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ARTICLE

‘They needed some styling, shortening and editing’: The Impact of Editing in Gábor Sztehlo’s Memoir of Holocaust Rescue

Barnabas Balint

Faculty of History, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
Email: barnabas.balint@history.ox.ac.uk

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Abstract

In 1984, the Hungarian Evangelical Church Press posthumously published the Hungarian-language memoir of Gábor Sztehlo, a Lutheran pastor credited with saving hundreds of Jewish children during the Holocaust. Uncovered in the archives, the memoir’s original manuscript was recently published by Gergely Kunt. This article compares the original and published texts to reveal the significant differences between them. Recognising which topics were deliberately omitted and altered from the published version reveals how attitudes at the time sought to tell a certain history: one that was politically expedient in a communist country and acceptable to the Church authorities who supported its publication.

Keywords: Hungary; memoir; Christian Church; Holocaust; resistance

In 1984, the Hungarian Evangelical Church Press posthumously published the Hungarian-language memoir of Gábor Sztehlo, a Lutheran pastor credited with saving hundreds of Jewish children during the Holocaust in Hungary.[1] Its publication came over ten years after Sztehlo had been awarded the title ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ by Yad Vashem, the world Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Israel, in 1972.[2] He wrote his memoir, which had not been circulated at the time of his award, during his exile from communist Hungary, which he spent in Switzerland from 1961 until his death in 1974. The Church’s published version of his memoir was subsequently translated and published in both English and German.[3] These published versions of the memoir differ greatly from the original manuscript, which has been recently published by researcher

[1]Gábor Sztehlo, *Isten kezében* [*In the Hands of God*] (Budapest, 1984).

[2]Gábor Sztehlo (1909–74), Yad Vashem Archives, M.31.2/722.

[3]Gábor Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God* (Budapest, 1994); Gábor Sztehlo, *In Gottes Hand* [*In the Hands of God*] (Zurich, 1983).

Gergely Kunt.[4] Kunt revealed that Sztehlo's original text had been almost completely rewritten and about 40 per cent of it cut entirely.[5] While Kunt identified many political and institutional changes, he paid less attention to Sztehlo's personal subjectivities and reflections. Addressing this gap, this article compares the original and published Hungarian texts to reveal how Sztehlo understood himself and his work and how these ideas are presented differently in the two versions of the memoir. As a result, it gives insights into the motivations of the publisher, their political context, and the impact that their changes had on the narrative about Sztehlo's rescue work that has entered the historical record and public memory.

The edited and translated versions of Sztehlo's memoir present a stronger, more proactive and heroic image of the rescuer. While they do not neglect elements of his humanity, they do place the focus more on his actions and less on his reflections and moments of doubt. They also mute his criticism of the Christian Churches in Hungary and often present the Jews he rescued as passive victims, instead of actors in a collaborative rescue operation. Explaining the changes, the journalist who edited Sztehlo's manuscript for publication, Éva Bozóky, wrote that:

> He did not prepare his notes for publishing. He put down his memories for himself and probably for scholars wanting to throw some light on history. He wrote them down in the environment of a foreign language, so they needed some styling, shortening and editing. This work of the editor was, however, guided by faithfulness to the original text and by the deepest respect towards its contents.[6]

Bozóky's statement explains the changes and suggests that they were done in good faith. Despite this, the changes that she made reflect much more than merely 'styling, shortening and editing'. The published version changed not only Sztehlo's writing style but also substantially altered the narrative that the memoir conveyed. Bozóky's description of Sztehlo's original manuscript as 'notes' and her declaration that they needed editing before they were suitable for publication reveals her perspective that an account of his memories was not enough; to be published, Bozóky held, Sztehlo's memoir had to be woven into a different narrative, one that was palpable to those other than 'scholars wanting to throw some light on history'.

This article identifies four key themes in which the editing process changed the narrative of Sztehlo's memoir. They are, of course, not exhaustive, but they do highlight important changes, especially in reference to how the memoir contributes to current historiographical trends. First, the edits stripped the children Sztehlo saved of much of their agency, creating a simplistic narrative of rescuer and rescued. Second, they hid some of Sztehlo's own anxieties and uncertainties, instead presenting him as a more

[4]Published as Gábor Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap – Emlékek a magyarországi zsidómentésről 1944-ben* [*Three Hundred and Sixty-Five Days – Memoires from the Rescue of Hungarian Jews in 1944*] (Budapest, 2022). Sztehlo in fact created multiple versions of the memoir, which are held in the Hungarian National Evangelical Archives. See Kunt's epilogue, *ibid.*, 511–15.

[5]For an English outline of the original manuscript version of the memoir, see Gergely Kunt, 'Responsibility and Confronting the Holocaust in Memoir: The Year in Hungary', *Biography*, 46 (2023), 35–9.

[6]Éva Bozóky, 'Editor's Postscript', in Sztehlo, *Isten kezében*, 230–1.

confident and proactive figure. Arguably the most significant of these anxieties was Sztehlo's questioning of his faith, which constitutes the third theme. Finally, the editor removed material which showed the Church in a bad light, whitewashing the role of the Church in the Holocaust in Hungary.

While this article is not the first to identify differences between the original and published versions of Sztehlo's memoir, it is novel for the attention that it pays to the subjectivities of these changes and the way they reflect Sztehlo's personal, rather than institutional, history. In his epilogue to the publication of Sztehlo's original manuscript, Gergely Kunt argued that three factors defined the changes Bozóky made to the memoir: the Hungarian Evangelical Church, political power, and official and private taboos.[7] Kunt revealed how the edits had the result of erasing Sztehlo's criticisms of the Church, universalising his individual rescue effort, and omitting his commentary on antisemitism, social class and Soviet crimes.[8] The changes she made were varied – Kunt described how 'she condensed certain points ..., rephrased others in such a way that their meaning was partially changed, and finally there were some that she deleted entirely'.[9] Kunt did not, however, explore how Sztehlo presented himself personally and how he reflected on his own emotions. This article, therefore, expands the list of differences to include many more of the subjectivities and personal reflections that were changed. These include Sztehlo's own anxieties, uncertainties and struggles with his faith. While Kunt's analysis accurately identified the political changes, this article points out the more individual, subtle changes.

While the changes are deeply personal, they reflect on both the history of Sztehlo's rescue efforts and the political constraints of his editor, impacting the narrative of Sztehlo that has entered the history books. They highlight how significant access to the original manuscript is for historians today, who prize highly histories of Jewish agency and of emotions and subjectivity. These are aspects that were omitted from the published copy, but which also held less of a place in historiography and historical interest at the time of its publication. Now that historical research on these themes has opened up, Sztehlo's original reflections on them can form an important part of this new narrative. As well as feeding these new histories, recognising that these topics were deliberately omitted from the published version reveals how attitudes at the time sought to tell a certain history: one that was politically expedient in a communist country and palpable to the Church authorities who supported its publication. The very publication of the memoir challenged the traditional communist narrative of wartime resistance, which focused on communist anti-fascist actions, obscuring the specificities of the Jewish experience and histories of rescue by the Christian Churches. Although not the main focus of this article, understanding how Bozóky trod the line between challenging and reinforcing communist narratives of history is essential for identifying how and why the two versions of Sztehlo's memoir are so different.

[7] Gergely Kunt, 'Utószó [Afterword]', in Gábor Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap - Emlékek a magyarországi zsidómentésről 1944-ben [Three Hundred and Sixty-five Days – Memoires from the Rescue of Hungarian Jews in 1944]* (Budapest, 2022), 485–532, at 507.

[8] *Ibid.*, 507–8, 110–11.

[9] *Ibid.*, 507.

What follows reflects on exactly these issues. It charts where they appear across three chapters from the memoir. These chapters come from distinct moments in Sztehlo's history. While the original memoir consisted of twenty-seven consecutive chapters, the published version was divided into three sections, of eleven, twenty-two and fifteen shorter chapters respectively. The first chapter that this article analyses is titled 'Precautionary Measures'. It is the eighth chapter of the original memoir, and covers a period in July 1944 when Sztehlo learned that the Jó Pásztor [Good Shepherd] committee offices in Budapest had come under threat and had to decide how to respond. The second chapter in this analysis, the twelfth chapter in the original text, is titled 'Sad October Days'. In it, Sztehlo recounts the rapid expansion of the Jó Pásztor children's homes amid escalating danger following the Arrow Cross takeover in October 1944. He describes the strain of securing buildings, supplies and official protection, as well as his tensions with the Red Cross delegation. The final chapter analysed here comes from towards the end of the memoir, as the twenty-second chapter. Titled 'January 29', it recounts the siege of Budapest by the Soviet army in early 1945, during which Sztehlo and those in his care were caught on the front line as Soviet and German forces fought around their house.

By focusing analysis on these three chapters, it has been possible to conduct a line-by-line comparison of the original and edited versions of the text. This kind of close analysis reveals the specific changes made to exact lines of text, revealing the subtle (and not so subtle) word changes, omissions and distortions. As the changes were made on this micro level, it is only by paying attention to them word for word that they are revealed. By returning to the original text of Sztehlo's memoirs, it is also possible to access the initial narrative that he constructed about his work, before it was edited by the Church. With a deep insight into Sztehlo's personal challenges, it offers a valuable opportunity to challenge the redemptive narratives that have dominated this history. Historians and survivors alike have often drawn on Sztehlo's published memoir for research and knowledge. Historian Tamás Kende even recalled his father giving him a copy of the memoir as a child. When researching his own book, Kende acknowledged that he discovered how Sztehlo's history had been 'streamlined to fit a particular narrative'.[10] Most people, however, have read the published memoirs unaware of the editing process and how it has shaped the book's – and Sztehlo's own – historical narrative as a rescuer. By exposing these changes, this article offers a new history of Gábor Sztehlo and his rescue efforts.

Gábor Sztehlo and Éva Bozóky: from history to memory

The first entry in Sztehlo's memoir is dated 19 March 1944, the day of the German occupation of Hungary. Choosing this date reveals how Sztehlo understood his memoir as an account of his wartime rescue efforts. It also exposes a blind spot in Sztehlo's perspective. By beginning at the German occupation, Sztehlo indicated his view that the history of Jewish rescue dated to 1944, suggesting a lack of interest or concern in the previous years. These years, however, had been characterised by anti-Jewish laws,

[10]Tamás Kende, *Embermentés, vagyonmentés, státuszmentés 1944–1945-ben: Sztehlo Gábor emlékezetében [Saving Lives, Saving Property, Saving Status in 1944–1945: In Memory of Gábor Sztehlo]* (Pécs, 2023), 9–12.

restrictions, and sometimes even violence, in what historian Ferenc Lacsó termed a 'process of internal Nazification' in Hungary.[11] Although the country's Jewish population was not subject to ghettoisation and systematic murder until 1944, anti-Jewish laws introduced from 1938 and 1941 limited Jews' economic, social and political rights, modelled on Germany's Nuremberg laws. Jewish refugees from other countries who had made their way to Hungary faced additional persecution, including deportation and sometimes murder as early as 1941.[12] In response to these actions, Jewish communities in Hungary established a significant mutual aid network.[13] By neither acknowledging these issues nor recognising their relevance for the persecution Jews then faced in 1944, Sztehlo revealed his perspective as a Christian who did not perceive restriction and assault until the German occupation. Gergely Kunt's suggestion that Sztehlo 'belonged among the majority of bystander ministers who were more intent upon realizing their own and the Church's aims [than resisting persecution]' thus rings true.[14]

Not only did Sztehlo's interest in helping Jews emerge only after the German occupation of Hungary, it also resulted from his appointment by his superior, Bishop Sándor Raffay, to be the Lutheran Church's representative on the Jó Pásztor committee. The committee, which Sztehlo had not heard of before his appointment, was responsible for providing care and assistance to Jews who converted to Protestantism.[15] It was led by Reverend József Éliás and processed hundreds of conversion documents for Jews seeking Christian papers between 1940 and 1944.[16] An increasing number of Jews underwent merely pro-forma conversions, hoping that Christian documents would protect them from anti-Jewish measures. By early summer 1944, Sztehlo's work with the Jó Pásztor committee was primarily focused on saving the lives of Christian children who were classed as Jews by racial laws because they were born to converts. Sztehlo worked with Friedrich Born, the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to establish homes for these children under the protection of the Red Cross. By February 1945, they had established at least twenty-eight homes and protected approximately 2,000 people.[17]

While the history of rescue in Hungary is rich and diverse, Sztehlo's efforts often fall into the cracks between different historiographies on rescue, international institutions and the Christian Churches. Kunt's recent research on Sztehlo presented him as a pedagogue – positioning his wartime rescue efforts as a precursor to his later experiment establishing a children's home where the youths themselves took

[11]Ferenc Lacsó, 'The Radicalization of Hungarian Antisemitism until 1941: On Indigenous Roots and Transnational Embeddedness', in *Right-Wing Politics and the Rose of Antisemitism in Europe 1935–1941*, ed. Frank Bajohr and Dieter Pohl (Göttingen, 2020), 48.

[12]George Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder: 1941 Rehearsal for the Hungarian Holocaust* (West Lafayette, 2023).

[13]Kings Krojimovics and Géza Komoróczy, *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History* (Budapest, 1999).

[14]Gergely Kunt, *The Children's Republic of Gaudiopolis: The History and Memory of a Budapest Children's Home for Holocaust and War Orphans* (Budapest, 2022), 27.

[15]Sztehlo, *Isten kezében*, 18.

[16]Lutheran Church of Pest: Baptism records 1940–1944, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, RG-68.150M, reels 3–7.

[17]Kunt, *Gaudiopolis*, 44. Arieh Ben-Tov, *The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Jews in Hungary, 1943–1945* (Dordrecht, 1988), 352.

responsibility for their work.[18] In contrast, Arieh Ben-Tov's account of the ICRC's work in Hungary presented Sztehlo as a participant in their programmes, integrating his rescue efforts into a wider history of ICRC-led aid.[19] Tamás Kende's Hungarian-language work brought these two perspectives together, reflecting on how Sztehlo, Born and others worked as a team.[20] Historical narratives on the rescue efforts led by Christians, however, have been more contentious in the historiography. Randolph Braham argued that many early accounts 'exaggerate the rescue achievements of various individuals and institutions'.[21] Conversely, Moshe Herczl's history of Christianity and the Holocaust in Hungary afforded only one paragraph to the work of the Jó Pásztor committee, mentioning only József Éliás.[22] Despite this complex historiography, the public nature of Sztehlo's efforts following the publication of his memoir and his naming as Righteous Among the Nations led to the emergence of the so-called 'Sztehlo-gyerekek', or 'Sztehlo-children'. These children, now adults, whom he saved, have widely documented their experiences, both in video interviews and in published accounts.[23] Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of their recollections mirror the positive and redemptive narratives of some of the historiography, often overlooking their own agency as children and the more complex personal challenges that their carers faced. This redemptive narrative is dominant in Sztehlo's published memoir, too. While it has long been assumed that this was Sztehlo's intention, this article reveals how it was the editing process, not Sztehlo's own writing, that created this narrative.

This approach draws attention to the memory politics of 1980s Hungary, when Bozóky made the edits. The year 1984 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary and a turning point towards a more explicit Jewish history of the event. When he became the deputy head of the Department of Philosophy and History at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1985, György Ránki established a team of Hungarian Jewish history researchers, while Géza Komoroczy became head of the new Centre for Judaic Studies at the University of Budapest in 1988. Reflecting on the state of research in 1985, Ránki commented that:

> enough time has elapsed for historians to go beyond a faithful representation of the events in their research, to weigh the logic of events, what was avoidable and what inevitable, and to examine the long-term internal and external processes from which one can analyze the everyday historical events in terms of the mutual influences between the European power system and the domestic political structure of Hungarian society.[24]

[18] Kunt, *Gaudiopolis*.

[19] Ben-Tov, *The International Committee of the Red Cross*, 352.

[20] Kende *Embermentés*.

[21] Randolph Braham, 'The Rescue of the Jews of Hungary in Historical Perspective', in Randolph Braham (ed.), *Studies on the Holocaust, Selected Writings* (New York, 2000), 117–34, at 119.

[22] Moshe Herczl, *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry* (New York, 1993), 191.

[23] Andrási Andor and Laborczi Dóra (eds.), *Sztehlo-gyerekek voltunk* [*We Were Sztehlo Children*] (Budapest, 2018).

[24] György Ránki, 'The Road to German Occupation (Hungary in 1944)', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 31 (1985), 309.

This work, however, remained limited to specific perspectives that had found favour under communism, including economic history.[25] At the same time, international cooperation between researchers began to produce some research and wider perspectives. Randolph Braham and Béla Vágó published the first of what would become a decennial publication, *The Holocaust in Hungary: 40 Years Later*, in 1985.[26] This followed the publication of Braham's own *The Politics of Genocide* in 1981 and the second edition of Ránki's *1944: March 19*, in 1979.[27] These publications indicated a growing Holocaust consciousness in late Soviet Hungary, but one which was still influenced by the totalitarian ideology of communism.

It was within this evolving memory politics that Bozóky carried out the work of editing Sztehlo's memoir. Bozóky was perhaps an understandable choice for this work, as a respected writer, journalist, teacher and librarian with strong links to the Evangelical Church. From 1960, she was a columnist for various newspapers, including the magazine of the Ministry of Education and the Evangelical Review.[28] However, earlier in her life Bozóky was involved in several political scandals that influenced her later approach to public life. Her husband, Ferenc Donáth, was a Hungarian politician and direct associate of Imre Nagy, who advocated negotiations during the Hungarian revolution in 1956. The couple were arrested twice – once in 1951 and again following the failed revolution. In November 1956, they were deported by the Russian KGB to Snagov in Romania, where they were interned. Bozóky and her children were allowed to return to Hungary in 1958, when her husband was sentenced to twelve years in prison for his role in the revolution.[29] He was then released in 1960 under an amnesty and reunited with his family. In an interview for the Historical Photo and Interview Archive at the National Széchényi Library, Bozóky recalled the difficulty of her time in internment: 'I'm not one of those typical housewives and family mothers, but an emancipated woman.'[30] Nonetheless, she realised that she had to be careful with what she said, or risk further reprisals from the communist government. She remembered how in letters to and from her family 'political things can't be written down because they [the authorities] will confiscate the letters, so they [her family] didn't risk it and they wrote fun things'.[31] Kunt linked this approach to Bozóky's career, commenting that 'as a journalist, Éva Bozóky knew well where the limits of press freedom were in

[25]György Ránki, *Közgazdaság és történelem: a gazdaságtörténet válaszútjai* [*Economics and History: The Crossroads of Economic History*] (Budapest, 1977); György Ránki, *Economy and Foreign Policy: The Struggle of the Great Powers for Hegemony in the Danube Valley, 1919–1939* (Boulder, 1983); Iván Berend and György Ránki, *The Hungarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (1985).

[26]Randolph Braham and Béla Vágó (eds.), *The Holocaust in Hungary: Forty Years Later* (New York, 1985).

[27]Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* (New York, 1981); György Ránki, *1944 március 19: Magyarország német megszállása* [*1944 March 19: German Occupation of Hungary*] (2nd edn, Budapest, 1978).

[28]*Könyvtáros: a művelődésügyi minisztérium lapya 19 évfolyam 1969 január* (Budapest, 1969); Kunt, 'Utószó', 501.

[29]'"Ez volt a snagovi korszak" [This Was the Snagov Era]', *National Library Blog*, nemzetikonyvtar.blog.hu, published on 29 Oct. 2023.

[30]Life story interview with Éva Bozóky, wife of politician Ferenc Donáth, conducted in 1993. Interviewer: Gábor Hanák. National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Historical Photo and Interview Archive.

[31]*Ibid*.

the soft dictatorship' of Soviet Hungary.[32] Both her storied past and her professional experiences, therefore, positioned her well to edit Sztehlo's memoir; she was a known intellectual with the journalistic and academic skills to do the job, but as a victim of the communist system was also no stranger to adapting her words for political necessity.

The changes that Bozóky made to the memoir, by adapting to the political climate of the time, have fundamentally shaped how Sztehlo was perceived and understood in history and memory ever since. They constructed a narrative about a heroic rescuer, confident in himself, his work and his colleagues, who took control and looked after his passive charges. As a result, our understanding of Sztehlo's life has underestimated his own humanity as well as the agency of the Jewish children he saved. It has simplified a complex history of uncertainty and insecurity, instead curating a history of Christian moral authority in service of Cold War political objectives. This article redresses this imbalance, exposing the changes and recovering the original voice of Gábor Sztehlo.

Children's agency

One of the most striking differences between the original and published memoir is how the two texts approach the issue of children's agency and the relationship between Sztehlo as a rescuer and the children as the rescued. This theme is visible in all three of the chapters under consideration here; chapter 8 shows how Sztehlo remembered children in the early days of rescue during summer 1944, chapter 12 reveals how their actions in the difficult period of October 1944 inspired his future educational projects, and chapter 22 tells a history of youth agency during the turmoil of the siege of Budapest.

Chapter 8 of his memoirs begins with Sztehlo describing the scene at the Jó Pásztor offices in Budapest in July 1944. Sztehlo recounts how when he arrived at the office at 5 Lázár Street, he found it empty. Whereas a few days earlier it had been the site of busy activity, it was now completely deserted. His memoirs retell a conversation he had with the only remaining staff member, Emil Hajós. Hajós explained that several members of the group had gone into hiding after József Éliás was told that their office had become a target for the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian Nazi Party. Along with the staff, the children who had also been housed in the office had also been moved. In the published version of his memoir, Sztehlo deals with the children briefly, explaining that 'the children have been found shelter elsewhere'.[33] This event shows the instability of rescue efforts during the Holocaust, when safety could not be guaranteed and danger was ever-present. It also reveals how the rescuers responded to this uncertainty, frequently moving children to different homes.

While this aspect of the rescue effort is an accurate representation of Sztehlo's original description, it is not a complete one. In the original text, Sztehlo described the children in more detail, explaining how the rescuers 'also found shelter elsewhere for the rest of them, the boys, and the helping girls'.[34] By cutting these details, the editor obscured several key pieces of information about Sztehlo's children's homes.

[32]Kunt, 'Utószó', 507.
[33]Sztehlo, *Isten kezében*, 40; Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 43.
[34]Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 64.

First, the presence of both boys and girls. When he mentioned 'the boys, and the helping girls', Sztehlo's original manuscript drew attention to the co-educational nature of the children's homes. Second, acknowledging that the homes were co-educational reveals how gender influenced the children's experiences. The reference to 'helping girls' tells us how young women were expected to play a role in supporting the life of the homes. Third, recognising how young women were expected to fulfil these roles reveals the active contribution and agency that they had in these homes. By removing these details from the published versions, the editor presented a strictly adult-centred history of the rescue efforts, hiding the children's own agency.

Such agency appears later in the original memoir, too. Chapter 12 charts the rapid expansion of the children's homes amid escalating danger following the Arrow Cross takeover in October. In this chapter, Sztehlo reflects on how the children responded to this danger and how he was inspired by them. In the published version, however, this is presented passively, with the children referred to as 'our charges', while the original positions them as 'children and young people', who are the main grammatical subject.[35] The difference is not merely grammatical. In the original memoir, Sztehlo wrote how the children 'were able to overcome even the greatest dangers through brotherly solidarity, self-sacrifice, and shared work'.[36] Yet, the published version of this sentence read 'our charges there still managed to overcome the greatest difficulties through brotherly harmony and joint effort'.[37] The use of the word 'managed' instead of 'able' reinforces the demotion of child agency, focusing on the fact of their survival rather than their ability and actions which led to it. Moreover, the omission of self-sacrifice strips the children of the authority to make such a sacrifice. While Sztehlo originally positioned the children as active parts of this process, the edited version confined them to the role of weaker charges.

An even more powerful example of how the published version prioritised Sztehlo's centrality comes from chapter 22, which recounts the extreme situation during the siege of Budapest in January 1945. Describing their preparations for the arrival of the Soviet army, the published memoir explained how 'we had agreed a day or two earlier that when the Russians arrived, Kovai was to immediately tell them there were children in the house. It was a special gift of God to have sent this communist writer with his good Russian to our shelter.'[38] While this sentence acknowledges that multiple people 'agreed', it stands in contrast to Sztehlo's original text, where he outlined how 'in the previous days we had discussed among ourselves that if the Russians came in, the children should be visible first, and Kovai should speak to them in Russian'.[39] By minimising this discussion, the published version downplayed the agency of other people in Sztehlo's children's home, reinforcing the image of Sztehlo as the principal decision-maker and leader.

Following the arrival of the Soviet army, the original memoir then explains in great detail how two boys from the children's home went missing, with Sztehlo only finding out later that they had smuggled themselves through the army's lines to safety. While

[35] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 70, Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 117.
[36] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 70.
[37] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 117.
[38] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 159.
[39] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 283.

this anecdote appears in both versions of the memoir, it is presented very differently. First, in the published version, it is separated out into a different chapter, titled 'In Captivity'.[40] This separates it from the events of the initial Russian arrival, presenting it as another event, rather than as something Sztehlo understood in the context of their struggles during the siege. Second, the published version is more condescending in tone. It described how the children 'managed' to escape, while the original memoir celebrated how they 'cleverly escaped' and 'succeeded in freeing themselves'.[41] This linguistic difference is significant, as it fundamentally changed how the young people's actions were presented. In the published version, it is only Sztehlo who is shown as having 'succeeded' at rescue, while the actions of others are downplayed and muted. Although both convey the facts of what happened, the subtle changes introduced in the edited version act to suppress a moment where children acted independently of rescue structures.

The agency of Jewish children in hiding, which was often expressed through their adaptation strategies, has become a key theme in recent historiography. This development reflects a wider growth in the history of childhood in the past two decades, particularly since the pioneering work of Mary Jo Maynes and Steven Mintz in 2008.[42] While most of the historiography on hidden children during the Holocaust approaches the issue from the perspective of Jewish children pretending to be Christian – as opposed to looking at the history of converts – their insights into how children adapted to hiding are, nonetheless, useful.[43] Although Sztehlo's memoir – coming from the perspective of the rescuer – is ill-placed to tell the history of these bottom-up solidarities among the children, his brief descriptions of the different children's roles in the homes, as well as his comments on their 'self-sacrifice' and his account of the two boys' escape gives an insight into how these may have functioned. Instead of viewing the children as a monolithic mass, his original manuscript acknowledged that they interacted with each other, had different roles in their community, and took their own active steps within it – and even sometimes even beyond.

This image of engaged and empowered children is more accurately in line with Sztehlo's pedagogical approach. In his account of Sztehlo's post-war children's home, Gaudiopolis, Kunt devoted a quarter of his book to Sztehlo's rescue work with the ICRC. Kunt argued that the wartime children's homes became the post-war orphanages from which Sztehlo built Gaudiopolis, establishing a framework for the pedagogical experiment.[44] Sztehlo's Gaudiopolis was organised around the principle that children should play an active role in running their community. He established various 'ministries' that were led by democratically elected children and performed practical roles in the orphanage. These ranged from organising workshops (Ministry for Industry) to running events and programs (Ministry for Social Welfare). Kunt argued that these

[40] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 165.

[41] *Ibid.*; Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 296–7.

[42] Mary Jo Maynes, 'Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1 (2008), 123; Steven Mintz, 'Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1 (2008), 93.

[43] See, for example, Diane L. Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland* (Berkeley, 2007), 333.

[44] Kunt, *Gaudiopolis*.

activities enabled children to 'experience what it meant to have rights as a member of a minority group or to uphold the ways as a member of the minority'.[45] While Sztehlo did not seek to establish Gaudiopolis during the war, his belief that children should be actively involved in the workings of their children's homes appears in his approach during wartime, too. By assigning children responsibilities, Sztehlo developed and implemented his own pedagogical ideas.

It is important, however, to understand Sztehlo's actions within the broader context of hidden children, too. While Sztehlo's support for children's agency is not in doubt, the necessity of running children's homes during wartime, with limited adult support, also shaped their lives. In her work on hidden children in Belgium, Suzanne Vromen explained how 'older children took responsibility for younger ones'.[46] This included helping younger children during air raids, washing their hair, and acting as role models.[47] The trend of older children and teenagers taking on more traditionally 'adult' roles was often mirrored in young people's lives across Europe, as 'young Jews experienced previously unimaginable responsibilities'.[48] Against this backdrop, Sztehlo's references to youth agency can also be read as an indication of how institutions were forced to rely on children themselves to help organise the homes. Such a reliance on the children appears across the original memoir, from chapter 8's reference to the 'helping girls', to chapter 12's description of how the boys themselves built their bunk beds.[49]

While Sztehlo's pedagogy of agency incorporated both male and female children, his uneven references to girls and boys in these instances draws attention to the gendered nature of wartime rescue work. Paul Bartrop and Samantha Lakin argued that women took the lead in rescue work, setting a 'moral compass for others to follow'.[50] Indeed, in the history of children's aid and rescue during the Holocaust, women dominate in the roles of caregiver and smuggler. Sztehlo's rescue efforts, however, were largely organised by men. The Jó Pásztor committee was dominated by men, including Éliás, Sztehlo and Hajós. Women's roles in the committee's work remained at lower levels, generally restricted to caregiving and the administration of individual homes. This situation echoes Laura Hobson Faure's more nuanced understanding of gender relations in rescue in France. Hobson Faure revealed the tensions between men and women, as rescue efforts became a battleground for control and influence between the established community – mainly consisting of men – and more informal groups and individual women who started the process and carried out most of its work.[51]

When Bozóky removed the details about 'the boys, and the helping girls' from Sztehlo's memoir, replacing it with the catch-all phrase 'children', she was probably

[45] *Ibid.*, 140.

[46] Suzanne Vromen, *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (Oxford, 2008), 41.

[47] *Ibid.*, 42.

[48] Barnabas Balint, 'Competing for the Youth: Jewish Scout Identity, Religion, and Gender during the Holocaust in France', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 37 (2023), 390–403, at 398.

[49] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 119.

[50] Paul Bartrop and Samantha Lakin, *Heroines of Vichy France: Rescuing French Jews during the Holocaust* (Santa Barbara, 2019), 119, 121.

[51] Laura Hobson Faure, *Who Will Rescue Us? The Story of the Jewish Children Who Fled to France and America During the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2025), 48–51.

unaware that these few words carried such insight into the operation of the children's homes and their children's lives. Constructing a narrative about Sztehlo's heroism that described and explained how he and the Jó Pásztor committee took action to protect the children from an impending Arrow Cross attack was deemed more important. Details about who the children were appeared to be a distraction and were, therefore, removed. Their removal, however, stripped the children of agency, creating a simplistic narrative of rescuer and rescued. It also obscured Sztehlo's own approach to his charges, distorting how he viewed children's ability to contribute to their own rescue.

Sztehlo's anxiety and uncertainties

Throughout his memoir – when he arrived at the Jó Pásztor offices in July 1944, when he was confronted by the new danger of the Arrow Cross in October 1944 and when he was faced by the arrival of the Soviet army in January 1945 – Sztehlo constantly found himself under pressure to understand what had happened and to decide how to respond. This created significant emotional challenges, as he was faced with decisions and situations beyond the norm, which defied everyday understanding. How Sztehlo responded to these challenges differs starkly in the original and published versions of his memoir. Constructing a heroic image of a larger-than-life rescuer, the published version omits a plethora of references to Sztehlo's own anxieties and uncertainties.

When recalling his arrival at the Jó Pásztor offices in July 1944, Sztehlo presented this moment in his memoirs through his conversation with Emil Hajós. In the published version, the memoir describes how Sztehlo 'kept asking him what we could do, what he thought was possible'.[52] This line presents Sztehlo's determination and drive, focusing on developing a plan for moving forward. It is also possible to interpret his reliance on Hajós in this moment, as Sztehlo himself is seen as being uncertain, but this is brushed aside by his concern and desire for action. The line is followed swiftly by Sztehlo's reflection that he 'kept repeating the fragments of experiences I and József Éliás had gained to try and give him some basis for advising me'.[53] Although the passage presents Sztehlo as desperate for advice, he is still shown as knowledgeable and determined.

The original version of his memoirs, however, contains a subtle difference that nuances this image. While the published version shows a confident Sztehlo thinking about what to do next, the original version included him asking what had happened at the children's home, expressing his own uncertainty and how he relied upon other people for vital information. In the original version, the line describing his conversation with Hajós reads: 'I asked what happened, what will happen, what does he see unfolding?'[54] These three questions differ from the two that the published versions present. First, the complete omission of the question 'what happened' obscures Sztehlo's original ignorance. By removing all mention of him asking what had happened, the memoir shifts the focus to the proactive, placing greater emphasis on

[52]Sztehlo, *Isten kezében*, 41; Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 43.
[53]Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 43.
[54]Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 65.

Sztehlo as a man of action. The second and third questions also support this semantic shift: by changing 'what will happen' to 'what we could do' and 'what does he see unfolding' to 'what he thought was possible', the published memoir transforms uncertain and general language into an action-focused vocabulary of initiative.

Similarly, the published version of the memoir downplays Sztehlo's emotional struggles. When recounting the difficulties he encountered when expanding the number of homes in October 1944, Sztehlo described a meeting with Frederich Born, the Swiss head of the International Committee for the Red Cross in Budapest. Born informed him about a large home that was being organised in Ikervár, Vas county, for other children. Sztehlo's reflections on this news reveal a greater sense of frustration and anxiety in the original version than in the published one. In the published memoir, Sztehlo wrote that 'it was terribly good of him, but I was still envious and I didn't blush to tell the delegate [Born] so'.[55] Conversely, Sztehlo's original text referred to 'considerable envy'.[56] Although this is a small word change – and the idea of Sztehlo blushing was maintained – the omission of the word 'considerable' gives less weight to Sztehlo's feelings here.

In both texts, Sztehlo went on to lament how the pressure of looking after so many people made it difficult to think clearly. In the published version, he wrote: 'How could I have considered things soberly when I had to care for more than one hundred children and fifty adults daily, while also dealing with mothers pleading for shelter for their children, sometimes whole families seeking refuge?'[57] While this line does evoke a strong emotional state, the original text is even more impassioned. In the original, Sztehlo wrote that 'what pressed on me at that time was the sight of the terrible need and the daily appeals of more and more adults and children asking for refuge, urging me that I had to do something. The pressing urgency made me incapable of understanding other needs or sober considerations.'[58] The use of phrases like 'terrible need' and 'incapable of understanding' go beyond the rhetorical question used in the published version. They evoke more pronounced concerns that cut to the core of Sztehlo's sense of self. This anecdote is important for nuancing the differences between the two memoirs. The published version does not eschew emotion completely, as it does incorporate moments of Sztehlo's uncertainty. What it does, however, is reduce its intensity, muffling the original anxious voice.

At other points in the memoir, these changes are more extreme. In his original text, Sztehlo recounted how he feared they may be shot by the Soviet army when, shortly after the arrival of troops, he and some of the children were interrogated under suspicion of being connected to the German forces. He recalled how one of the others asked him: 'Are they going to shoot us now?'[59] Following this, Sztehlo wrote:

> We took off our caps. We prayed. We placed our lives into God's hands. We asked forgiveness for our sins. I also thought of my wife and children. For when there is

[55] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 71.
[56] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 118.
[57] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 71.
[58] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 118.
[59] *Ibid.*, 291.

> no human help, when everything already seems lost, then God steps into a person's life … In our hearts there was nothing special. Rather a quiet calm. Perhaps this is as it should be, I do not know … Was I afraid or did I rejoice when I remained alive? I do not know.[60]

This extract conveys the fear and confusion that Sztehlo felt during this interrogation. It is a deep and intimate account of a man who believed that he may be about to die and grappled with coming to terms with his survival. In the published version of the memoir, as with the anecdote of the two boys' escape, his interrogation is separated out into the next chapter. As well as being separated from the arrival of Soviet forces, the emotional significance of this moment is also flattened in the published account. Instead of revealing Sztehlo's fear, the published memoir merely describes the interrogation:

> When my turn came, I was questioned by a civilian who found me suspicious because of the Finnish dagger hanging from my belt. I gestured to him that I was cutting bread with it but he didn't seem to believe me … I no longer remember the questions of this civilian. But finally I was taken back to the yard where there might already have been about one hundred people. We slowly marched off.[61]

By removing Sztehlo's fear, the published version presented a fundamentally different account of this event. It rewrote a moment of confusion and confrontation with near-death into one that appeared almost harmless.

This transformation of language reflects a wider theme within the representation of accounts about the Holocaust, by which their authors (often, but not always, survivors) are reinterpreted from 'victims' into 'heroes'.[62] This version of memory masks the true horrors of the Holocaust and makes it palatable for a public audience. As Sztehlo's memoir was a text transformed for public readership, it can be read as a part of this trend. As a result, studying its changes gives an insight into the formation and reformation of Holocaust memory. In particular, the edits that Bozóky made reveal the tension between Lawrence Langer's concepts of 'deep memory' and 'common memory'.[63] In his analysis of Charlotte Delbo's 'deep memory' memoir, Langer argued that Delbo's account 'expose[d] the naked self divested of its heroic garments, a self cold, filthy, gaunt, the victims of unbearable pain'.[64] Given this representation, Langer argued, 'it is no wonder that common memory does not enjoy dwelling on such images'.[65] When Bozóky edited Sztehlo's memoir, she made no secret of wanting to transform it into something that could be read by the general public. Her edits, therefore, can be read

[60] *Ibid.*, 291–3.

[61] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 163–4.

[62] Leah Lawford, 'From "Victims" to "Survivors": The Role of Language in Shaping Holocaust Memory, Moral Authority, and the Technological Eternalisation of Testimonies', in *Victims, Survivors, and the Implications of Terminology*, ed. Kerri J. Malloy and Carse Ramos (Basingstoke, forthcoming).

[63] Noah Shenker, '"Disrupted Narratives": Lawrence Langer's Explorations of Deep Memory in Holocaust Testimonies', *Journal of Holocaust Research*, 34 (2020), 336–49.

[64] Lawrence Langer, *The Afterdeath of the Holocaust* (Cham, 2021), 96.

[65] *Ibid.*

as an attempt to translate Sztehlo's 'deep' memory into a more 'common' memory that the public would feel comfortable 'dwelling on'.

However, Bozóky's changes were not just about transforming one type of memory into another. The very nature of her changes influenced how the rest of the text is interpreted. This process echoes Kara Critchell's work on Holocaust memory in contemporary British society. Critchell argued that Holocaust memory functions as a 'screen memory', by which 'one memory obscures another from view'.[66] Critchell's use of the 'screen memory' idea shows how the 'common' memory Bozóky constructed out of Sztehlo's memoir not only offered a competing narrative of historical events but also acted to obscure the 'deep' memory that Sztehlo presented in his original account. It was through this positive image of a heroic Sztehlo that Bozóky encouraged readers to consider Sztehlo's moments of uncertainty and anxiety. Bozóky did not need to remove all references to Sztehlo's anxieties, just create the screen memory required to obscure them behind a narrative of heroism. In fact, Bozóky included Sztehlo's comment that he 'became deeply depressed' in response to the unfolding crisis.[67] The chapter even ends on a negative note, with Sztehlo remarking that he 'felt the same helpless gloom as ever'.[68] However, while Sztehlo's original manuscript is decidedly reflective on these issues, the published version oscillates between statements of anxiety and purpose. The narrative of Sztehlo's heroism and initiative acted as a 'screen memory' to contextualise these moments of reflection, while the changes in language minimised and reframed the moments themselves.

Employing this approach, however, could only go so far in reframing Sztehlo's account into one of heroism. In some cases, Bozóky removed whole sentences and ideas from the memoir, too. The published version, for example, cut out parts where Sztehlo spoke about feeling alienated from the world and reflected on how he needed to feel connected in order to help others. In the original version, Sztehlo went on to explain how 'later I learned to have fellowship with this world precisely so that I can help. Because we can only help those with whom we are in community.'[69] Through these words, Sztehlo developed a philosophy of fellowship that he believed informed his rescue efforts. Understanding this philosophy reveals not only Sztehlo's own approach to rescue but also how he reflected on his actions and struggled emotionally. The importance he placed on fellowship accentuates the difficulty that Sztehlo felt when he suffered from a sense of alienation. A man plagued with this kind of unease is not the traditional image of a heroic rescuer. These reflections were, therefore, removed from the published version. Yet it is exactly these reflections that reveal the more human, subjective history of Sztehlo's work and give us a better understanding of his life.

Questioning faith

Perhaps the most significant feature of the memoir – that which defines its genre and Sztehlo's own identity – is that Sztehlo wrote it as a man of God. As the account of a

[66] Lara Critchell, *Holocaust Education in British Society and Culture* (University of Winchester, Ph.D. thesis, 2014), 39.

[67] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 43.

[68] *Ibid.*, 46.

[69] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 67.

Lutheran pastor, the memoir represents not only a history of rescue, but of Christian rescue. Sztehlo's actions are interpreted to speak for his religion, and the topic of his faith frequently surfaces in his narrative. The way Sztehlo reflected on his religion, however, was deeply personal and sometimes challenged his own identity. At times, this meant that Sztehlo sought to find divine explanations for what was happening. At others, it included moments where he suffered a crisis of faith, questioning his own beliefs.

When recounting his reaction to the events of July 1944, Sztehlo's faith and connection to God is a key theme. In the published version of his memoirs, immediately after admitting that he had become 'deeply depressed', Sztehlo questions the value of his rescue work: 'was it possible that all our efforts of the past months had been in vain?'[70] He recounts how Hajós must have sensed his anxiety 'for he said slowly and quietly: During these months we've learned a lot, you and us alike. God prepared us for the suffering of the times ahead.' By saying this, Hajós connected their successes and resilience to the aid of their God. The narrative of the memoir bears this out, presenting Hajós's comment as the solution to Sztehlo's depression.

While the reference to God is understandable given their shared Christian values, it comes somewhat unexpectedly in the context of their conversation. The published memoir frames Hajós's comment as a response to Sztehlo's question about the apparent futility of their work. Here, it is Hajós, not Sztehlo, who introduces God to the conversation and uses his religious belief as a way of inspiring Sztehlo with renewed confidence. His strategy is successful: Sztehlo recalled that after this conversation 'we said good-bye like people who are convinced they will stay close and that their lives will continue to take parallel courses'.[71] This representation of their conversation, however, is not accurate when compared with the original manuscript. In the manuscript, it is Sztehlo who introduces the question of God, not Hajós. Furthermore, instead of God being a fully inspiring figure, the context of the conversation between the two men is a crisis of faith. In the original manuscript, Sztehlo describes how he began the conversation by asking 'how could God allow it, that there has been no progress?' It is in response to this question that Hajós counselled him that 'we have learned a lot, you and us, in these months. He [God] has prepared us for the hardship of the next months.'[72]

By editing Sztehlo's question to omit his reference to God, the memoir presents a completely different narrative about these individuals and their relationship with their faith. Sztehlo's original account revealed his own personal doubts in his faith. He, like so many in response to the Holocaust, could not believe that his God would stand by in face of their challenges. This crisis of faith and deep uncertainty reveals a part of Sztehlo's personality that contradicts the proactive and confident picture of a heroic rescuer. Moreover, it cuts to the heart of his identity as a Lutheran pastor. By admitting his crisis of faith, Sztehlo acknowledged the deep trauma of the Holocaust as an event that challenged his most closely held beliefs. This is a valuable perspective, as there has been little research on how the Holocaust challenged rescuers' faith. Instead,

[70] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 43.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 65.

rescuers are often presented as being motivated by their faith.[73] While Sztehlo's religious motivations are not in doubt, the discovery that he was not constantly confident and secure in them nuances our understanding of rescuers' motivations and their subjectivity. That Sztehlo suffered from a lack of faith reveals his personal experiences and how he responded individually and as a fallible human figure, rather than a larger-than-life hero. Sztehlo's crisis of faith was removed from the published version of his memoir not only because the book was edited for and published by the Church but also because Bozóky held a prominent position within the Church herself. It is natural that the institution would edit out a crisis of faith, seeking instead to present their hero in the best possible light. Aside from the distortion that this had on our understanding of Sztehlo as an individual, these changes also positioned the memoir differently in terms of theological debates around faith during the Holocaust. Simon Dein argued that where faith did survive the Holocaust, it did so because of people's belief in theodicy, the 'attempt to ascribe meaning to this suffering'.[74] Although Dein focused on the faith of Jewish concentration camp prisoners, the idea that belief could be maintained only through a 'justification of God' has deeper roots in theological responses to the Holocaust.[75] Hajós's assertion that 'God prepared us for the suffering of the times ahead'/'He [God] has prepared us for the hardship of the next months' clearly supports this theology, as it positions the challenges the Jó Pásztor committee faced as meaningful and productive. Importantly, this sentence appears in both the original and published version, suggesting that Sztehlo did genuinely wish to convey these ideas in his memoir. However, removing the context of his crisis of faith makes Sztehlo and Hajós's renewed commitment to the meaningfulness of suffering appear more theologically proactive than reactive. Recognising Sztehlo's moment of doubt numbs the theodicy, while the published memoir presents a stronger narrative of conviction.

Developing this stronger narrative of conviction relied not only on removing Sztehlo's crisis of faith but also on reducing and simplifying some of his theology. While the published version of Sztehlo's chapter about October 1944 ends with a description of the administration of the children's homes under the auspices of the ICRC, his original version of this chapter ends with a significant amount of theological reflection. In this original, Sztehlo wrote thoughtfully: 'That October was a sorrowful one … How many people's deaths and torments those days meant … We lived through God's trial even in the midst of unleashed human passions; He showed His love.'[76] Not only is this passage more reflective than the administration-focused published version of this chapter, it also directly addresses the presence of God as both providing a test and giving them the hope to get through it. By making these comments, Sztehlo constructed his own understanding of what they were experiencing through a theological lens. He

[73]Deirdre Burke, 'Religion and Atrocity: The Influence of Religion on Perpetrators, Bystanders and Victims during the Holocaust', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 28 (2007), 151–61.

[74]Simon Dein, 'Trauma, Theodicy and Faith: Maintaining Religious Beliefs in the Holocaust', *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 25 (2022), 388–400, at 389.

[75]Eliezer Schweid, '"Faith, Ethics and the Holocaust": The Justification of Religion in the Crisis of the Holocaust', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), 395–412.

[76]Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 134.

integrated the Holocaust into his religious understanding of life, where God both challenged and inspired him. By removing these thoughtful theological reflections from the published version of the memoir, Sztehlo was presented as a more proactive than contemplative figure.

Editing out Sztehlo's crisis of faith and some of his theological reflections, therefore, had a major impact on the narrative about Sztehlo's theological approach and beliefs. It brought the memoir into line with a more orthodox interpretation of God and the Holocaust, removing the nuance of how a deeply religious man nonetheless had his faith shaken by the event. While these changes have important ramifications on our understanding of the memoir as a text that reflects the history of religious belief, they also have an impact on how we perceive Sztehlo as an individual. As a Christian pastor, it is exactly this crisis of faith that is so significant for understanding his subjective perspective. The original manuscript revealed how the war challenged his life and beliefs and how he developed a philosophy to overcome those challenges. By removing these deeply personal reflections, the published memoir presented a two-dimensional image of a more complex figure.

The Christian Churches

While the discussion so far has focused largely on Sztehlo's own perspectives and subjectivities, we now turn towards the institution of the Lutheran Church and Sztehlo's interaction with his superiors. The omission of Sztehlo's crisis of faith from the published version has already revealed how the public interests of the Church – which commissioned the edits and published the book – influenced the final text. Continuing in this vein, comparing the original and published versions reveals how further significant edits framed how the Church and its members were presented in the published memoir. Omissions and alterations to the text removed and softened some of the criticisms that Sztehlo himself levelled at the institution, instead presenting the Church in a more positive light.

Soon after the incident in the Jó Pásztor offices in July 1944, Sztehlo visited his superior in the Church, Bishop Sándor Raffay. At the meeting, he expressed his worries about the situation and asked for the bishop's advice. Their interaction is presented very differently in the original manuscript and the published version of the memoirs. While the result of the meeting is the same in both versions – Raffay informs Sztehlo there is little the Church can do to help, and the meeting ends with Sztehlo feeling helpless – the original manuscript contains details about the Church's response to the war that portray it in a more negative light. In the published version, Raffay is simply quoted as saying that 'I can't do anything for you, my son. The last bishops' conference considered the [rescue] activities of the Good Shepherd [the Jó Pásztor committee] very dangerous, simply playing with fire. Emil Hajós was right about that at least.' When Sztehlo expressed his frustration at their position, by informing the bishop that he 'can't stand this', Raffay advised him to 'take leave then', counselling him that 'time is on our side'.[77]

This interaction reveals Sztehlo's relationship with Raffay and the wider group of bishops in the Lutheran Church in Hungary. By mentioning the bishops' conference,

[77] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 46.

Raffay shifts responsibility for his inaction onto other figures in the Church. As it was Raffay himself who first directed Sztehlo to work for the Jó Pásztor committee, it is unsurprising that he sought to deflect blame for the Church's lack of support. However, this passage does not present the bishops in a completely negative light. Instead, they are shown to be concerned that the committee's activities are 'very dangerous'. By referring to Hajós, the text even makes a link between the bishops' perspective and that of one of Sztehlo's colleagues involved in the day-to-day running of the committee's work. This connection evokes ideas of legitimacy and community between the bishops (who are otherwise completely disconnected from the committee's work) and the rescuers.

Sztehlo's account of the meeting in his original manuscript, however, constructs a different narrative about the bishops. In the manuscript, Sztehlo tells of how Raffay showed him a notice signed by some of the bishops that proudly supported Hungary's role in the Second World War, explaining:

> He [Raffay] handed me a piece of paper. The paper was beautifully printed, with a call for a Crusade [literally translated: 'war of the Cross'], signed by four of our bishops. Patriotic prayers were interspersed with Bible quotes. The church blesses the guns! It was not a call to arms, but the fact was that the Church approved and supported the war, even in its twenty-third hour, with all its destruction and hatred.[78]

Sztehlo's surprise and anger at the paper is palpable in this text. It contrasts starkly with the published version of his memoir. Instead of the bishops being concerned that the Jó Pásztor committee's work was dangerous, they are shown to support the state and the very institutions that threaten its work. Removing this passage whitewashed the history of the Church, presenting a picture of rescue and heroism instead of complicity and collaboration.

This inaccurate narrative reflected the post-war approach of the Hungarian Christian Churches. At the end of the war, Bishop Albert Bereczky, himself a member of the Reformed (Lutheran) Church, published a short book on *Hungarian Protestantism and the Persecution of Jews*. The text focused on the Church's opposition to the ghetto, negotiations with the authorities to issue exemptions from anti-Jewish laws for converts to Christianity, pastoral work and the Jó Pásztor committee. Concluding the text, Bereczky summarised the book as an attempt to 'submit here to the verdict of history whatever they [the Protestant Churches] have done in faith, in charity and in sacrifice during the period of the persecution of the Jews in Hungary'.[79] Bereczky's account was mirrored in some of the earliest historiography on the Holocaust in Hungary; in Jenő Lévai's foundational study written in 1948, the Churches are lauded for their role in rescue and their influence over members of the government.[80] While Sztehlo's memoir was published over thirty-five years after Lévai and Bereczky's interventions, it continued their tradition of placing emphasis on the rescue efforts led by the Church and minimising their collaboration and complicity.

[78] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 70.

[79] Albert Bereczky, *Hungarian Protestantism and the Persecution of Jews* (Budapest, 1945), 47.

[80] Jenő Lévai, *Zsidósors Magyarországon* [*Jewish Fate in Hungary*] (Budapest, 1948), 145–9, 179–206.

More recent historiography has been much more critical of the role of the Christian Churches in Hungary, including Sztehlo's Lutheran Church and the more widespread Catholic Church. Perhaps the most significant of these works is Paul Hanebrink's research on Christian Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century. Hanebrink argued that the Holocaust triggered a 'moral crisis of Christian nationalism in Hungary', but that the Churches 'refused to abandon' anti-Jewish prejudice, which constituted a 'basic tenet of Christian nationalism'.[81] The differences between Sztehlo's original and published memoir become even more significant when considering these contradictory perspectives on the history of the Christian Churches. While the published version supported a narrative of rescue, the original manuscript gives a much more detailed insight into the 'moral crisis' that Hanebrink identified. Sztehlo and Raffay's conversation about the Bishops and their support for the war provides further evidence for how many senior members of the Churches were complicit in persecution. Moreover, the detail in Sztehlo's original manuscript adds further nuance to the tension within the Hungarian Evangelical Church, revealing a heterogeneous community that held different views on what they should do.

This lack of conviction on behalf of the Church is revealed elsewhere in the memoir, too. When Sztehlo became more involved in the work of the ICRC in October 1944, he underwent a transition from Christian pastor to employee of an international institution. This necessitated taking official time off from Church duties and receiving an ICRC salary. In the published version of his memoir, these changes are expressed simply and factually: 'Born told me that if I entered the service of the Red Cross, my salary would be four times what I had been receiving from the church ... I asked the bishop for leave so that I could work for the Red Cross.'[82] In his original version of the memoir, however, Sztehlo was much more reflective on what these changes meant to him. Comparing the new salary he was offered to that of other pastors, he commented that 'I almost felt ashamed to receive so much, while many of my fellow pastors were living on 200–300 pengő.'[83] When Sztehlo pointed out this sense of shame, he spoke not only about his own circumstances but also about the difference it highlighted between the financial position and priorities of the Church and the ICRC. Moreover, when Sztehlo wrote about requesting leave in his original text, he stated that 'I had to request leave from the bishop in order to enter the service of the Red Cross.'[84] The omission in the published version of the words 'had to' for his request for leave from Church duties subtly reinforces the idea that rescue was not a priority for the Church, as it was not something that he could do while still fulfilling his duties as a pastor. These complexities and embarrassing details about the Church's wartime priorities were edited out of the published memoir, transforming Sztehlo's narrative into a more factual, rather than reflective piece.

Sztehlo's original manuscript, therefore, offered a new and provocative perspective that challenged the prevailing narrative about the Christian Churches in Hungary during the Holocaust, while not downplaying his rescue work in their name. Yet these

[81] Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), 194, 213.

[82] Sztehlo, *In the Hands of God*, 73.

[83] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 121–3.

[84] *Ibid*.

comments of his were suppressed when the memoir was originally published by a Church institution seeking to protect its reputation. While this change may not be surprising given the interests of the Church, it raises an important distinction in the historiography of religion and the Holocaust. In his research on faith and the Holocaust, Eliezer Schweid suggested that 'the problem is really one of the justification of religion, not God'.[85] Sztehlo's critiques take this a step further, revealing how the Church scrambled to justify religious *institutions*, not religion or even God.

Conclusion

In the opening pages of the original manuscript, Sztehlo reflected on the genre of his memoir: although he charted the course of a year, he was aware that it could not be considered a diary, as he had written it sixteen to seventeen years after the events he chronicled. 'Everything', he stated, 'was certainly written from the perspective of 16 to 17 years'.[86] Nonetheless, he hoped that his memoir would 'immortalise' his memoires and took great effort to ensure that they would 'not be the product of fiction, fairytale, [or] fantasy'. It would be another fifteen years after Sztehlo wrote these words that a version of his memoir was finally available to read in Hungarian and almost another ten until it was published in English. Yet, as this article has shown, the published versions did not fully live up to Sztehlo's aspirations. While his manuscript was his own narrative, the published version was that of the Evangelical Church, who reframed and re-moulded his memories into their history.

The differences between these narratives centred around four main themes: the agency of the children he saved, his own anxieties and uncertainties, his relationship with God, and the role of the Church. In all four of these areas, the published memoir shifted the image of Sztehlo that it presented. Moving away from a multifaceted narrative of a man doing his best, but who was plagued by uncertainty and anxiety and who relied heavily on others, to a larger-than-life hero figure, the published version constructed a history that satisfied the demands of a public readership and of the Church institutions who supported its publication. It met a desire for a heroic figure who prioritised action and struggle against injustice, as opposed to reflection and earnest criticism of the institutions of which he was a part.

This narrative has shaped the scholarly and public perception of Sztehlo's rescue efforts during the Holocaust. The memoir's edits, therefore, serve as a powerful case study for how institutional representation can alter an individual's history and memory. Editing and publishing the memoir reshaped Sztehlo's history. It fundamentally redefined his own understanding of the events, curating a post-war memory that projected the moral authority of the Christian Church and Sztehlo's image as a heroic figure. This serves as a warning for how first-hand accounts are constructed, transmitted and instrumentalised after they are written. This is especially challenging for memoirs – like Sztehlo's – that are edited and published after their author has died, offering no opportunity for him to be a part of the publication process. This very process curtailed his own historical agency, as it changed, removed and rephrased his own

[85] Schweid, '"Faith, Ethics and the Holocaust"', 396.
[86] Sztehlo, *Háromszázhatvanöt nap*, 7.

words. Sztehlo's published memoir, therefore, is less *his* and more that of the Church and the times in which it was published.

The published version of his memoir is not, however, an imitation, nor is it wholly inaccurate. With the exception of a few omissions, each chapter mirrors the original and, within the chapters, the text is generally rooted in the original, too. As this article has shown, it is largely possible to follow the manuscript and published versions line by line. Doing so, however, reveals the complex and sophisticated edits that were made to the text, which had a significant impact on its message. By carefully cutting certain sentences and adapting the words used, the published version altered the framing of Sztehlo's subjectivity. It developed a vocabulary of initiative and removed his more philosophical reflections.

Exposing and stripping away these misrepresentations, this article reveals how Sztehlo's original manuscript presented him as a highly reflective and thoughtful man. Despite the years that had passed since the events, he recalled many details about his wartime experiences and conveyed his varying emotions at different points along the way. His memoir – as he intended it – is not only an account of the events but also his commentary on them. In its pages, he develops his own philosophy of fellowship, reflecting on his motivations, abilities and weaknesses as someone who moved from being a bystander to being a rescuer. It is these subjectivities that the Church deemed irrelevant to his history of 365 fateful days of rescue. Yet it is precisely the subjectivities that help us rescue Sztehlo's memory from the abstractness of heroism.

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