the earnings of his books would advance his vision of the future -- that the people of Transylvania and the Danubian Basin of Europe would eventually enjoy the blessings of political and cultural liberty and economic security.

In February of 1998 the great author passed away. His ashes were taken to the Transylvanian Helikon memorial in the gardens of the castle of Marosvécs, in the Maros valley of Transylvania within view of the mountains he loved and near the people he championed for so long, so well and so faithfully.

by Huba Wass