

Great Milic Nature Park
– The world of the preserved values –



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GREAT MILIC NATURE PARK

– *The world of the preserved values* –

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Ancient world

Introduction

– the atmosphere of the Nature Park and the harmony of the potentials of the landscape near the border in the Hegyköz region –

At the time of the political change of the 1990s, this region with its many small villages was typical of the Hungarian rural landscape of the time. The situation was worse in Füzér, but also in Pusztafalu, Füzérkajata, Vilyvitány, Felsőregmec, Vágáshuta, Kishuta and Nagy-huta, because these are so-called impasse villages, i.e. they are rather isolated due to their location next to the border and in a basin.

The current employment problems of the region are caused by the disintegration of the system of sectoral divisions and cooperatives, the lack of innovative product development that would have been necessary for the future of the potential products (perlite, kaolinite, wood, porcelain, fruit) of the Hegyköz region, the loss of market share of the Hollóházi Porcelain Factory – as the biggest employer of Hegyköz – despite its product development efforts, the setback of the traditional cropland management and the pasturage. Although some restructuring took place as regards small enterprises, tourism developments, agriculture and forestry, product processing and gastronomy in the villages, but the unemployment, the ageing society and the rural exodus are the processes that mostly shape the life of the local communities.

Local governments have made significant improvements regarding infrastructural and institutional development (water, gas, canalization, inland water, schooling – community centres – development of social institutions), communal work programs are in gear almost continuously and they establish several partnership-based co operations within the Hegyköz region (improvement of the quality of drinking water, handicraft programs, building a cycle lane in Hegyköz, etc.), but a lack of perspective has been characteristic of the region. Such a perspective should:

- suit the characteristics of the region regarding the landscape and land management;
- comply with the idea and criteria of sustainability;
- make the landscape attractive for both visitors and local residents;
- enable existing, traditional cooperation on geographical basis again;
- establish “sustainable landscape” development strategies that suit the natural factors of the region and the local ideologies;
- aim at improving rural employment and the ability to make profit, establishing workplaces, improving the quality of life and reducing rural exodus;
- and should do all this with the aid of an extensive local social dialogue and cooperation.



Due to my family connections I am originally from Füzér and in addition to my job at the local government I have worked in forestry and as an entrepreneur, therefore I would like to draw up the following short- and long term goals:

- This beautiful natural landscape and the local communities have paramount importance for local residents and they, as local patriots find their conservation crucial.
- They do not see their future in establishing industry or high-tech parks, but in implementing the sustainable use of the land, which includes:
 - close to nature forestry and related wildlife management;
 - regional agriculture:
 - local processing industry, development of local products and handicraft,
 - rural gastronomy, recreation (relaxation),
 - protection of cultural heritage – both material and intellectual –, preserving tradition, protection of monuments, village renewal
 - and the establishment of and support for the background of ecotourism that harmonizes with environmental objectives.

The Nature Park is – in my opinion – a comprehensive regional development unit, which embodies among others the possibilities and the spirit of the region as well as the future vision of its small communities.

In the Great Milic mountain group, which dominates the southern and western half of the Szalánci Hills, we would like to carry out developments in cooperation with our Slovakian partners in compliance with the ethos of the Nature Park as we share this region. Therefore it is easier to solve potential problems jointly and as regards the possibilities we can achieve better results on a cross-regional level.

I believe that the first positive results and successes of our joint initiative related to the settlements in Hegyköz, in the region north to the Vitányi Hill and along the Hernád River are beneficial for the acceptance of the idea and ethos of the Nature Park. All this complies with the regional politics of the European Union, which aims at re-establishing and supporting previously interrupted relations between settlements near the border and within the small regions.

The Nature Park, which is located in the five settlements on the side of Great Milic, Füzér, Füzérkumlós, Hollóháza, Kéked, Pusztafalu, establishes certain integration in the spirit of the defined aims. The social capital of the region, which has been recognized in the course of previous cooperation, allows us to hope that this local initiative is going to grow and be successful in the future.

Jenő Horváth
mayor of the village Füzér



Introduction

This publication is published within the framework of the Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Co-operation Program 2007-2013 as part of the project called “Inviting Forest – Discovery of Protected Areas on Nature Trails between Two Castles”. As the region near the border is very rich in natural attractions, the main focus of the project is on the joint efforts of the two settlements at the border, Slanec (SK) and Füzér (HU) aiming at protecting the nature as well as developing an environmentally conscious attitude of the public towards environmental protection. Considering the geographical closeness of the protected areas, their protection requires close cooperation and coordination within the field. The system of cross border nature trails has five thematic parts: the Nature Trail along the Border, the Izra Lake Nature Trail, the Great Milic Nature Trail, the Marovka - Bodó Meadow Nature Trail and the Őr Hill (Guard Hill) Nature Trail. The biggest height difference – up to 566 meters – is on the Great Milic Nature Trail and the longest nature trail segment is on the Izra Lake Natural Trail with its 21,066 meters. All nature trails use the same symbol: a rectangular sign with white background and two horizontal lilac-yellow strips. Most of the nature trails are located between the two castles, which function in addition to being majestic monuments as information centres and museums within the framework of the cross border cooperation. Visitors have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the history of the castles and their surroundings as well as the traditions and life of the communities of Slanec and Füzér. While exploring the region they can rest at the rest areas located alongside the nature trails. With the aid of the information signs, they can at each station get to know the flora and fauna of the region and maps help them to find their own location and directions. They can rest on the benches and at the rest places equipped with tables and stoves located in the beautiful nature and in case of bad weather; they can stay in the beautifully crafted, wooden rain shelters. All objects at the rest places are made of high quality oak.

The numerous natural attractions of our region are integral parts of the system of the protected areas of Natura 2000. The main aim of Natura 2000 is to protect the biodiversity of the given state and consequently the EU as part of the system of protected areas of the member states. This system of protected areas aims at protecting the most valuable and endangered plant and animal species that can still be found in their natural habitat as well as their habitats in the member states of the European Union and at ensuring an absolute biodiversity within the EU through the protection of these species and their habitats. The nature trails specified in this project have been established on this basis at the most notable locations of Milic, Milic Rock, Marovka,



Malá Izra, Reed Lake and the two castle hills. The trails go alongside areas of national importance, like the Izra Lake, the Bodnár Well and the forester houses.

The neighborhood of Košice has a proven touristic potential: The Slanské Hills in the eastern part of Slovakia have volcanic origin. The range extends in north-south direction from Prešov to the Slovakian-Hungarian border and closes the Košice Basin from the east. From a geological point of view, the Slanské Hills belong to the so called Eastern Slovakian Neovolcanic Hills (23.8-5.3 mill. years). The region has countless and vary diverse natural, cultural and historic attractions, which build the basis for tourism. From a touristic point of view, the existing gastronomical and accommodation possibilities of the region cannot accommodate a more intensive active tourism due to their capacity, the services offered and their locations. The deserted family houses of the regions, which are mostly owned by private individuals, are the biggest potential in terms of a more intensive diversification towards rural tourism. These houses could be preliminarily used as tourist accommodations and smaller rest houses. The development of the enterprises working in tourism could be an ideal opportunity for our region to start to flourish; we could avoid the establishment of large industry, which would in the long run harm the environment. By increasing the popularity of the region, the settlements would develop, new enterprises could be established and by continuously expanding our product lines we could become an interesting tourist destination, which is visited by tourists over and over again.

The work of local governments does not end with establishing rest places along the natural trails. These places have to be managed and maintained and continuous and high quality services have to be offered to visitors. The integration of nature trails into the Slovak national natural trail network, their introduction to tourists and their promotion in the local information centres can only be realized at a higher, over-regional level. We would like to contribute to the promotion of the local attractions among tourists, cyclists and other visitors of every age group by preparing tourism itineraries about the natural trails, the cycle lanes and the regional sights enabling them to prepare for their hike according to their own wishes. The nature trails contribute to a healthy lifestyle and give us the opportunity to get to know the beautiful natural sights and the flora and fauna, to visit the people living in our partner settlements and to maintain our mutual relationships. It strengthens the relation between the two neighboring countries and our common interests when tourists meet at the border regardless of nationality, citizenship or political views. Such activities unite well-intentioned people in a peaceful atmosphere in the nature and last but not least have a beneficial effect on their spirit as well.

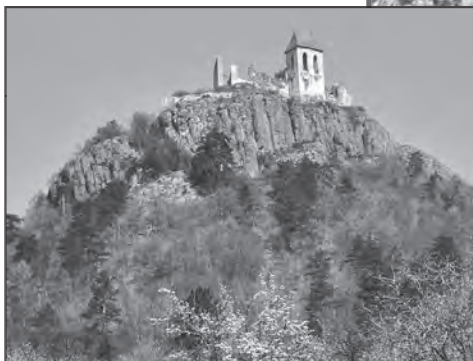
*Ing. Jozef Bela
mayor of the village Slanec*



Great Milic Nature Park

– The world of the preserved values –

The *Tokaj Mountains*, which extends in North-South direction, is the most eastern and youngest volcanic part of the North Hungarian Mountains, it is actually the southern part of the (*Prešov*) *Eperjes-Tokaj Mountains* or the *Tokaj-Eperjes (Prešov) mountain range*, it borders on the river Hernád from the West and the Bodrog River from the East.



The North Hungarian Mountains are located within the Carpathian Basin. The *Tokaj- Eperjes mountain range* consisting of three mountain units with its 150 km long ridge is located on the eastern side of the region. Its southern part is called Tokaj Mountains, the middle part is the *Szalánci Hills* (Slanské vrchy) and its northern part is the *Eperjesi Hills* (Prešovské vrchy). The Szalánci Hills or Mountains, which form the southern part of the middle section, are located in Hungary. The Great Milic mountain group and the region Hegyköz – with its subsection named Felső-Hegyköz – are situated within these hills. (PÁLYI Z. JR; 2002)¹

If you turn towards the Hegyköz after Sátoraljaújhely, the road turns to the West among the tent-like hills and if you look towards Filkeháza after you have left Pálháza, on the horizon you can catch a sight of the silhouette of the Füzér Castle and the connected andesite top. The village Füzér is the historic centre of Hegyköz. According to the latest research “*Blind*” *Andronicus*, a member of the clan *Aba* might have been the owner of this place: this region is located isolated, far away from the procession routes (Hernád- and Bodrog valley), thus it could be easily protected and integrated into the area and its villages as symbolic starting point of the Hegyköz Basin. There were five stone castles in the county *Abaúj* in the era of the Grand Prince of the Hungarians, *Árpád*: *Boldogkő*, *Füzér*, *Regéc*, *Gönc* and *Szalánc* – the latter four were in the possession of the clan *Aba*. The register of the villages that belonged to the *Füzér* estate shows from the 18th century a great correspondence to the – historic – cultural landscape that is called *Hegyköz*

The area located in the south-eastern corner of the former *Abaúj* County was mentioned under the name *Hegyköz* in the visitation records of the *Abaúj* Reformed Diocese for the first time. The name occurs in agricultural texts originating from the first part of the 19th century and the first comprehensive

¹PÁLYI Z. JR. (2002): *A Szalánci-hegység (Slanské vrchy) hazai területre eső erdeinek természetvédelmi szempontú jellemzése [The nature protection oriented forests description concerning the Hungarian side of the Szalánci Hills (Slanské vrchy)]*, Manuscript, Debrecen



monograph of Abaúj County. Later records also mention Hegyköz – the area between Hollóháza and Vágáshuta – quite often (BALASSA 2000)².

The establishment of the Great Milic Nature Park is connected to Felső-Hegyköz: The idea of the nature park originates from the local governments of the settlements (Hollóháza, Füzér, Pusztafalu) situated on the southern side of the Great Milic mountain group and at its hilly forefront. The Slovakian villages on the northern side of the Milic (Szalánc (Slanec), Szalánchuta (Slanská Huta), Eszkáros (Skároš), Újszállás (Nový Salaš)) joined this initiative and they were followed by Füzérkomlós and Kéked from the Hungarian side.

The public associates the notion of nature parks preliminary with tourism in today's Hungary. The reason for this is the fact that the associations and organizations that are called nature parks are often founded in the course of sponsoring tourism organizations of a certain region. The nature park initiative was facilitated by the cooperation of settlements near and across

the border as well. Exemplary are the authorization and establishment of the border crossing points in the Austrian-Hungarian cross border nature park Írottkő / Geschriebenstein by an intergovernmental agreement, the organization of ecotourism and the expansion of ecotourism programs.

The instruments of PHARE common micro-projects and the cross-border tenders for protecting the environment and the nature provided the framework for drafting a regional development concept, which was then complemented by the preparation of the related plan documentation. Within the Great Milic mountain group – rich in environmental/natural attractions – and in the hilly regions in the surroundings of the above settlements, the aim of the initiative

is to promote the sustainable use of the environment and ecotourism as pulling forces of the region in term of rural development.

According to its self-definition, the Great Milic Nature Park does not intend to highlight a few segments (e.g. ecotourism), but aims for a much more extensive synthesis. The aims formulated by the genius loci (spirit of a place) include the protection of the values of this marginalized region. We must also put a halt to the destructive affect of regional integration that has been ongoing for decades and must face modernization challenges at the same time. The emotional element of the above thoughts is very strong. The strong cohesion of the community contributed to the establishment of the initiative and the cooperation to a great extent. The environmental and the natural values as



²BALASSA I. (2000): *A Hegyköz földművelése [Land cultivation of the Hegyköz]*, Száz Magyar Falu Könyvesháza, Budapest (in Hungarian).

well as the traditions are still in the air and meanwhile it became evident that the incapable system of sectoral divisions is history. In such a situation local initiatives and local governments that consider environmental protection and conservation an inspirational idea have a realistic room for development.



The saddle of Slanec, in the background the Slanec Hills.

The aim of the JOINT PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT (2000-2006³) concerning the Hungarian-Slovakian borderline was to exploit the potentials of the border area cooperation in order to establish a social-economical environment that is capable of retaining the population of these rural areas. Sustainability is considered paramount while preparing and implementing development strategies for rural areas.

The Great Milic mountain group is a smaller geographical, one could say, ecological unit. In this respect, the general and unique environmental features unify the landscape. The tent-like hills that were shaped in the course of post-volcanic activity give this mountain group, belonging to two counties, a specific landscape image, e.g. the uniquely attractive Izra “Tarn”. Additionally there are numerous historic monuments in the area: The castles Füzér and Slanec (Szalánc) are popular tourist destinations.

Nature parks are organizational units of sustainable rural development, preferably large natural and cultural landscapes and exemplary recreational areas at the same time. These regions:

- ❖ can be characterized as varied, unique and rich in natural and environmental beauty;

³ KÖZÖS KÖZÖS PROGRAMOZÁSI DOKUMENTUM (2000-2006), MAGYARORSZÁG – SZLOVÁKIA PHARE HATÁRMENTI EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉSI PROGRAM.



- ❖ thanks to their physical geography they are perfectly appropriate for spending an effective and actively relaxing time here;
- ❖ the basic principles and objectives of the use of land and environment aim to conserve these values.

The nature park is established with the cooperation of local settlements, enterprises and civil organizations as a unit of rural development. The phrase nature park is not a term from the Environmental Protection Act; in practical terms it is a rural development category.

In order to remedy this deficiency, the term nature park has been defined in Subsection p Section 10 of Act LXXVI of 2004 on the General Rules of Environmental Protection.

“Nature park: a bigger area of the country that has been established according to the provisions of the law, is rich in characteristic natural, environmental and cultural historical values and is suitable for active relaxation, recreation, healing, sustainable tourism, environmental protection education, disseminating information and environmentally friendly agriculture in the nature.” Section 16 says that the minister “may approve of the use of the title nature park”.

Nature parks are defined in France as follows:

“An area that has a delicate balance and a rich natural and cultural heritage is considered to be a nature park if it:

- ❖ protects the natural and cultural heritage;
- ❖ contributes to the economical and social development;
- ❖ provides accommodation and information to residents and visitors;
- ❖ experimental projects are among its activities, the scientific research of the area is supported and
- ❖ it has been given a status as such for 10 years.”

Scope of activities of French nature parks:

- Protection of the environment and the landscape;
- Development of the society and the economy, which includes agriculture, fishery, handicraft, heritage protection and tourism services;
- Scientific research of the area;
- Education, training, providing information;
- Experimental projects;
- Modernization of villages and regional planning.
- The importance of the different activities may alternate.

The definition of nature parks in Germany is as follows:

“Large areas that are to be developed in a uniform way and

- ❖ consist preliminarily of agricultural land or nature reserves,
- ❖ are suitable for recreational activities thanks to their landscape features,
- ❖ are suitable for recreational and tourism activities based on the basic principles of rural development and the territorial laws. The aim of the recreation has to be selected and planned suitably.”

Scope of activities of German nature parks:

- Protection of the environment and the landscape;
- In line with the law, another important objective is to provide rest places and to maintain an organization supervising the park;
- Cooperation related to the conservation of built and environmental heritage.
- Public and educational activities are new objectives. These were introduced in 1984 by the association of nature parks (VND).

Previous nature park programs in Hungary launched with the aid of PHARE resources are the following: in Western Transdanubia in Kőszeg and Kőszeghegyalja Írott-kő – the Geschriebenstein Nature Park, the Hármashatár Nature Park (Hungarian-Austrian-Slovenian) and the associated Kerka-mente Nature Park. The Sopron-hegyvidék (Soproni Hills) Nature Park has been launched on the western border of Hungary. The Körösök Völgye (Körös Valley) Nature Park was established on the Rumanian-Hungarian borderline. The Vértes Nature Park is the only one that has not been opened near the country’s border. The Ipoly-mente Börzsöny Nature Park has been established alongside the Slovakian-Hungarian borderline and the Great Milic Nature Park informed us in 2003 that they would like to open at the same borderline.

Scope of activities of the Hungarian nature parks:

Protection of the nature and the environment: conservation

- to protect, manage and develop the nature and the landscape;
- to support sustainable use and the marketing of local products as well as strengthen regional identity;
- to support an environmentally conscious attitude and education.

Recreation and leisure:

- to facilitate recreational activities in the peaceful nature;
- to establish sustainable tourism and ecotourism;
- to establish the management of recreational activities and sustainable management;
- to organize eco-mobility.



The local governments of Hollóháza, Füzér and Pusztafalu initiated the launch of the “NAGY-MILIC NATURE PARK” in the summer of 2003 based on their potentials in terms of natural values, history and the capacity of the local population. They were joined by the villages Skároš (Szkáros), Slanec (Szalánc), Slanská Huta (Szalánchuta) and Nový Salaš (Újszállás) from the Slovakian side of the border. In 2004 two Hungarian villages, Kékéd and Füzérkomlós joined the initiative.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Signed on July 15, 2003 by the mayors of Füzér, Hollóháza, Pusztafalu, Szalánc (Slanec), Szalánchuta (Slanská Huta), Eszkáros (Skároš) and Újszállás (Nový Salaš) and on June 23, 2004 by the mayors of Kékéd and Füzérkomlós.

The signatories of the above named declaration express their intention to establish the “Great Milic Nature Park” in line with the objectives that have been agreed upon jointly with the population and the representatives of the local governments.

The crags of the Great Milic mountain group and the surrounding hilly landscape are located within the borders of the above listed settlements.

This area situated on the Hungarian-Slovakian border is full of potentials and possibilities for activities and is characterized by numerous natural, environmental and cultural attractions due to the environmental protection and not the least its peripheral location.

The intention to maintain this untouched originality sets the direction for the concept of future rural development plans.

The region could support and retain its population if we manage the resources based on the conservation of local values and develop ecotourism.

The idea of establishing the nature park is based on a European scheme that aims to keep the rural features of landscapes and subjugates every future development to this aim.

Consequently, the Nature Park is established with the cooperation of local settlements, enterprises and civil organizations in the spirit of sustainability as a regional development unit.

Based on the above mentioned values, the mayors of the founding villages and those settlements that joined the project at a later time express their intent to establish the “Great Milic Nature Park”.

The theory behind this intent: the territorial and dimensional potentials of the planned Nature Park are presently not sufficient to reach the objec-

tives (natural, historical, economical-geographical and social environment) without having a supplementary impact on the region. We would like to uncover these supplementary effects as the basis of the cross-border, institutional regional cooperation.

In addition to the vegetation, the architectural heritage within the natural environment of the region – which does not include only the sights well-known in Hungary – like Sárospatak, Füzér, Regéc, the castle of Boldogkő, or the cultural heritage of Gönc and Vizsoly, but other buildings and houses located in the empty, stagnating villages, which might also attract people who – for at least a short period of time – would like to leave their hasty lives.

In the course of our work, we would like to take stock of the potentials and opportunities of this marginalized rural environment and raise awareness for the processes that affect it adversely. The role of this small region in facing the challenges of the future should be in compliance with the following aspects: to protect the characteristic features of the environment, to protect the natural and cultural values and to support the livelihood of the local population.



State border along the northern range of the Tokaj-Zemplén Mountains in the former cadaster district of the village Füzér.

Visiting this relatively untouched nature and seeing the eye-catching and amazing panorama is a good opportunity for modern people who wish to recharge their batteries and relax also in order to raise their spirits. The fundamental interest of the population of Hegyköz is to encourage others to follow their example in protecting and conserving the original features of the environment.



Potentials of the Nature Park:

The establishment of a nature park, the intention of fulfilling high quality standards concerning nature parks and the efforts to do so are in compliance with today's paradigm shift.

This favorable paradigm change puts the idea of sustainability / maintainability in the foreground. These objectives could be facilitated within the Nature Park in the following fields:

- ❖ the nature and the environment;
- ❖ agriculture;
- ❖ free time relaxation and tourism;
- ❖ rural development.

The nature park enables us to draw additional resources into the region, builds the basis for the optimal use of these instruments, and motivates people to be innovative, creative and to become more willing to invest (i.e. LEADER programs).



The Tolvaj Hill above Pusztafalu

The institutional cooperation and the joint forum of the nature park support the harmonization of the “areas of opportunities”, conflict solving and the adoption of development-related experiences of other regions. To conclude, the model of nature parks requires a dialogue and joint action, which is based on the harmonization of local interests – establishing the theoretical background of an effective regional cooperation

Dr. László Nyári

Priority areas of nature conservation in the Great Milic Nature Park

The variety and wealth of fauna and flora in highlands depend largely on the diversity of geological and topographical conditions because the variety of rocks creates varied edaphic conditions, and the varied surface shapes lead to mixed microclimatic conditions. As a result, a variety of habitats, diverse flora and fauna find a home and varied associations are formed in the highlands.

The sides of dissected cups and tent-shaped volcanic wrecks of varied exposure and slope degree provide so many habitats that the species and association wealth of Zemplén Mountains and especially the region of the Milic group and its neighborhood are comparable to the Mecsek or Bükk Mountains, which are far richer regarding the quality of rock. Primarily owing to the richness in shapes, among our volcanic highlands, the region named Zemplén Mountains in Hungary can be described as the region having the most varied flora and fauna.

In Slovakia, the **Milic** is a European special area of interest (SCI) composed of the southern part of the **Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains** bordering Hungary. This is a mountainous, forested, sparsely populated landscape on the southern volcanic highland of the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains. The massif of the Milic is remarkably partitioned and is composed of a number of individual subunits; the Bradlo strata crag (840 m) and the extended Milic stratovolcano (896 m) are the most important. The mountain range is predominantly covered by clay-stone sediments from the Tertiary age. The primeval mountain beech forests which require acid soils and the lime-maple forests - occasionally have a virgin forest character, especially in the Great Milic ranges. Oak forests find favorable living conditions on the extreme growing sites. The presence of plain-like swamp alder stand is notable because it is an unusual occurrence in this 530 m elevation. Typical species of swamp forest vegetation -including the forest association representatives are in the relief depression of the Malá Izra (Little Izra). The important landscape features are the rock formations and stone rivers in combination with their unique living communities and plant associations. The presence of birds (raptors, owls, and songbirds) has an enormous importance.

The northern foothills of Milic are covered with the preserved natural association of forests and mountain meadows, which are suitable for scything and in some places grazing the livestock as well (scything once a year). The unfertilized meadow vegetation on the clearings of Milic, scythed once a year, is of great value.



The Milic habitat protection area is within the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains bird protection area which belongs to the international system of Important Bird Areas (IBA). Among the area's most valuable species are the imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), the honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), the Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*), the white-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*), and the black kite (*Milvus migrans*). Aside from the habitats and species European importance, further habitats and species there are representing national values. Due to its location, the area is the important migration corridors for the gray wolf from Slovakia to Hungary.

Protected areas in Slovakia: the state protects the natural heritage by establishing different types of specially protected areas in Slovakia. The Act on Nature Conservation (No 543/2002 TT), established the following categories: national parks, landscape protection area, protected area, nature reserves, natural monument, protected landscape element and bird protection area. Some of the areas protect European habitats and species are present in the area, and

the remainder areas protect national habitats and species. During their forest protection activities, foresters take into account the degrees of protection of each area, which are number 5 in Slovakia. The intensities of the forest management activities and also the regeneration methods take into consideration the different degrees of protection.

The Castle Hill of Szalánc is a tongue of the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains above the village of Szalánc (Slanec). The **Slanský hradný vrch** (Castle Hill of Szalánc) **Nature Reserve** covers 15.81 ha. It was classified in 1932 into the areas of the thermophile,

Partial view from the forest of the Castle Hill of Szalánc (Slanec)

drought-resistant flora and fauna that require special protection. The area is important in scientific research and carrying out cultural and educational activities. The castle ruins are on top of the andesite rock Castle Hill. Beside the drought-tolerant vegetation of Castle Hill, an ancient oak-beech avenue is tucked up on the hillside. The object of protection is signified by the mixed deciduous understory vegetation and mountainous vegetation: rock fescue (*Festuca pseudodalmatica*), evergreen clematis (*Clematis vitalba*), wild lettuce (*Lactuca quercina*), unkempt yellowhead (*Inula hirta*). Besides the trees and herbs, shrubs are also significant: mahaleb cherry (*Prunus mahaleb*) bushes, spiraea spirea (*Spiraea media*), burnet rose (*Rosa spinosissima*) and many other species. The area is protected by grade 4.



The **Trstinové jazero Nature Monument** (Reed Lake) is at the foot of the Castle Hill. This is a natural formation with the 4th grade protection. The total area of the nature monument covers 0.8291 hectares, of which water covers 0.3642 hectares.

The protected area was established for the preservation of valuable protected plants and critically endangered species such as reptiles which are represented in a uniquely high density: smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), alpine newt (*Mesotriton alpestris*), fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*), yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*), common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*). The most significant reptiles are the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), and a slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*). The important birds are the robin (*Erithacus rubecola*), greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*), members of the Paridae and Embrezidae families, the Eurasian wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), the common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*). The presence of non-native muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*) was recorded among the mammals. The species of aquatic and coastal communities are the most typical among the plants: the cattail (*Typha latifolia*), narrowleaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), yellow iris (*Iris pseud-acorus*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), common dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), wild pear (*Pyrus pyraster*), common privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), wild apple (*Malus sylvestris*), common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). One of the endangered plants is the marsh fern (*Thelypteris palustris*).

The mountain ranges of the Milic massif are situated parallel to the Hungarian border, and occasional primeval forests and their fauna communities are located on the volcanic substrate. The Milic was established along a breaking line, where there are easily observable remains of pseudo-volcanoes and their lava flows, which formed the tops of the mountains long ago. The importance of the area is shown by the fact that there are 4 nature reserves on the northern and north-eastern slopes of the Milic in Slovakia, to protect the remains of primeval forests: Veľký Milič (Great Milic



Beech association in the Marocká hola Nature Reserve



SK), Malý Milič (Little Milic SK), Marocká hoľa and Malá Izra (Little Izra), and the Miličská skála (Milic Rock) Natural Monument. Each of the four reserves can be visited. The tourist path marked in red leads through the Marocká hoľa and Veľký Milič Nature Reserves. The yellow-marked paths are in the immediate vicinity of the Malý Milič which leads from Slanská Huta to Izra Lake. The Miličská skála (Milic Rock) Natural Monument is most difficult to reach on the Great Milic Peak (HU), next to the border of Hungary.

The **Marocká hoľa Nature Reserve** is located on the southern tongue of the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains between 610 to 805 meters above sea level, on the western slopes of Sucha Hora or Szár-hegy. “Shining Mountain” is the meaning in the archaic Hungarian “Szár-hegy.” The ancient beech forest associations mixed with common ash remained predominantly in the reserve. Sessile oak is the most characteristic species in the northern rocky ridge, and there are beech-oak forest associations in very good condition around here. The object of protection is composed by valuable ancient beech forests older than 130 years – determined by the andesite and andesitic tuff bedrock between 590-635 m above sea level. The mixture ratio is 90 % beech, 10 % mountain elm; the virgin forest like area – occasionally with sycamore maple and common ash mixture – is easy of attainment. The forest vegetation of the area involves all the characteristics of the virgin forest like associations. The diameter and height structure of the undisturbed forests indicate a continuous distribution. The volume of the standing and fallen dead wood and live wood is also correct for a nature reserve.

The 64 ha **Marocká hoľa Nature Reserve** was protected in 1950. The object of protection is composed by valuable virgin like beech forests older than 130 years – determined by the andesite bedrock. Despite this, a couple of decades ago the fallen wood material was harvested after a serious wind calamity. Therefore, the former structure, which had been like a virgin forest, disappeared. There was limited removal of wood. Only those specimens were removed which were negative factors for the further natural development of that forest. These should not have a determining influence on the developmental dynamics of the forest associations. However, the existence of the nature reserve was significantly endangered. The degree of protection was moderated to the 4th category in 2004. This allows the harvest of the fallen wood caused by wind or other calamities.



Obelisk on the Great Milic Peak (HU), at the border of the Milic Rock Natural Monument.



The south-western edge of the Malý Milič (Little Milic) National Nature Reserve and the 6th rest area.

Miličská skala (Milic Rock) was declared a **natural monument** in 1990. The monument covers 11.6 ha and protects the morphologically distinct rock formations which are remnants of dacite flows and were shaped into their current forms through the fragmentation of the originally lava block.

The **Malý Milič (Little Milic) National Nature Reserve** is located in the area of Skároš and Slanská Huta and covers 14.05 ha. The protected area is a rocky heel of the Malý Milič with its typical rock walls and rock screes. The area was protected to preserve the typical ancient woodland vegetation and the different species of prey birds which found suitable breeding conditions in the Milic area. The beech forest associations are more common in the area, with mixed oak forests. Sycamore maple associations were formed in the lava flow areas, mixed with ashes and large-leaved lime trees.

The 67.81 ha. **Veľký Milič (Great Milic) National Nature Reserve** was established in 1976. The most remarkable blocks of forest habitat types are present here. The base of the massif is made up of andesites and dacite, which forms the southern part of the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains. The lime-acorn associations are typical in this oak-beech forest zone. The characteristic plant communities have been created on rocky cliffs, including maple forests on lava flows which are the southernmost occurrences of such habitat type within Slovakia. Virgin forests like ancient forests occur on medium and poor growing sites and between 725-780 m above sea level; the mixture ratio is 65 % beech, 20 % sessile oak, ash 10 %, 5 % hornbeam with scattered



sycamore maples. It has been preserved in a close to original state, but the signs of human intervention are visible. The Velký Milič (Great Milic) National Nature Reserve has forest communities on southern lava flows in the Szalánc (Slanec) Mountains and a nesting habitat for protected prey birds. The area is used for zoological and forestry research. There is no designated buffer zone and the protection grade is 5.

The **Malá Izra (Little Izra) Nature Reserve** is in the area of the Slanec (Szalánc) Forestry Directorate on the Milic massif, which is situated near Velká Izra (Great Izra) Lake. The Malá Izra is a natural lake formed by a depression in the terrain, surrounded by a woodland complex in the mountain range of the Milic. The site accommodates rare lowland swamp alder stands at the rather unusual elevation of 530 meters above sea level.

The Hungarian **Zemplén Landscape Protection Area** (Zempléni Tájévdelmi Körzet, ZTK), become protected by the decision of the Natural Nature Conservation Authority (Országos Természetvédelmi Hivatal, OTvH) numbered 1/1984 (XII. 13.), is a nationally protected natural site. Area: 26,496 hectares

According to the regulation, the region has been declared protected for the purpose of “preserving and maintaining the geological values, the terrestrial forms dominating the landscape character, the protected species of flora and fauna, the natural plant associations, the grasslands and the natural forests and the typical landscape environment of communities”.

As part of the protected area, in the northern part of the Zemplén Landscape Protection Area, the following sites are strictly protected, with the total area of 226 ha:

- Oláh Meadow
- The Castle Hill of Füzér and its Surrounding
- Drahos Meadow
- Tolvaj Hill

In the Hungarian side of Great Milic Nature Park, the clearings, such as **Drahos and Oláh Meadow**, and the habitat and association complexes, such as the **hill of Füzér Castle** and **Tolvaj Hill** above Pusztafalu are associations representing priority natural value. The dominating volcanic form of the basin of Pusztafalu, i.e. the lava dome with its steeper slope is the most typical in the case of Tolvaj Hill. Through the gap volcanism, its dense liquefied material, when pushing upwards from the magma chamber, barely reached the surface, and thus did not create lava flows, but penetrated into the surrounding sediments, tuff-stones, lifted them and then congealed.

The managed, still natural plant population of mountain meadows (e.g. Drahos Meadow) are characterized by the presence of meadow species from the mountains (e.g. meadow gladiolus, gentian, Siberian iris). The symbiosis of life forms is demonstrated by the fact that the *Maculinea alcon* butterfly species lay eggs onto the flower buds of the Marsh Gentian, or on the upper



part of the stem or on the upper leaves. The young caterpillars develop in the pericarp, and after they have left it, the ant hosts continue their nurture. At a later development phase, imitating the scent and ultrasound signal of ant larvae, they make the ant workers feed them.

Vipera berus is a snake typical of the higher, more rainy and tussocky meadows of the Zemplén Mountains. It is a short, thick-bodied snake; its length rarely exceeds 80 cm. It has an X or Y-shaped marking on the back. This mark is followed by a brown or black zigzag-patterned streak until the tail tip, so the middle of the back is always dark. It is rare everywhere in its habitats, it preferably avoids people – it perceives ground vibrations and leaves in time. In these areas environment protection management aims to maintain and to increase biological diversity of the grasslands, by means of traditional grassland management such as scything and grazing, and also by stopping or curbing the scrubs.

In the case of the habitat complex of the lava dome of **Tolvaj Hill**, it is typical that on the increasingly steep slopes, the downward ridges of hill sides, the closed forest stands like hornbeam-oak forests, beech forests and rocky forests become thinner, and give way to the acidophilous oak woods formed in these regions on highly acidic bedrock. This way on the southern sides, increasingly exposed to warm weather, acidity- and drought-tolerant species are dominant, while on the northern sides, species preferring acidity and showing humid conditions appear. In the forest stands of the frame soils, characterized by unfavorable nutrient and water management, formed on acidic bedrock, rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) can be found, while *Luzula luzuloides*, the common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and the bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) are typical of the grass layer. The association formed in the salient rock ridges, unique in Hungary, is the silicate rocky forest, with the main tree species of sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) and characteristic species of common whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), but the silver birch (*Betula pendula*) can also be found here. Further stands of the forest association can be found on the rocks of southern exposure of the volcanic mountains of the northern and north-eastern Carpathian Mountains. On the silicate rocky grasslands of Tolvaj Hill, rock outcrops appear in smaller spots than in the case of the hill of Füzér Castle, and the vegetation of open and closed rocky grassland alternate. From a forestry perspective, the forest stands of the area primarily serve defense purposes.

The **hill of Füzér Castle** is a volcanic formation that is remarkable from a distance, emerging alone from its environment. The upper third of steep hill sides is the dacite block that – forming an almost vertical cliff on the southern, south-western and north-western sides – forms a natural defense line around the hilltop that provides place for castle building. The only bet-



ter access is offered by the gentler topographic conditions of the saddle joining from North-East by means of the access road to the “Párkány” (Shelf) and then the stairs cut into the rock.

The Füzér Castle and the Castle Hill have recently been awarded the prize of “natural wonder of Hungary”. An improvement shaping as a result is the rocky grassland visitor track planned on the hillside, which makes it possible to study and present rare sights without damaging them. The protected rarities can be visited in groups with a guide. In the Middle Ages the hillsides were cut bald and later stayed bare due to the intensive grazing of livestock. The barren rock and rockslide surface meant the basis for special pioneer vegetation: the rocky grassland.

The Castle Hill and the castle have been inhabited since the Bronze Age. The anthropogenic effect has been continuous in the Middle Age and the Modern history as well. Among the establishments under the castle, the 1620 inventory lists a wildlife park, and the 1667 urbarium mentions a fishpond. The wildlife park was probably located on the northern side of the Castle Hill, but there is no trace of the fishpond today.

The grazing of livestock played a role in the formation of the silicate rocky grassland association. The vegetation in the neighborhood of the hill of Füzér Castle was clearly a barren area based on the presentations and paintings from the 18-19th centuries. The works of Ender Thomas (1793-1875) Austrian landscape painter should be highlighted here, who – according to his contemporaries – drew, painted and shaded more accurately than the landscape photographing machines of the time, and his aquarelles from the 1860s show a barren area. The Sunday Paper (Vasárnapi Újság) published the original drawing of János Greguss on the treeless Castle Hill and the ruins hidden on the top in 1868.

After the grazing of livestock stopped, the rocky grasslands, pushed back by the expanding scrubs and undergrowth, can find habitat only on the hilltop. In the last hundred years, as a result of the forestation of barren areas, deciduous forest mixed with pine appeared on the hillsides.

Here let me talk about a special forestry activity, a quasi-rural development method: the afforestation of barren areas. It means the binding and afforestation of the barren slopes, the soil of which has not developed or has eroded, by planting saplings or sowing seeds. The purpose is soil protection, which was intended to promote the improvement of the habitat of eroded clearings formed in the earlier centuries and the initiation of soil development.

Nándor Schudlich forest engineer from Füzér reported on the forestation of barren areas in the Hegyköz region at the end of his career, these plantations can be found now in the area of the hill of Füzér Castle in the



advanced succession process of developing into hardwood stand. The forestation of the barren areas of the hill of Füzér Castle with Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), European black pine (*Pinus nigra*) and flowering ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) saplings took place in the 1910s. The photos from the beginning of the 20th century show a young pine tree stand on the southern side of the Castle Hill where the fire breaks between the parts are clearly visible. In connection with the developments in the conducted forestation of barren areas, the report of 1935 says: "... the afforestation of rocky parts under the castle ruins of Füzér should be avoided for conservation purposes."

To continue these activities, in 1941 the Administration Committee of Abauj-Torna County announced the related decision of the Minister of Agriculture to the Hungarian royal Forestry Directorate of Kassa (Kaschau, Kosiče) and the Károlyi estate. The decision declared the Füzér 137a, b and 138 forest compartments, lying on an area of 34,3 cadastral acres (almost 20 ha) to be natural reserves, in agreement with the Hungarian royal religion and public education minister, in order to protect the rare plants growing in the rocky soil of the hill side and the castle ruins.

The rocky grassland cloister, serving presentation purposes, is not only a trail that can be visited by a guide or a tool for sharing knowledge on the nature, but this gridded steel surface, hidden in the landscape allows safe walking on it and creates the infrastructural background of the conservation management of the Castle Hill as well. The eradication works can be carried out on this basis to eradicate the scrubs that have caused the significant loss of character of the rocky grassland mosaic parts. Similarly, the research on the carved stones of the enormous amount of castle wall ruins found at the foot of the dacite organs can be based on this rocky grassland promenade.

The rare plant associations to be presented are the following:

- Pioneer vegetation of rock walls and stone walls;
- acidophilus open and closed rocky grassland types.
- scrubs on rocks, which unique associations appear 450-750 m above sea level in the oak, hornbeam-oak and beech forest zones, and typically form a special mosaic complex with forests on rocks on the northern side.
- woody, lush, natural habitat on the mountainous and hilly areas, the scree forest.

The special and unique silicate rocky grassland association shows an extremely dry and sunny habitat. The grassland, due to the strong abiotic stress, does not close. This is called an edaphic association, which means that the vascular plant species settle on the soil accumulated in rock fissures. Most characteristic species:



- *Aurinia saxatilis*, the plant of rock walls and open rocky grasslands.
- The dwarf iris (*Iris pumila*), characteristic of rocky grasslands, the diversity of flower color, i.e. *lusus* is characterised by purple and yellow.
- *Sempervivum marmoreum* is a native species of the Carpathian basin or Pannonia, and it is the protected species of prehistoric rocky grass-fields and rocky slopes
- in the more shady and humid corners and sides members of, the *Polypodiaceae* family like *Asplenium trichomanes* and *Polypodium vulgare* – often covering larger rocky surfaces – are typical.
- The low branching semi-shrub, *Minuartia frutescens* is the characteristic of acidophilous rocky grasslands, while beneath the shrub the yellow-flowered *Sedum acre* settled.
- The rockfoil (*Saxifraga paniculata*) is characterized by the capsule-shaped flowers in racemes and its rosette.
- The habitat of *Dianthus carthusianorum* (Carthusian pink) blooming in the summer finds its habitat at the closed rocky grasslands and steppe slopes.
- *Centaurea triumfettii* is typically present in associations of dry rocky grasslands, steppe meadows on slopes, dry oak forests and shrubs.
- *Potentilla arenaria* blooms in great numbers on the Castle Hill, on the northern part the *Lathyrus vernus* and the *Anemone ranunculoides* are common.
- The plant called *Thlaspi kovatsii* ssp. *schudichii*, stretching through the Meleszke Side, received its scientific name from Nándor Schudich Jr. forest caretaker who discovered the subspecies.

The lack of grazing livestock and the shrubs formed as a result – especially dog rose (*Rosa canina*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus*) – hinders the performance of conservation tasks.

Other anomalies, such as the collapse of castle walls and the settlement of rockslide vegetation there endanger the stability and integrity of original associations and reduce their expansion. The Castle Hill of Füzér is a good example of the fact that the cooperation of local population is an example to follow in the field of historic and natural value preservation too. Keeping this example in mind, in the Great Milic Nature Park our goal and task is to ensure the long-term and sustainable preservation of local communities, the natural cultural landscape and the priority historical monuments and natural areas.

Dr. László Nyári

Nature trails and landscape management in the Great Milic

Nature Park

The North Hungarian Mountains are located within the Carpathian Basin. The *Tokaj-Eperjes (Prešov) mountain range* consisting of three mountain units with its 150 km long ridge is located on the eastern side of the region. Its southern part is called Tokaj Mountains, the middle part is the *Szalánc Hills (Slanské vrchy)* and its northern part is the *Eperjes Hills (Prešovské vrchy)*. The southern part of Szalánc (Slanec) Hills, which form the middle section, is located in Hungary. The Nagy Milic mountain group and the region Hegyköz – with its subsection named Felső-Hegyköz – are situated within these hills.



If you turn towards the region Hegyköz after Sátoraljaújhely, the road turns to the West among the tent-like hills and if you look towards Filkeháza after you have left Pálháza, on the horizon you can catch a sight of the silhouette of the Füzér Castle and the connected dacite cuneiform top. The register of the villages that belonged to the Füzér estate shows a great correspondence from the 13th century onwards to the natural and historic landscape that is called Hegyköz.

The topography of the landscape is marked by multi-centre volcanism. In addition, owing to its geographic location, the connection to the ridge of the Carpathian Mountains should also be mentioned because the Tokaj-Eperjes mountain range, which covers the landscape in a north-south direction,



stretches down from the wreath of the Carpathian Mountains.

Thus the region is predominantly characterized by mountain-like landscape, which is completed by basin hills in the region of Hegyköz. The villages of Great Milic Nature Park on the Slovakian side (Eszkáros



(Skároš), Szalánc (Slanec), Szalánchuta (Slanská Huta) and Újszállás (Nový Salaš)) correspond to this description of landscape characteristics.

Among the villages on the Hungarian side, Füzér, Füzérkajata, Hollóháza, Pusztafalu also belong to this group. The western border of the Nature Park extends to the Hernád at Kékéd, where the western part of the village border is characterized by the floodplain nature of the river basin.

The slogan of Great Milic Nature Park, “*the world of preserved values*” indicates that perhaps the most important task of nature parks is the preservation of natural values. Our natural values have mostly survived in the regions at medium altitudes, thus several nature parks have been established and are being established in our highlands.

When examining the history of land use, it should be highlighted that from the second half of the 13th century, through the establishment of the villages supplying Füzér Castle, the area occupied by communities extended to the region of Felső-Hegyköz as well. 14th century sources mention the municipalities built around Regéc Castle in Erdővidék and Boldogkő Castle in Meződűlő. 65 out of the present 72 communities of the region had settled by the end of the 14th century.

Szalánc (Slanec) settlement was formed around an important fortress, which was represented in 1230 included the first record in the “Castrum Salis’ or “Salt castle” denotation. The castle had built by an ancestor of the Szalánci family, Csama’s son Péter from the Aba clan. Újszállás (Nový Salaš) was first mentioned in 1330 and belonged to the Nagyszalánc (Slanec) castle estate. In 1630 only a quarter landholding payed tax, the local people were serfs and cotters. In the 18th century belonged to the Forgách family estate. In 1828, 248 people lived here in 32 houses. The inhabitants used to farming and keeping of animals for living, as well as worked in the nearby glass factory. Many of the inhabitants emigrated to overseas between 1900 and 1910. Szalánchuta’s (Slanská Huta’s) area belonged to the Szalánc (Slanec) castle estate in the Middle Ages. The village came into being on the land of Újszállás (Nový Salaš) in the 18th century. The village holders were the Forgách counts, the lords of the Szalánc (Slanec) manor. The first inhabitants were cotters employed in the (former) local glass foundry. The first written reference was made in 1722, but its independence was won only in 1880. Until then the settlement was controlled as a part of Újszállás (Nový Salaš).

The present structure of the nature park communities is predominantly “pectinate”. It is due to the fact that these villages, located at the foot of the hills, are surrounded by a forest on one side and by farmland on the other. These are villages made up of several streets, built around some kind of centre – usually a church. They characteristically stretch towards



one direction; which results in the so-called comb-like structure. The settlement shows a regular image here. Most of the communities in Hegyköz are characterized by pectinate, comb-like structure. We should also mention the municipalities located in narrow valleys, the one-street villages located on clearings, having a small inner area and a small population size. The land allocation and settlement are irregular here, the distance between



houses is varied; this is the way the community accommodates to the opportunities limited by nature. The structure of these communities is the most valuable. These are: Kishuta, Nagyhuta, Vágáshuta; and Hollóháza also belong to this group by nature, but this latter is a more densely settled and populated industrial community.

Along with the settlement, the attitude towards the forest changed too. In addition to the deforestation carried out for purposes of agricultural expansion, the multi-purpose use of the forest has also become widespread. While previously the forest had almost exclusively been used for hunting, forest grazing, felling of firewood and timber, and collection of forest products became increasingly important. The forest meant the financial basis for the inhabitants of villages built on clearings, which had only limited areas of land. Due to the forest use, the forest image around the villages was different from the image in areas far from them.

The permanently utilized forests covered the daily firewood needs in inhabited areas, and the livestock was also grazed there. These were coppices, or so-called “copses”, which were maintained by cutting at short intervals. In the forests further away from villages, the timber was extracted with the method of select-cutting. These forests were later prohibited, so this latter use did not dramatically change the forest and landscape image. Thanks to this, the beech and hornbeam-oak forests have been relatively intact in the region of Great Milic and the later established “huta” settlements.

Very nice exhibition place is at the boundary of the forest and forest clearings showing an example of the “Big Tree” (Nagy Fa, Vel’ké drevo). The remnant trees – like the 300 year old estimated common oak “Big Tree” become an apprehension in the course of time. The spatial order of the present-day land use has been oriented to this natural landmark, which could mark village or estate boundaries. Since an edge of cleared forest area is near – the villages of Szalánchuta (Slanská Huta) and Újszállás (Nový Salaš) in



cleared forest areas – the “Big Tree” could mark the former village boundary of Szalánchuta. The road to Kalsa (Kalša) branches away from there.

Today the 22,000.00 ha periphery of the villages listed in the subregion of Hegyköz is divided into the following cultivation sectors: 61 % forest, 21 % cropland, 10 % pasture, 6.5 % meadow, 1.5 % orchard and vineyard. This means that around 60% of the region is woodland and 40% is agricultural land. It adapts well to historical processes too, since this ratio is just the opposite in the case of Western European cultural landscapes.

Nature trails are tools for presenting landscape-use processes as well as natural and cultural historical values and are intended to enable self-study and self-knowledge development. They serve to provide information and share knowledge while the participants hike, and this way, in addition to “learning the curriculum”, they come into close contact with the environment.

Several nature trails have been and are being established in the Great Milic Nature Park:

- Bodó Meadow and Maróka (Marovka) Nature Trail
- Great Milic Nature Trail
- Izra Lake Nature Trail
- Forestry-Ecological or Ór Hill (Guard Hill) Nature Trail
- Nature Trail along the Border

On the route of nature trails, the existing values and the tasks, challenges and opportunities to preserve and maintain them are also presented on the basis of the local landscape management approach.

The first challenge to mention is the fact that the processes of past lifetimes were completely different in the so-called “Visegrad countries” from the Western and Central European pattern: the erosion of the rural agricultural structure and especially the human basis operating it led to the disappearance of some traditional land use forms and to the formation of the so-called “after-farming systems”.

Spontaneous succession progresses started within regions. These particularly affected grazing areas, because animal husbandry was always the first to be excluded from rural farming, and the countryside became dominated by the “Green Angel” (Zöld Angyal) of László Nagy poet. It is owing to the fact that in several cases traditional farming, dating back to several centuries even increased the natural values by providing habitats. The so-called clearings should be mentioned here, where farmers established meadows in the place of former forests. In these places populations of several protected orchid species appeared with the insect and butterfly fauna related to them (living in symbiosis with them). At present these natural values have been endangered with the depopulation of the region and the decline of traditional forms of land use.



The abandonment and underuse of meadows are also typical in the Slovakian northern foothill complexes of Milic; they haven't been scythed and grazed over the last few years, which has led to the formation of scrubs with invasive plants (blackthorn, hawthorn, hedge rose).

Regarding land use planning however, it should be taken into consideration that in addition to forest management, one of the basic elements in provide a livelihood for the population and thus keeping them, is agriculture. The favorite form of traditional land use is the grassy orchard, most of which have been abandoned by now. The old, rotten fruit trees provide habitat for several species of insects and birds.

The opportunities are the following: planting fruit cultures, grassland management, revitalization of grasslands – restoring grazing animal husbandry, planting indigenous hardwood tree species on weak arable lands, local processing of products (dried fruit, pálinka [traditional fruit brandy], jam) and the spread of labor-intensive bio-cultures.

The region of Northern Zemplén and thus the whole Milic mountain group is considered as an ecological optimum habitat in terms of the two main tree species of the forest stand, beech and sessile oak. From a climatic aspect, sub-continental and Carpathian climate effects can be observed, which provide the region with a moderately dry and a moderately cool nature. Considering the soil capabilities, two- and three-level forest soils dominate. The habitat conditions of the region are typically affected by the exposure and the extra-zonal climate conditions, such as canyons and rock streams (stone rivers).

The method of natural regeneration applied in planned forest management is the shelterwood (gradual regeneration cutting), which is based on the growth and crop of indigenous stand, and ensures the preservation of local populations. The advantage lies in its safety because it allows the managers to preserve the genetic material of a forest section regarded as a population that has already adapted to the environment, while the new generation of the stand ensures the continuous forest cover of the area. The method provides particularly high level of security in renewing the stand of the light-demanding sessile oak.

The recently launched method based on cutting holes (small canopy openings) is intended to help farmers achieve a forest structure based on



Old apple varieties during autumnal ripeness in Füzér.



the constant distribution of age groups, where all age groups – from a more than 100-year-old single organism to the young sapling – are represented in the same area. This select-cutting method is a proven forestry practice in the mixed beech, spruce and silver fir stands of the European high mountains. The safe use is proven by experience in case of stands with the main tree species of beech, found on the ecological optimum habitats.

The Milic group – not being a calcareous mountain range – is rich in streams, and this topographical feature is very significant due to the landscape-level diversity of the micro climate, the flora and the fauna. Today, the increase in the public welfare role of the forest and the increasing environmental problems justify the analysis and presentation of the hydrological situation of forests more and more.

The forest springs and streams are more and more significant, also due to the increase in the public welfare tourism role of the forest.

For hikers, the importance of springs and streams is twofold:

- in case of a larger trip, these provide the necessary drinking water, which is also good for refreshment,
- these can be the destinations of the walk or trip as well.

It is important to acquire a more detailed knowledge of the environment, water yield and water quality of forest springs also because the environmental and water pollution problems affecting the whole of humankind have been increasingly acute today.

Thus it is important to monitor and present the hydrological processes in a zone so heavily visited by tourists in order to ensure and maintain the biological balance.

The springs are determinate by above-surface catchment area (which can be roughly determined) and the underwater catchment area, i.e. underground streams (which can almost never be determined exactly). The emergence of water has an important role in the affected flora and fauna, and their condition has a major influence on the quality of human environment as well.

The massif of the Great Milic is important for tourism. During the tourist seasons the visitor density is very high in a relatively small area. The forest is protected so that we can learn more about “water management” and if necessary it can be rehabilitated in the context of environmental protection and environmental planning. These may be:

- Hydrological study of forest water resources: springs, creeks, and lakes;
- Hydrological and forest management analysis of landslides;
- Utilization management and methods for preventing erosion;
- The water catchment area should be considered as a management



unit due to the major hydrological effect of tree species and their age distribution;

- Both technical and ecological objectives are taken into account in the control of streams;
- Renovation and maintenance of existing spring catchments;
- Hydrologic sizing of technical facilities (culverts, bridges);
- Maintaining natural and man-made lakes and creating new ones;
- Establishment and maintenance of wetlands;
- Check, maintenance and refurbishment of small water works and bridges.

The infrastructural elements of the landscape, like forest and meadow roads or small bridges mean the traffic veins of the adaptive landscape management. In forest areas these roads ensure the achievement of the “multiple ownership – multi-purpose – close-to-nature” forest management. We have already talked about the closeness to nature when informing about the applied restoration methods. In addition to farming, the multiple purposes mean the protection of environmental elements and the possibility of playing a public welfare role. A professionally maintained network that is adapted to the region, exploring small forest catchment areas and allowing for safe traffic, is a prerequisite for both cycling and horse-drawn carriage tourism. In the region of Milic, the forestry road construction has solid traditions.

At the established earthwork, the drainage is provided with culverts. The base of the first structured roads was built from dry, large stones found nearby, between the two lines of kerbstones bordering the road surface. The flat part of foot stones were placed on the ground, with their more coarse and sharp part looking upwards. The macadam surface, i.e. the wearing layer was scattered on it and then condensed. The renewal of the wearing layer and the maintenance of road consistency is a road maintenance task.

Several facilities, tasks, challenges and opportunities have been mentioned about the establishment of a grassroots nature park. In the western part of the old continent, a nature park is the framework for the harmonious coexistence of local communities and natural environment. It is not the tool in the hands of professional authorities to prohibit, punish and waste away, but a grassroots forum where the official, civil and farming actors of the region agree on common goals and tasks. Keeping this in mind, our goal and task is to ensure the joint, long-term and sustainable preservation of local communities, the natural cultural landscape and the priority areas of natural value in the region of Great Milic. Hopefully the information acquired and the trip taken in these nature trails can help our visitors receive and understand this message.

Dr. László Nyári



Wildlife management and hunting in the past and present in the Great Milic

The North Hungarian Mountains are located within the Carpathian Basin. The *Tokaj-Eperjes (Prešov) mountain range* consisting of three mountain units with its 150 km long ridge is located on the eastern side of the region. The middle part is the region of Szalánci Hills (Slanské or Slanec Hills), with its northern part situated in Slovakia and the southern part belonging to Hungary. The Great Milic mountain range, which stretches down to

Hegyköz Basin like a North Carpathian “island”, is Hungary’s only Carpathian natural habitat. After the Turkish Wars and Rákóczi’s War of Independence, two dominant landowning families of the Milic region, the Forgách family in the north and the Károlyi family in the south determined the wildlife management and hunting culture of the region.

The Great Milic has always been a deer rut site in the popular knowledge

Trophy of a red deer culled on September 30, 1932 on Orita Plateau, antler weight: 7 kg, even ten, typical at Milic, front cup in the prestigious, renovated castle at Lászlótanya.

and practices of local hunters. It is no mere chance that the Károlyi family (Count László Károlyi), once landowners in the southern part of the region, established a stone-built hunting castle at Lászlótanya at the end of the 19th century in order to make their hunter camp (that had previously included only blockhouses) more extended and convenient. In addition to the hunting castle, hunting lodges were also built for temporary stay, e.g. the hunting lodge in the region of Oláh-rét on the Hungarian side or the hunting lodge in Karolka on the Slovakian side, which derive from that period.

The trophies caught by the Károlyi family, which all have an ink inscription on the skull including the place and time of the culling as well as the weight of the trophy, prove that the same deer rut sites have been known for several decades and are still listed as the best deer rut sites in today’s hunting



and wildlife management practice (e.g. Oláh Meadow and Orita Plateau).

Károlyi László's son, István was also devoted to the passion of hunting and took part in several hunting adventures abroad with his friend, Zsigmond Széchenyi. The regular hunts and his new zoo, established in Fót, proved to be very expensive pastime activities. In order to balance the expenses, the mostly unutilized castle in Füzérradvány was converted into a luxury hotel in 1936-37. The electricity as well as cold and hot water were introduced and major internal transformations were carried out. The building and its neighbourhood got equipped with every possible comfort. The established facilities included swimming pool, tennis court, golf course, sledge and ski runs. The guests had the opportunity to go fishing, boating, horse and carriage riding as well. The Castle Hotel opened on May 8, 1938 and gained as much popularity as the Palace Hotel in Lillafüred, a popular castle hotel of Hungary before 1945⁴.



Sledding in winter by the Castle Hotel in Füzérradvány

HERBERT NADLER zoologist, writer on hunting, manager of the Budapest Zoo and Botanical Garden described his experiences with the Castle Hotel as follows: *"It is a real luxury for hunters! It is even more prominent than the Grand Hotel in Ótátrafüred.*



Foyer of the Castle Hotel

*Old furniture and fireplaces filled with glowing pieces of wood in large and high rooms, decorated with magnificent Hungarian and African hunting trophies... full of comfort and convenience"*⁵

Of course, wildlife management was not only relevant for presenting the trophy achieved at that time either. The Károlyi manor needed the income from organising hunts in addition and as a complement to providing accommodation and elite tourism. The Castle Hotel became the central place of accommodation for hunting guests arriving in Hegyköz, it was an ideal base for hunting enthusiasts to reach the region

⁴ PILLÉR T; KÁRÁSZI; GYÖRYJ. (1989): *Zempléni-hegység [Zemplén Mountains]*; in: RAKONCZAY Z. (ed.): *Ipolytarnóciól – Füzérradványig, Észak-Magyarország természeti értékei [From Ipolytarnóc to Füzérradvány, Natural values of North-Hungary]*; Mezőgazdasági Kiadó, Budapest (in Hungarian).

⁵ NADLER H. (1943): *Vadásznapló 1943 [Hunting diary of 1943]*; *Erdészettörténeti Közlemények XL, Országos Erdészeti Egyesület Erdészettörténeti Szakosztály, Budapest, 1999 (in Hungarian)..*

of Central Zemplén and the Milic Mountains. The devoted work of forestry and hunting professionals was required for wildlife management, hunting and organising hunts; as ISTVÁN PARTY, manorial hunt master reported in the thirties and forties of the last century.

As one of the leaders of the professional staff of the Károlyi manor, his writings do not display a kind of hunting romantics, but describe the experience of the wildlife manager and provide guidance instead: the wildlife management of Károlyi lands in Zemplén was renowned throughout Europe at that time.

In connection with feeding the deer population, it was recognised already at that time that the use of artificial fodder to feed deer in winter results in the loss of weak and stunted specimens only. Incomplete and poor feeding results in the death of a large number of animals, while the death of strong stags implies significant negligence. In connection with feeding, one should take into consideration the feasibility and time of logging works because bud fodder always substitutes for the necessity of putting out grain.⁶

“Then a group of loggers came in the valley to continue their work: to fell and log the old nurse trees left during logging. The deer now visit in groups for the buds of the felled beech trees at night, that’s why we have come here to shoot hind at dawn.” writes HERBERT NADLER in his Hunter Diary, remembering his hunting adventures in Hegyköz in December 1943.

Count Forgách is said to have introduced 9 specimens of red deer to the region of Milic in the 50s of the nineteenth century from Máramaros



“A” type Carpathian red deer trophy: larger beam length and thickness, proportional shape, nice colour and pearling, strong, multi-tine cup.

(Maramures) county, while the counts of the Károlyi family introduced a stock of 15 specimens from their wildlife park in Transdanubia; which were of smaller stature and were different from the specimens from Máramaros in colour. This Transdanubian bloodline interbred with the Carpathian one, and the present deer type of the Milic region developed by the First World War.

It should be noted that the influence of the Carpathian type has continued to prevail owing to the dominance of

⁶ PARTY I. (1940): *Az 1940. évi tél után [After the winter of 1940]; Nimród Vadászlap, 1940. május 1; p. 212-214 (in Hungarian).*

migration routes. Recollections point out that by the end of the nineteenth century the red deer population had increased in number to an extent that Count Károlyi enclosed his forests in order to prevent agricultural and forestry damage. This fencing was in use until the end of the Second World War.

The former owner of the other estate, István Forgách also enclosed almost 3000 acres of forest in order to prevent damage caused by game. The love of forests and affection for hunting of the Forgách family is demonstrated by the fact that István Forgách, who died in 1916, was buried in the family tomb near his favourite hunting castle in Kerekhegy (Okrúhly vrch).

The hunting area of Milic is predominantly characterised by large game species. Frequent and dominant ones are red deer, roe deer and wild boar; the mouflon introduced by the Károlyi family to the Hegyköz region is no longer present in the Milic Mountains; in the Zemplén region it typically occurs in Central Zemplén. The Carpathian red deer in the Milic region is characterised by the dark colour of the coat and the antlers of stags, the lack of bay tine, the intensive pearling, the strong tray, which often extends up to the bottom part of the cup as well as the robust, often double-tine cup. Among the types migrating to the region, it is worth mentioning the "A" type red deer specimens that have a strong, multi-tine cup.

The roe population of the Zemplén and Milic region can be classified according to its quality into the group of trophies weighing up to 150-350 g (max. 400 g). The beautiful, mature, old roebuck trophies are of precious value for all hunters, regardless of their weight. The number of roe deer has decreased due to the fact that the grasslands have become more weedy and bushy and the small forest meadows have become woodier. This is due to the fact that the roe deer is a wild species that selects the most delicious ones of grasses too; the hunting literature thus calls them "the most choosy" ruminants.

The autumn and winter wild boar hunts have always made the heart of all visiting foreign and domestic hunters flutter. It was never the rife bags (50-100) that were typical but only the 10-20 bags. Of course, the experience of the landscape and the panorama, the mood of hunting with hounds and last



Stag culled in the autumn of 1969 in Great Milic. Left side of the picture: German guest hunters, right side of the picture: Jenő Horváth, main hunter, leader of stalking.



but not least the precise organisation are considered additional values. Large wild boar males always occur in the region, they can be characterised by more than 20 cm long tusks. These tusks are circular in shape, broad and intact – a broken tusk is rare. Male boars having more than 20 cm long tusks are usually medallist.



The popularity of hunting tourism is unwavering in this region. Füzérkomlós has become the centre of the region's hunting tourism on the Hungarian side from the mid-90s. Due to the poor quality (6-8 AK/ha quality on average) of the soil in Hegyköz, afforestation, wildlife breeding, establishment of wildlife parks, keeping livestock, hunting and hiking tourism are the only breakthrough points and at

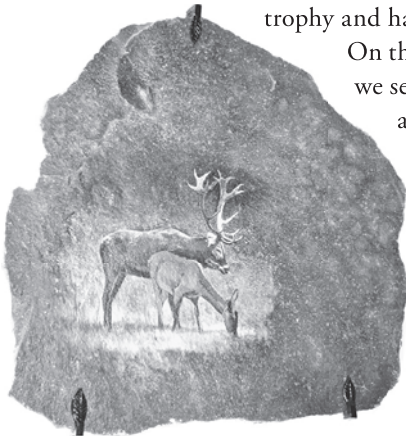
the same time the only employment opportunities for the people living here. This aim inspired the establishment of the Szonta Szafari Wildlife Park on the border of Füzérkomlós, on the southern side of Great Milic Nature Park.

As wildlife managers of Great Milic, we are proud of the fact that the damage to the big game population of the region is so slight that it is possible to apply the natural "Pro Silva" methods, affecting smaller areas, which can be used in regions of Western Europe that are poorer in game.

Our mission is the preservation of all wildlife management and hunting traditions that are rooted in the hunting culture of the Károlyi and Forgách Manors and have greatly contributed to the fact that the Carpathian red deer genome in Milic has been preserved with its exceptional trophy and habit characteristics.

On the basis of these management attitudes, we seek cooperation with the forestry management giving the functional backbone of the region and the increasingly typical ecotourism as well.

András Mester



Nature parks as local and organizational frameworks for protecting the heritage and conserving the character of a region as well as enhancing innovation

The region, the location and the allocation of character, originality and nature play an important role in the approach of regional or local marketing. The nature park itself – **in this case the Great Milic Nature Park** – can be considered as a **type of product**, as it fulfills the criteria for national/international tourism products.

Within a certain region, especially regional and local products, like tourism programs, events or **handicraft products, homemade or processed food** (jam, squash, walnut, etc.) produced regionally or sold in “organic stores” can be labeled as products of the nature park, which can be a quality guarantee regarding their organic nature. This guarantee can be reinforced by using a „**Nature Park Label**” as a marketing tool (local product).



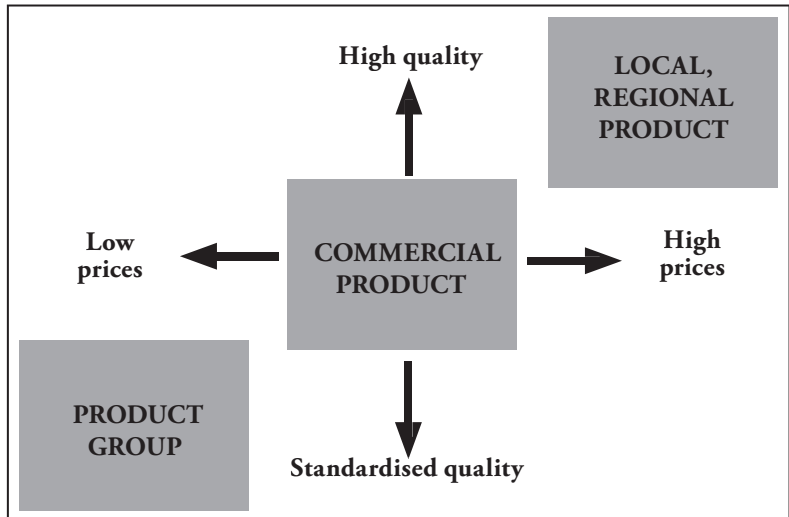
Local products (p alinka (brandy) from the region Hegyk oz and plum jam).

Local products in the region of Great Milic:

- **Apiary products:** honey, medovina honey wine, propolis
- **Products of animal origin:** cow milk and cottage cheese, goat milk and cheese, chicken eggs, pork bacon and lard, sausage, produce from pig killings, rabbit fur;
- **Fruit and fruit products:** apple, pear, plum, cherry, peach, walnut, blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, red currant and fruit products – plum jam, and different sorts of jam and squash;
- **Garden vegetables:** tomato, green pepper, cucumber, root vegetables, potato;
- **Grapes and wines**
- **Mushroom products:** freshly picked mushroom – porcino, boletaceae and dried mushroom
- **Woven products:** baskets and brooms made of cane
- **Handicraft woodwork products:** (e.g. handles of hand tools, wooden rakes, local furniture and their accessories);



- **Handicraft wrought-iron products:** decorations, candlesticks, bases
- **Needle-craft:** embroidery, crochet-work, homespun (it is not produced anymore but could be made as the necessary tools and machines are available);
- **Traditional dresses:** only for order;



The meaning of products (brands) in trade, (Source: MÜLLER-HAGEDORN, L. 1997).

Based on the experience of the South-German regions, the aim of establishing local product brands is to sell **these local products in a more processed way and thus with more return. The brand name has to express and at the same time vouch for the special regional origin and high quality of the product.**

The main condition for establishing a brand label that fulfils all these criteria is the quality management; additional important criteria are the propagation of the consumption of domestic products and the unified product design (packaging, marketing, promotion). [ECKERT et al (2000)⁷].

Of course, this requires the support of the society from the ground up as well as a basis that relying on the social resources of the micro region establishes regional cooperation.

The active collaboration of small local communities and places – which is exemplary in this region – is an important precondition for developments

⁷ECKERT, A; POPP, D; LENZ, C; BACHMANN, J; HAGE, G. (2000): *Naturpark Südschwarzwald, Konzeption zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung des Naturparks Südschwarzwald [Southern Black Forest Nature Park, concept for the sustainable development of the Southern Black Forest Nature Park];* *Schlusßbericht, Landesregierung Baden-Württemberg – EU-Leader II, Südschwarzwald (in German).*

MÜLLER-HAGEDORN, L. (1997): *Trends im Handel – Analysen und Fakten zur aktuellen Situation im Handel [Trade trends – analyses and facts of the current situation of trade], Frankfurt / Main (in German).*

and the management of visitors, tourists and guests staying at accommodations. It is an empirical fact that the demand for mass produced products in post-industrial societies is not pervading in all layers of the society. **Unique products that were not made in mass production** are better marketable. The solvent demand for products could be enhanced by connecting the Great Milic Nature Park to the international ecotourism network. In the world of “preserved values”, *Jam cooking* we believe that people who would like to relax are more receptive to the attractive natural environment, the aesthetically pleasing look of settlements and the preserved values.



On the Hungarian side, the non-profit Ltd. responsible for organizing and coordinating the fulfillment of objectives represented by the Great Milic Nature Park would like to act as a generating organization. As a partnership forum, it takes on the responsibility for coordinating and harmonizing different development and sustainability priorities, the establishment of the long-term organizational framework for regional rural development, landscape maintenance and community building cooperation and thus could be the host for rural development projects supported by the European Union (LEADER).

The LEADER is a “community initiative in favor of viable rural communities”. Its objective within the European Union is to alter the attitude of local governments, entrepreneurs and that of the civil society in micro-regions based on partnerships and in form of grassroots initiatives. Experience shows that thanks to LEADER, the cooperation based on partnerships and the recognition of common interests replaces isolated, individual and sometimes overlapping

efforts, which occasionally hinder each other.

On the Hungarian side, the **Zempléni Helyi Termék és Szolgáltatás Klaszter** (Local Produce and Service Cluster of Zemplén) has been established to develop products. The aim of the cluster is to produce all possible joint, individual or supplementary goods by



Porcino or penny bun (Boletus edulis).



organizing the current and future produce of members into a system and to sell them under one trademark.

Planned product line:

Fruit based products: Jams containing especially high concentration of fruit with or without added sugar, juices with a 100% fruit content or nectars with a 50% fruit content (by mixing different fruit types or using only one type)

Products containing low concentration of water: desiccated and dried fruit, fruit powder mix made of fruit

Fruit cheese and jellies

Crystallized fruit puddings

Sweet spreads

Alcoholic drinks

Meat-based products

Soured and fermented dairy products

The cluster considers it important to reach the first levels of product processing and sees it as the first level of product development. An example could be the production of fruit pulp (mainly plum and apricot) that is retrieved by seeding, cleaning and deep-freezing and can be processed further.

Based on the above, the strategic goals of the Great Milic Nature Park are as follows:

- Protection of values: the conservation of a uniform cultural landscape and the protection of cultural values.
- Protection of the nature: protection of habitats and species, looking after and maintaining the landscape.
- Environmental protection: minimizing the effects that are harmful for the environment.
- Rural development: supporting the development of the society and the economy by including local initiatives.
- Forestry, land and water management (supporting traditional environmentally friendly management methods and techniques, propagation of organic farming).
- Handicraft: conservation of handicraft professions which are characteristic for the region.
- Industry: enhancing environmentally sound techniques and knowledge-based enterprises.

- Tourism: supporting ecotourism, green tourism and the tourism infrastructure serving recreational and holiday purposes.
- Urban development: renewing and revitalizing villages and their look, environmental education.
- Enhancing cooperation: supporting cooperation within the region.



Woven baskets

The aim of the Nature Park is to establish a sound basis for the economy in the region while taking the ecological basic rules of the environment into consideration.

High quality and unique products and within these categories local food products are included in the objectives of the Great Milic Nature Park as a generating organization. All this is connected to the preservation of rural-natural values and the experiences that are only characteristic for this region.

The attractions of the Great Milic Nature Park enable the establishment of special and unique (local) products and thus the enhancement of the competitiveness of the region. During the development, **sustainability must be considered as a basic requirement in all fields, but within this aspect** we should aim at **establishing complex products** that attract interest with their unique, special and globally competitive nature. We would like to turn the Great Milic Nature Park into a brand name that is known in the Carpathian Basin and also in further regions of the world.

Zoltán Ogár



Castle history – historic preservation – restoration and heritage tourism at the Great Milic Nature Park

The history of Füzér Castle

Füzér Castle is among the few rock castles that had already existed before the Mongol invasion. The present archeological and historical studies unanimously agree that a branch of the Aba clan had the castle built in the early 13th century. However, the castle soon got into the possession of Andronicus master of the Kompolt clan, who later sold it to King Andrew II. By means of this, Füzér became a royal castle. The first mention in a charter derives from the period of the reign of King Béla IV, from 1264. His son, Stephen V donated the castle to Mihály comes of the Rosd clan and his brother, Demeter in 1270.

The castle could not stay long in the possession of the Rosd clan because research has shown that by the end of the 13th century Amade Aba got hold of it together with the neighbouring castle estates. It became royal property again only after the Battle of Rozgony (1312), where King Charles Robert defeated the sons of Amade Aba palatine. The Angevin rulers, King Charles Robert and Louis I (Louis the Great) considered the castle and the castle estate of Füzér as so-called honors, i.e. the comes of Abaúj County became keepers of the estate during their run of office.

The Perényi family appeared in the castle history in 1389. Sigismund of Luxemburg donated the castle to the sons of Péter Perényi, Miklós, János and Imre as a perpetual grant. From that time the Perényi family members were careful owners of Füzér Castle until 1567, the extinction of the Nádor branch of the family. They are associated with the gothic reconstruction of the castle and the renaissance extensions carried out in the second half of the 16th century. The defense system was modernized under the ownership of Péter Perényi crown guard and his son, Gábor. Péter Perényi commissioned the construction of a gate bastion in front of the gate tower, on the basis of the old Italian system, based on the plans of Alessandro Vedani Italian architect. The interior of the tower was walled up solidly in the mid-17th century.

Füzér probably never functioned as the family seat, it did not have representative functions, but the most precious family assets and the treasury were probably kept here. Having lost the Battle of Mohács, in the autumn of 1526, after the coronation of King John I (John Zápolya), Péter Perényi found his own castle the best place to safeguard the Holy Crown. Visegrád,



where the crown was traditionally guarded, was subject to the possible attacks of Ferdinand I, enforcing Habsburg legal claims.

After the death of Gábor Perényi in 1567, Füzér Castle was received by György Báthory de Ecsed, related by blood to the Perényi family. As the heritage of his daughter, Elizabeth Báthory, who was married to Ferenc Nádasdy, the castle became the possession of the Nádasdy family. In the 17th century Füzér lost the special attention it enjoyed under the ownership of the Perényi family. The Nádasdy family settled its centre in the western part of the country, Füzér was far from this region. Collections from that period inform about purist furniture and the role the castle played in the economic life of the estate. In the 17th century, the richness of the former “treasury” was only demonstrated by a single painting, associated with the Báthory era: the portrait of Gabriel Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, who was murdered at a young age. The painting was kept in Füzér until the destruction of the castle, when it disappeared.

In 1671, after the execution of Ferenc Nádasdy judge royal on the basis of trumped up charges, the castle got once again into the royal possession and thus under the management of the chamber. In 1676 the court chamber gave orders to destroy the castle. The historic role of Füzér Castle thus ended, and the castle estate belonging to it got into the possession of the Károlyi family in 1686.



The history and present status of Szalánc (Slanec)

Szalánc Castle is situated 23 km east from Kassa (Kaschau, Košice) on the hilltop above the village. The exact date of construction is unknown but it was probably built after the Mongol invasion. It is thought to be originated in the Árpád era. The oldest authentic mention can be found in a charter of the chapter of Eger from 1303^{*}, when the sons and descendants of Szalánczi I Péter (Petri de Zalanch) – originating from the Aba clan – shared the castle and other possessions.

Next it is mentioned in the 1330s, when ten successors of the Szalánczy family traded Szalánc Castle and the estate belonging to it with a Drugeth family ancestor with the permission of King Charles Robert. The Gereni branch of the Drugeth family owned Szalánc Castle until its extinction. From the Gereni branch of the Drugeth family, Miklós III, the supremus comes of Ung County and ban of Szörény married one of his daughters to László Telegdy. Thereafter Szalánc Castle became Telegdy's possession through marriage. László Telegdy's daughter, Anna married László Losonczy, ban of Slavonia, and so the Losonczy family soon took possession of the Szalánc Castle from the Telegdy family.

In the first half of the 15th century, Hussites settled in Upper Hungary and occupied the castle. The troops of János Hunyadi chased them away in 1448. In the 1490s the Losonczy family rebuilt the castle. After the extinction of the Losonczy family, Rudolf II donated the castle to Baron Zsigmond Forgách de Ghymes in 1601.

István Bocskai occupied it in 1605, but after the Treaty of Vienna and



after the Treaty of Vienna and Bocskai's death it returned to Zsigmond Forgách. It was inherited by his son, Ádám, who was appointed chief commander of Kassa in 1643. A year later, on 4th March, 1644, he gave up Kassa without fight to George I Rákóczi, who took part in the Thirty Years' War as an ally of Sweden and France. However, he escaped to Ferdinand III in Vienna, whom he informed about the composition of Rákóczi's army and plans and took part in the initial fight against him. Nevertheless, the Transylvanian troops defeated

Lajos Csordák: Marsh under Slanec Castle, 1896, oil

^{*} This data is 1281 in the novel of Viktor Szombathy /1986/ and in other sources 1230.

him at the battle at Szalánc and then burned the castle down in 1644.

In the following decades, the castle changed hands several times. Occasionally it was held by anti-Habsburg rebels or by the emperor's troops, and in the meantime it suffered significant damage. Imre Thököly occupied it in 1678, and later signed a ceasefire with Leopold I. As a consequence the imperial troops invaded. General Count Jakab Lestie, the president of the war cabinet and commander in Upper Hungary destroyed the castle in 1679. Since then it has been lying in ruins.

As the 1868 May edition of the *Vasárnapi újság* (Sunday paper) puts it: "And thus the at least six-century-old stone castle was destroyed. The castle is presently owned by the Szalánc branch of the Forgách family and in one of its towers, that was rebuilt by Earl József Forgách, a keen supporter of sciences, the following text is displayed on two iron plates:"

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I. Arx Szaláncz Seculo XIII. per genus Aba erecta; — Seculo XIV. per Drugethios tentata; ab anno 1390. per secula Losoncziis paruit; anno 1440 per Bohemum Ducem Joannem Giskra de Brandeisz desolata; post semiseculum per Ladislaum de Losoncz restaurata.

II. Ab Anno 1601. Comitum Forgách propria; per Bocskay, Bethlen, Rákóczy, Tököly iterato lacessita; anno 1644. per Georgium I. Rákóczy combusta; — ejus Dominus Comes Sigismundus III. Forgách captus; ab anno 1679. diruta moles. — Per Dominum ejusdem Josephum Comitem Forgách ab anno 1825. non martis exercitiis, sed sui suorum que deliciis restituitur.

I. The Szalánc Castle was erected by the Aba clan in the 13th century. In the 14th century it was in the hands of the Drugeth family; from 1390 it was in the possession of the Losonczy family; in 1440 John Giskra of Brandys, Czech officer abandoned it; it was rebuilt by László Losonczy around the middle of the century.

II. From 1061 it was in the possession of the Forgách viscounts; the fortress was attacked by Bocskay, Bethlen, Rákóczy and Tököly time and time again; in 1644 György Rákóczy I burned it down and its owner Zsigmond Forgách III was taken prisoner; in 1679 it was destroyed and has remained in that state ever since. Its owner, Viscount József Forgách has started to rebuilt it in 1825, not for battles however, but for himself and the enjoyment of his family.

Today the owner and operator of Szalánc Castle is the municipality of Slanec (Nagyszalánc). The Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County decided to renovate the castle in October 2011. The related historical and archeological excavation of the castle is conducted in June to September 2012 together with the detailed architec-



tural and historical excavation of the castle centre (i.e. tower, palace and chapel), including the following activities:

- ❖ the on-site documentation and evaluation of findings
- ❖ the positioning of findings and details on the ground plans, elevations and prints
- ❖ processing details of historic value into inventory lists and developing a reconstruction proposal
- ❖ writing down the position of findings and processing their description, as well as the complex evaluation of the development of the researched castle section
- ❖ developing the overall castle reconstruction plan, including each detail
- ❖ the photographic documentation of findings
- ❖ the presentation of results and continuous consultation with the methodological expert of the Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County
- ❖ studying and evaluating the existing documentation associated with the researched object in the archives of the Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County
- ❖ drawing up the excavation report – written part and graphic supplements – evaluating the development of the object and the findings
- ❖ approval of the reconstruction proposal – see written part and graphic supplements

The exact geodetic survey of the area with terrestrial laser scanning and digital photogrammetry, the development of the field model of the castle ruins (palace section, tower and cistern) in orthogonal system (front view, side view and top view) as well as in detailed photographic raster structure with the indication of the geometry of castle walls are carried out in June to September, 2012. The scope of survey covers the castle centre – its internal and external parts – as well as the neighboring rooms.

The passportisation of castle ruins (static analysis and assessment) is also conducted in June to September, 2012. The results of the research carried out (archeological–historical, static and geodesic) will be of key importance when determining the steps of the reconstruction process. The archeological excavation of the castle is going to be carried out and the reconstruction works (castle tower and palace walls) are going to start in 2013.

The Civic Association to Save Szalánc Castle (Mentsük Meg a Szalánci Várat Polgári Társulás /Občianske združenie Zachráňme hrad Slanec) is actively involved in protecting the castle: in March 2012 they cleaned the castle courtyard from invasive plants and continue to support the reconstruction by means of voluntary work.

Castle history and heritage tourism: the example of Füzér

By the beginning of the 20th century, the appreciation of historic values had spread increasingly. The villagers, who had some decades ago carried stone away from the castle, began to appreciate the ruins, and seeing the destruction of walls awakened their need to preserve them. This morale, still living today, was first documented in a letter that Béla Wittich forestry adjutant wrote to the National Committee of Monuments in 1910.

“Please do not take into account my insignificant role – he writes – as I turn to your Excellency in connection with the renovation of Füzér Castle because I only write the wish of the region’s population: save Füzér Castle, the boast of our region from final destruction! Your Excellency! Perhaps it is not in vain to ask you for it if I tell you that the most beautiful part of the castle, the 5-meter-high Gothic chapel will collapse within a short time and only a white mess of ruins will show the place where the relics of Holy Crown was safeguarded in the chaotic period after the Battle of Mohács, where Erzsébet Báthori of Csejte expiated for her terrible sins. This year the gales have shattered the castle chapel to a great extent. The head stones of the pointed arched windows have loosened, a part has fallen out and another has crashed and started to slip down. The external one has bent to an extent that the difference from vertical is visible to the naked eye.”

The Committee sent Kálmán Lux architect to the site, who confirmed Wittich’s account by briefly describing the castle in his report. He considered the chapel worthy of restoration and offered an alternative for reconstruction in his notebook. Being aware of the limited financial possibilities of the Committee, he suggested that Count László Károlyi, the owner should be asked to renovate the chapel for the purposes of an upscale hunting shelter.

After the First World War, new initiatives have been launched to protect the chapel. In 1923, a member of the National Committee of Monuments visited the castle, who suggested the same as Lux. Nevertheless, the works did not start. The next attempt to raise awareness came from Füzér again: In 1928 Sándor Pacsai teacher wrote a letter to the Committee. According to the information contained, the forest lordship of Count Károlyi refused any restoration works, but the Committee asked the Count to carry out the



work in a letter again. More than five years later the forestry commission office informed the Committee that the proposed restoration of the chapel was carried out in 1934 and requested an expert to help continue the works. The Károlyi lordship must have decided on carrying out the conservation works on the castle ruins in order to boost tourism in the region; it was also at this time that the castle in Füzérradvány was converted into a resort hotel.

Later on, the protection of the more and more dilapidated castle in Füzér was taken up by the Hungarian Monument Protection Authority from the 1970s. However, the restoration works could start only after the forest road and cableway had been constructed, thus making it possible to carry the building material to the site. As a result of the construction works that have been ongoing since then, the castle chapel, the gate bastion and tower as well as some parts of the castle walls have been restored, the wall ruins of farm buildings have been presented and the reconstruction of the basement level of the former residential palace has started in 1994.

At present, the defense system and the buildings (wolf pit, guardhouse, stalls, lower elevator building) of the **lower castle** (front castle or palisade) are under construction. Their reconstruction is soon to be carried out and is planned to provide controlled entry, information to visitors and social services.

A development goal is the elimination of the dangerous state of the **stone stairs** between the front castle and the upper castle and the construction of timbered wooden stairs for safe access.

Furthermore, future tasks include the presentation of the former full establishment planned in the **upper castle**, covering some parts of the building, reconstructing places; exhibition, establishing contemporary interiors; as well as making the kitchen, baking house and cellars suitable for serving occasional events; as well as establishing an orderly design of the castle courtyard and the flower garden by using spices and herbs.

A characteristic element of the monument is the castle chapel originally built in honor of the Blessed Virgin. People stick to the tradition that Péter Perényi, after the defeat in the Battle of Mohács, had the Hungarian Holy Crown guarded in the chapel for almost a year. The crown is believed to have been placed in the storehouse serving for the storage of other values as well.

As a result of the archeological excavations carried out on the **lower bastion**, we have found the former floor level (material: stove tiles of the age, tuff and brick) and some previously unknown loopholes. The exploration has delimited the end of the southern wall of the lower bastion. Thus the archeological–monument protection sights of Füzér Castle are completed



with a well-bordered object under the former palace, which can be visited temporarily with a guide.



Heritage tourism event in Füzér Castle

The idea of caring for past memories emerged in the mid-19th century. Its background was the overwhelming dynamism of industrialization and urbanization, which put the main emphasis clearly on new and modern. However, all these new events highly threatened the values of historical past and as a consequence the idea of **protection** came to the fore.

Mostly enthusiastic amateurs organized and encouraged the activity, who focused first of all on the **protection** of buildings and put the emphasis on the age (historicism) and beauty (aesthetics) during the selection. As a result of their work, professional offices were established and the first inventories and monument lists were prepared.

However, this activity had become too pointless by the mid-20th century. As a consequence, from the 1960s, increased attention was paid to the **conservation** activities, which differed from **protection** in many ways. On the one hand, the emphasis gradually shifted from buildings to districts or even to whole towns, and on the other hand, in addition to the protection of historic values, more attention was paid to the operation of the given area (i.e. the function). Afterwards the aspects of monument protection became integral parts of the land use plans.

In the 1970s and 1980s new developments occurred in Western Europe regarding both ways, leading to the establishment of **heritage planning**.



Under this concept, the utilization of the values of past are emphasized in a way that result in tangible benefits as well, i.e. the memories of history are utilized for *economic functions*.

The same building parts also fill certain *social functions* by means of promoting socialization. It means that history and the past play important roles in transferring the norms and rules of society to the new generations.

In Füzér the cultural events organized in the castle primarily belong to the **heritage events**; cultural events are typical rather in the settlements. The tradition preserving events organized in the castle aim at presenting

former cultural traditions for the wider public and thus demonstrating historic values. We should emphasize the ‘flagship’ development of the region, i.e. the issue of the touristic utilization of Füzér Castle, which is associated with the activity of tradition preserving groups as well.

The historic motivation is complemented by the idea of “living castle”. It is not involved in run-down, conserved wall ruins but in the functional rooms restored in accordance with historic principles – in all the rooms where the everyday life of the castle, the programs and the events form a whole.

In the world of “**preserved values**” we believe that people who would like to relax are more receptive to the attractive natural environment, the aesthetically pleasing look of settlements and the preserved values. In the case of Füzér, with the return of castle life, the life of the region is also boosted.

Monument tourism in Füzér Castle

It is fortunate that local societies have archaic features that can be interpreted positively, which creates the basis for more effective community action opportunities.

Dr. László Nyári



Szombathy Viktor ⁸

Szalánc (Slanec) Castle

This castle from the age of the Hungarian Arpad Kings was built on a high loaf mountain, to the south-east of Kassa (Kaschau, Košice), within the area of the former Abaúj-Torna County, at the northern slope of the Great Milic Mountain. It was built by the ancient Aba clan. At the beginning



of the 13th century Szalánc (Slanec) was owned by Péter Szalánczi, a member of the Aba clan. However, no document mentions it before 1281. At that time Szalánc was the property of Finta palatine, however he also lost the castle as he was involved in a discord with Ladislas IV the Cuman The King from the Anjou House, Charles Robert donated Szalánc to his childhood friend, Miklós Drugeth Lord Chief Justice. Not just the Szalánc Castle was handed over, but other castles as well. By 1390 the property of the castle was transferred to László Losonczy due to marriage and heritage. Jan Jiskra occupied Szalánc for a while and destroyed it partly, but László Losonczy, the Treasurer of the Household rebuilt it in 1490, this time in gothic style. Szalánc was returned from the Losonczy family to the hands of the King and in 1601 – as the beneficiary of the donation from Rudolf II – Zsigmond Forgách became the owner of the castle, including extensive areas and forests. In 1605 István Bocskai held the castle for a short period of time, then it was returned to the Forgách family. In 1644 George II Rákóczi occupied and burned down Szalánc. The ups and downs of such castles follow a pattern where these are built by someone and destroyed by someone else, are confiscated by the king or returned to their previous owner; but they are renovated and burned down several times until the point where the castle is left to its sorrowful fate. Szalánc was also rebuilt



by the Forgách family, but was invaded by Imre Thököly in 1678. The same year the possession of the castle was taken by one of the generals of King Leopold I, the French Lestie count by siege and he destroyed whatever had not been destroyed before. Therefore Szalánc has been a ruin for three hundred years. At the end of the

⁸VIKTOR SZOMBATHY (1902-1987) writer, translator of literary works.

19th century the Forgách family restored one of the towers that survived the fights and stored the precious collections of the family in it. At that time the Forgách family had already been living in their baroque style manor-house near the castle. At the end of World War II both the tower with the valuables and the manor-house were destroyed.

There are several tiny streams running from the Sívári Mountains to the east of Kassa (Kaschau, Košice) and join the Bodrog River. The formerly beautiful Szalánc Castle has been deteriorating for three centuries in the valley shaped by one of the tiny streams, under the Great Milic Mountain, at the top of a lonely loaf mountain. From a distance its remaining tower looks like the tower of a windmill, only the turning sail of the windmill and the miller are missing!

However the person who was ordering to grind the wheat of Szalánc Castle – or that of the lands of the castle – was not a simple miller, but it was from the beginning the head of the prestigious Aba clan, namely the one from the Szalánc branch of the Aba clan. Therefore, the people living at Szalánc were from royal blood – from the blood of King Samuel Aba – and they created a high-wrought coat-of-arms for themselves.

The book of legends says that a head of the Aba family, Csoma was teaching his son, Peter to hunt in the vast trackless forest among the banks of the Olsva stream. He thought him various things: one day the arrow of the child was targeting animals with four legs, the other day animals with two legs, meaning birds. The young Péter was about to be able to hunt down the ones with four legs: he was already capable to hit roe-deer, fox and rabbit with his arrow – though his father saved deer and boar for a lesson to learn later – but hitting the wing of birds like falcon, kestrel, kite or hawk was still difficult for him.

All of a sudden a venerable-looking eagle appeared above the valley. At times it was lying on the pillow of the wind with outspread wings as if relaxing there, then unexpectedly took a flight up and was flying to its prey with lightening speed.

– I will shoot this eagle! – claimed little Péter, the son of Csoma, and stretched his bow, pointing it at the bird. But the bird seemed to know about his intention and at the very last minute it changed its direction.

– Aim and shoot it! – the father went on yelling at his son.

The child set spur into his horse and followed the eagle. The eagle seemed to play with him, sometimes appearing above them then disappearing again.



Péter, the son of Csoma had already shot out two arrows in vain.

– If you shoot it at the third try, you will have rewarded! – promised his father.

They had already left the Olsva, riding up and down between the hills as the eagle was teasing the boy. They reached the narrow valley of a small stream and they hardly had enough space to ride at full speed along the bank. This was the valley of the Ronyva near the Milic.

The eagle did not think any more that the pursuing child might ever shoot him. He stopped in the sky and failed to listen out for its hunter, instead it focused on a careless rabbit at the bank. The little boy placed the third arrow on the bow and shot the eagle.

It fell to a hilltop, but before dying it flew a half round in the air. The hunters rode up to the top of the hill. The hunter of the lord made a wreath of oak leaves, gave it to Péter, and said:

– this is your first eagle, young master, wreath it with this.

– And I shall build a castle for you at this place. – went on his father, the mighty Csoma lord.

This is the story of the foundation of the Szalánc Castle explaining the motifs on the herald of the Abas from Szalánc: an eagle with an oak wreath in its beak on a silver shield.

The time of the Aba clan had passed, and the castle of Szalánc was transferred to King Charles Robert. He was thinking about to donate it to someone. To somebody who deserves it. He had not expected at that time that his best friend, Miklós Drugeth will be the one.

Once in Visegrád, Miklós Drugeth was busy around the table of the King when suddenly the door flew open and Felician Zách rushed in with a naked sword in order to kill the King and his Heir, the little Lajos.

The people sitting at the table drew their swords including the guards of the King and the ones serving at the table. The little prince, Lajos remained safe and sound, but the King was wounded and the sword of Felicián cut four fingers of the queen.

Miklós Drugeth was the first one to jump in front of the King and shielded his the body, then he jumped in front of the princes and saved them at the price of his own blood.

Felician Zach's attack was not successful. A merciless decision destroyed four generations of the Zách clan. The protectors of the King were rewarded.

King Charles asked Miklós Drugeth:

— What shall I give you as a reward, my honest friend, Miklós?

— My King, you know better what I do deserve, but I was not acting for the reward!





– I know – nodded the King –, but someone who is so fast with his sword must be fast in making decisions as well. You shall be the Lord Chief Justice and thou shall have the castle of Szalánc as well! Together will all its surroundings.

It is strange that the Drugeths had a bird in their coat-of-arms as well. But they had a more peaceful bird, not an eagle: two doves connected with a clamp.

It is high time to tell about the real dove of the Szalánc Castle. Let me tell you about the dove, with the lovely feathered bird in the song, about Anna Losonczy and about the one writing the song about her, Bálint Balassi.

They met in the castle of Eger for the first time and Anna Losonczy had already been the wife of Kristóf Ungnád, the captain of the Eger Castle. The poet fell in love with her, and Anna began to love him as well. But Bálint Balassi lived an adventurous life; he was wandering here and there, faced adventures and fights between Hungary, Transylvania and Poland, and when the opportunity to conquer Anna occurred again – as Anna became a widow – the poet married her cousin, Krisztina Dobó.

The marriage with Krisztina Dobó did not last long.

And the poet, the famous fighter, the restless wanderer, the discordant castle owner showed up in the fine castle of Szalánc again and won Anna Losonczy for himself with songs, nice words and attractive poems.

The poet was begging for the mercy of the real dove of Szalánc when proposing her.

– Let's join our lives and stay together when death comes! – asked the poet.

– I had been waiting for thou, master – said Anna Losonczy in the fine castle of Szalánc –, but you have convinced me that you are not a fateful man. Your poems are written to several girls and women. Your poems are addressed to Anna, Judit, Coelia, Julia, and even Fulva.

– But you are the only real dove, my Anna! – the poet tried to convince her.

He would have loved to stay and to settle in Szalánc. The heir of the castle was Anna Losonczy, who had the right to use it.

– I say farewell to the poet and the valiant man, my dear Bálint – said Anna with a said smile, as she still reserved a secret place in her heart for Bálint Balassi – and I shall get married with Zsigmond Forgách.

This was the way the poet lost the real dove and the fine castle of Szalánc became the property of the Forgách family.

Szalánc had three Annas.

Anna Drugeth was the first one.

Then came Anna Telegdy.

Then as the third one, the beautiful Anna Losonczy.

Due to the poems she is the one to live the longest, even though Szalánc was ruined.

⁹Source: VIKTOR SZOMBATHY (1986): *Száll, a rege váról, várra – Szlovákiai vármondák [Legends from castle to castle – Slovakian fabular on castles], Madách Könyvkiadó, Pozsony (Bratislava). (In Hungarian.)*