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## **Greetings from “Hungarian Pittsburgh”. Resicza on picture postcards between 1898 and 1918**

### **Abstract**

The illustrated postcard as a new medium, which spread rapidly in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from 1880 onwards, was not only used for faster communication. It was also a means of self-representation for the communities, which were called upon to visually express and consolidate their self-narrative both internally and externally. In Resicza, one of the largest industrial centers of the Kingdom of Hungary, the smokestacks, industrial plants and machines of the StEG Company became the identity-creating landmark of the small town. The postcards of Resicza that were published and circulated until the end of the First World War prove the importance of the StEG Company as one of the central places of representation of high industrialization and modernity in the collective perception. At the same time, the more village-like small town, actually an appendage of the StEG, attempted to satisfy the growing aesthetic demands of an urban culture by means of image montage.

**Keywords:** Resicza, postcards, industrialisation, development, communication

### **The first picture postcards of and from Resicza**

The first verifiable picture postcards with images of Resicza/Reșița were sent in 1898.<sup>1</sup> The year is already worth mentioning because after its beginnings in 1894/95 the edition of picture postcards in Hungary became only fashionable with a series of editions on the occasion of celebrating the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian state in 1896. As the Hungarian mail did not claim any monopoly on editing picture postcards, as early as two years later several thousands of copies, published by private businessmen, about the capital of Budapest and other places were in circulation.

In Resicza the first greeting cards were published by Adolf Weiss, an extremely enterprising person. Weiss, a professional journalist, was active as an publisher, as a paper and book seller, and as a newspaper editor.<sup>2</sup> Having achieved a certain degree of wealth, he became also committed with municipal matters. For example, since 1911 he was a founding member of the joint stock company which was running the street lights of Resicza, apart from this he was a member of the management of the *Népbank* (People's Bank) joint stock company of Resicza

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<sup>1</sup>The author expresses her thanks to postcard collector Mr. Helmut Kulhanek from Mechernich, who provided the picture postcards from his valuable Resicza collection.

<sup>2</sup> In Resicza, *Resiczaer Zeitung*, in German, was edited by Adolf Weiss between 1887 and 1918, and *Resicai Lapok*, in Hungarian, was edited by Gyula Deák between 1900 and 1918. Weiss was the owner of both daily newspapers.

and of *Resiczai Első Takarékpénztár* (Savings Bank).<sup>3</sup> When looking at the motifs of the first picture postcards published by Weiss, three of them depict panoramic views of the place, with smoking factory chimneys, whereas the fourth picture postcard depicts newly built houses for workers. Thus, all these picture postcards make the Resicza works of *Privilegierte Österreichisch-Ungarische Staatseisenbahn-Gesellschaft/StEG* (Privileged Austrian-Hungarian State Railway Company)<sup>4</sup> their focus.<sup>5</sup> Two of these picture postcards provide additional information in the form of miniaturised additional pictures: one picture shows the management building of the Resicza works, the other one the Hungarian tricolour.

Figure 1 Panorama of Resicza with tricolor, 1898; Kulhanek collection



Why did Weiss believe it to be necessary, by way of his first picture postcards, to provide the nearer and farer world precisely with this information about his place of living?

### The works in Resicza

The 10<sup>th</sup> of October volume of the weekly *A Bánya* (The Pit) reports that Emperor Franz Joseph I. appointed the Director General of the Hungarian StEG, Béla Veith, Privy Councillor, in recognition of his merits. On this occasion, the newspaper appreciated the Director General as “one of the most agile leading figures of business in Hungary”.<sup>6</sup> Since 1900 Veith had been the head of an empire which, apart from landholdings, consisted of sawmills, steam mills, coal

<sup>3</sup> On the picture postcards see Kulhanek (2013): 85, 148, 181. – On the joint stock company see Budapesti Fővárosi Levéltár (Archive of the Capital of Budapest), VII.173.a-1911-3175f.

<sup>4</sup> The abbreviation of the German name of Szabadalmazott Osztrák-Magyar Államvasút-Társaság (OMÁV) was also used by contemporary texts and newspapers in the Hungarian language.

<sup>5</sup> For two of the picture postcards the photographic printing method was already used, for two others the lithographic method was still used.

<sup>6</sup> *A Bánya* 10.10.1909., 4.

and iron ore mines, charcoal production sites, coking plants and blast furnaces, steel mills, engineering companies, bridge building works, factories for the production of projectiles, nails and screws, fireclay and brick works, a lime kiln, an electricity plant, and a petroleum refinery, employing about 700 management and white collar staff and almost 18,000 workers.<sup>7</sup> The property of the Hungarian directorate of StEG, founded in 1882, focused on an area of about 133,000 hectares in the County of Krassó-Szörény and, since the state had purchased the company's railways in 1891, now the main site were the works in Resicza with their several branches in the County. However, even after these structural changes the Resicza works remained the biggest enterprise in the Kingdom of Hungary. It was based on the financially sound non-Hungarian, mostly French and Austrian, owners and shareholders, so that it was always capable of swiftly introducing the latest technologies and of putting the most modern facilities and machines into operation. Compared to the other heavy industry enterprises in Hungary, StEG had the advantage that it was running its own mines in the Banat, which produced coal of particularly high quality, and a good railway network which had been continuously extended since as early as 1855.

Furthermore, the Hungarian Directors General – such as Béla Veith, who was the head of StEG until the Peace of Trianon<sup>8</sup> – did not only act as engineers with much expertise but also successfully supported the interests of their works at all political and economic fora and institutions in Budapest. Given this fact, in his report to the US American government Godfrey L. Carden, a staff member of the Department of Commerce and Labor Office in Washington, could summarise these enterprises, which he had visited in 1909, like this: “Resicza. It is a small place, so far as cities go, but it represents in its population one of the most interesting iron and steel works in Europe. What Krupp is to Germany and Le Creusôt to France, so Resicza is to Hungary. A grade of steel is being turned out in these Hungarian works the equal, it is claimed, of the best in the world.”<sup>9</sup> Carden did not only count the Resicza works among the biggest Iron and steel works in Europe, but during his conversations at the place he even compared them to Pittsburgh, the North American coal and steel metropolis.<sup>10</sup> This US American ministry official also recognized the particular importance of the Resicza works for Hungary, when he went on: “No other company in Hungary occupies so important a position in the economic development of the country, and its prosperity may well be taken as indicative of conditions generally in the Hungarian territory.”<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact, the Resicza works always stimulated the modernisation of other steel and iron works in the Kingdom of Hungary, which also established ways of cooperating, apart from their competition.<sup>12</sup> If, until its railway lines were sold in 1891, StEG looked like a more or less consolidated enterprise, because it produced all the raw materials and products it needed for its railways, after 1891 it also opened up the fast growing

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<sup>7</sup> Beschreibung (1896); A Bányá 05.12.1908., 24-25; Gräf, R. (1997); Perianu, D. (2016).

<sup>8</sup> After having studied engineering and after a longer foreign stay, Béla Veith (1859–1934) was employed by the Ózd iron works, where he occupied the position of Director between 1884 and 1892. In the year 1900 he became Director General of StEG, which had its seat in Budapest. Even after the Treaty of Trianon he retained his office at the top of the company until 1929, as the representative of the foreign investors. The company was renamed Uzinele și Domeniile Reșița (U.D.R.) in Romania. After having stepped down he moved to Salzburg.

<sup>9</sup> Carden, G. L. (1910): 56.

<sup>10</sup> A Bányá 10.10.1909. 4; Magyar Vaskereskedő 26.09.1909., 26.

<sup>11</sup> Carden, G. L. (1910): 66.

<sup>12</sup> Pogány, Á. (2005).

national market, apart from the foreign markets.<sup>13</sup> The Resicza works produced important materials such as iron and steel and produced a broad variety of finished products such as railway tracks, bridges, water tanks, locomotives, steel hoops and wheels, as well as all kinds of pipes, screws and nails. All these products were needed for extending Hungary's industry and transport facilities as well as for building new city centres and industrial settlements.<sup>14</sup>

StEG played a crucial role also for the economic, social, and cultural development of the 72 places belonging to its domain – in particular the mining and production sites of places such as Resicza, Steierdorf, Anina, Bogsán/Bocşa, Csiklova/Ciclova und Moldova. Even after the prerogative rights and obligations, based on the Imperial Edict of 1853, had been abandoned in 1880,<sup>15</sup> the company was very much aware of its function. Its self-presentation as the biggest tax payer and employer of South Eastern Hungary, printed in 1896, testified to this, according to which “the benefit, the ability to pay taxes, and [the] wealth of the people of the County of Krassó-Szörény” was secured and thus also a “cultural mission” was accomplished.<sup>16</sup> StEG did not only care for its employees by building company-owned residential houses<sup>17</sup> or by way of pension funds and aid institutions, although the latter, together with better wages, had to be wrested from it by the workers in the course of tough negotiations and strikes.<sup>18</sup> StEG also supported the building of residential areas and, in the context of extending the sewer system on its works grounds, built a water supply system for the city. In that same year it granted the County of Krassó-Szörény an interest-free loan of 100,000 Crowns, for the purpose of constructing a road from Resicza to Anina which was to be much frequented by the people.<sup>19</sup> And in 1910, StEG supported the building of the new Protestant-Lutheran church of Resicza by supplying money, cheap building material and cost-free transportation.<sup>20</sup>

The fates of the Resicza works and the people of its locations were linked by a number of threads. Accordingly, it was no wonder that the inhabitants closely observed the activities of StEG and the changes at individual factories. Probably because of this, the demolition of a 45-metre high factory chimney in Resicza became a folk event. Accompanied by several

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<sup>13</sup> Katus, L. (2008). – The company delivered large amounts of materials and products also to foreign countries, e. g. apart from supplying German factories it also supplied steel iron and ship equipment to the British naval forces. On this see A Bányá 06.12.1908., 5.

<sup>14</sup> On this see, among others, the advertisement by the works in: A Bányá 07.04.1912., 9.

<sup>15</sup> Although the nobility had been deprived of its sovereign rights in Hungary in 1848, the Imperial Edict of 1853 granted StEG tavern licences, milling licences, fishing licences, hunting licences and market licences for all places belonging to the domain, just like the patronage over churches and denominational schools. On this see Gräf, R. (1997): 223-228 and Muzeul Banatului Montan Reșița, No. 472/9793: Protocoll, welches wegen Uibergabe des Reschitzaer Eisenwerkes von Seite der k. k. österr. Staatsverwaltung an die k. k. priv. österr. Staatseisenbahngesellschaft zu Reschitza den 14. und nachfolgenden Tagen des Monats Juli 1855 aufgenommen worden ist, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Beschreibung (1896): 6.

<sup>17</sup> The houses for the workers, consisting of two rooms, a kitchen and pantry, a cellar and a court, were built by help of interest-free loans granted by the works. Nemzet 28.09.1882., 3.

<sup>18</sup> Here I can only point out to the fact that StEG knew very well how to exploit its state-protected position, which indeed resulted in a number of grievances. For example, in 1897, after a mining accident at Anina, there were troubles because 80 families of dead mountain farmers were left without support, and in 1901 there was a strike because the piecework system had been introduced at the works. On this see, among others, the debate of the Hungarian Parliament of June 13<sup>th</sup>, in: Képviselet-házi napló (1896): 169-171; Fehér, M. (1914); Brătfalean, V. (1929).

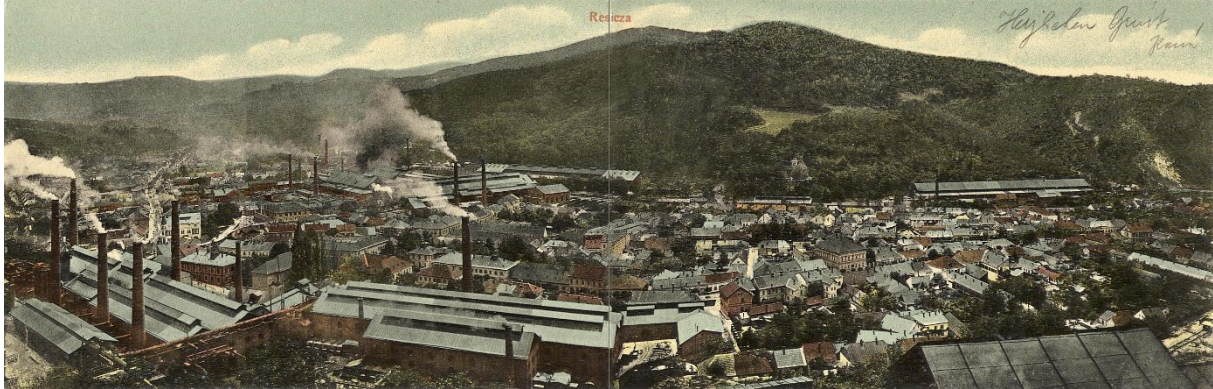
<sup>19</sup> A Bányá 05.09.1909., 5; ibid. 07.11.1909., 7.

<sup>20</sup> Evangélikus Óralló 22.09.1910., 364.

photographers – as reported by the *A Bányá* newspaper – the people of Resicza waited for hours for this uncommon attraction which marked the end of a factory building which was no longer needed.<sup>21</sup>

In the course of a few decades Resicza grew into a first-rate industrial centre, and soon the village community had become a larger town.

*Figure 2 Resicza, 1903; Kulhanek collection*



Still in 1856 the place had 3,242 inhabitants, in 1910 the number was already 17,384.<sup>22</sup> This growth was not least due to the constant immigration of skilled workers from Hungary and foreign countries as well as of unskilled labourers from the vicinity. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Resicza, a village originally inhabited by Romanians, developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional settlement. In 1880 the majority of the total number of the population of 4, 839 people was already German, followed by 2,179 Romanians, 783 Slovaks, and 477 Hungarians. In 1910 the number of Germans rose to 9,435, of Romanians to 3,796, and of Hungarians to 2,713, whereas the number of Slovaks went down to 549, due to assimilation. Another 891 were provided by Ruthenians, Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Czechs, French, Italians and Gypsies.<sup>23</sup> Both in the multi-lingual city and at the factories the common language was German, which was not only used by the workers but also by the management staff, even more as many of the directors, engineers and workshop managers came from German-speaking regions both of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and abroad.

With a few exceptions, the captions of the picture postcards – both pre-formulated greetings and the names of the depicted streets, buildings and factories – were bilingual, in Hungarian and in German. If we compare the captions of the picture postcards to those from other places in Hungary where German minorities were living, this frequent bilingualism is striking. For, whereas at about 1900 other places were gradually giving up on speaking German, the captions of picture postcards from Resicza remained bilingual.<sup>24</sup> This was clearly due to the strong local presence of StEG, and it was not even changed by the activities of the association for the spread

<sup>21</sup> *A Bányá* 26.03.1911., 3.

<sup>22</sup> These figures acc. to Varga, Á. E. (2002): 1. – Here it may be remarked that StEG was not the only employer from the industrial sector. The construction boom in Resicza and its vicinity also attracted other entrepreneurs. For example, János Jejmre founded a steam brick factory, and Aladár Gara founded a lime kiln.

<sup>23</sup> Varga, Á. E. (2002): 2; Gräf, R. (1997): 247-248.

<sup>24</sup> Multilingualism was even continued in Romania in the interwar period, although Hungarian was replaced by Romanian.



of the Hungarian language, founded in 1887, a member of which, along with StEG engineers, white collar workers and workers, was also the Director of the iron and steel works, Ottó Müller.<sup>25</sup>

### **The power of images**

The recording of the rapidly changing industrial world by help of the new medium of photography brought industrial photography into being, which focussed on industrial sites and technology.<sup>26</sup> Already when photography was in its infancies, the Central Directorate of StEG recognized the significance of the new medium as a vehicle for advertisement and information, and accordingly it initiated several photographic campaigns. Since the 1850s the development of the company, its railroad lines, factories, sites and products, was documented both by way of individual shots and series of photos in the form of albums.<sup>27</sup> Photography with its possibilities to produce authentic and exact images of objects, plans and work processes served on the one hand for the internal communication of StEG, between investors, director and engineers, to e. g. this way control the work status without long and troublesome journeys and to exchange technological information.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the new medium was employed for the company's politics, to improve its image and business. One particularity of StEG's photographic series was that they did not only document the change of the landscape as a result of interfering with nature and thus the idea of nature as an inexhaustible resource in the service of man, which had been predominant since the Early Modern Age.<sup>29</sup> Also groups of workers wearing their working clothes and carrying their tools were depicted, just like ethnic groups living on the domains of StEG, wearing their national wear. Thus, if placed next to each other, these images contrast the industrial world to traditional ways of life while vividly giving expression to the non-simultaneity of the simultaneous.

Photography was able to present the extent and success of the activities of the enterprise more convincingly than any journalistic coverage. The private railway companies made use of these advantages at national and international exhibitions where, apart from their products, they also presented themselves by way of photographic series.<sup>30</sup> The Hungarian publication *Képes Kiállítási Lapok* (Illustrated Exhibition Pages), which was published on the occasion of the

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<sup>25</sup> According to the report, Müller alone had been able to win over 319 employees of the works to the association. He also supported the city's Hungarian kindergarten. *A Bánya* 21.01.1912., 10; *Pesti Hírlap* 04.02.1904., 15.

<sup>26</sup> Fischer-Westhauser, U. (2002); Stremmel, R. (2020).

<sup>27</sup> By order of the Central Directorate three larger photographic series were produced on the StEG's possessions in the Banat. In the first "Album der Banater Besitzungen der k. k. priv. österr. Staats-Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft", Viennese photographer Andreas Groll documents, by 60 photographs, landscape, factories, workers and inhabitants of the domain between 1858 and 1861. When the coal and iron railway line Steierdorf-Oravica was completed in December 1862, a new album with 20 photographs by Szeged photographer Anton Rohrbach was compiled. On the occasion of the Vienna World Exhibition of 1873, the third StEG album compiled photographs by Gustav Adolf Stosius from Galicia, who gave up on working as an engineer in favour of working as a photographer and settled down at Laa/Thaya. On the albums see: Gaidoş, C. O. (2018); Faber, M. (2006/07).

<sup>28</sup> Keckeis, M. (2016).

<sup>29</sup> On this see, among others, Bayerl, G. (2001).

<sup>30</sup> Such as the Kassa-Oderberg-Vasúttársaság. Farkas, Zs. (2014a); Farkas, Zs. (2014b).

world exhibition in Vienna in 1873, wrote on this: “Taking photos has already become a social need. It has become indispensable, not only for family life but also for the sciences and the industry. [...] Taking photos is the best reporter on the world exhibition: it is also the best letter of recommendation for the exhibited objects, memorials and industrial products etc.”<sup>31</sup> Yet still, initially the photographs published by newspapers and magazines were redrawn as lithographs, indeed also those of *Képes Kiállítási Lapok*.<sup>32</sup> Only after the daily newspapers had switched from lithographic to photographic illustrations, photography started conquering another communication medium which had developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the picture postcard.<sup>33</sup>

Soon the picture postcard became a popular medium which provided information about places, cities and landscapes close by and far away. *Földrajzi Közlemények* (Geographic Information) summarised the role of the picture postcard in almost melodramatic ways: “It is such a novelty, which [...] is charming because of its beautifulness, which is a pleasure because of its noble modesty, and what is the main thing: it is instructive and educative.”<sup>34</sup> In the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, this way the picture postcard provided geographic and ethnographic knowledge at the same time, thus giving the people an idea not only of their environment but also of the extent and variety of the country as a whole. Thus seen, it was more effective than e. g. the monumental book project *Die Österreich-Ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy in Words and Pictures) which pursued the intention to propagate the idea of an overall monarchy. The reason was that right from the beginning the picture postcard was not exclusive. Disregarding any social differences, it became a popular, indeed desired object of everyday life. It was collected and exchanged, and as reported by *Vasárnapi Újság* (Sunday Newspaper), there were even ladies who decorated their rooms with picture postcards or used them for dressing screens.<sup>35</sup> In 1899 the Viennese journalist Karl Kraus, in the *Fackel* magazine, could even make fun of a real “picture postcard disease as a specific kind of illness” in the Monarchy, from which all classes were suffering. For, whereas one part of the population sent them by mail, the other part collected them passionately.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Austria-Hungary was second in Europe, after Germany, when it came to sending picture postcards.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Képes Kiállítási Lapok* 29.04.1873., 3.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning Hungary, see Farkas, Zs. (2014b): 170-174.

<sup>33</sup> On picture postcards in general see, among others, Walter (2001); Békési (2004); Starl, T. – Tropper, E. (2011); Holzheid, A. (2011); Jäger, J. (2011).

<sup>34</sup> *Földrajzi Közlemények* 29 (1901): 282.

<sup>35</sup> *Vasárnapi Újság* 21.07.1901., 467.

<sup>36</sup> Kraus, K. (1899): 12-14.

<sup>37</sup> At about the year 1900, 88 million picture postcards every year were sent in Germany, in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy it was 31 million, followed by Switzerland with 22 million, although there it was foreign tourists who sent most of the picture postcards. *Vasárnapi Újság* 21.07.1901., 467. – In 1910, already 140.5 million were sent in Hungary, in Austria in 1912 it was even 276.7 million. *Világ* 29.06.1912., 36 and Békési, S. (2004): 407.

## The picture postcard as a medium of communication

The picture postcard was an element of a rapidly growing system of communication<sup>38</sup> which included photographers, publishers, sellers, buyers (senders) and addressees to the same degree. In the case of Resicza we have only little information about the photographs which served as templates for picture postcards, although StEG employed photographers on a regular basis. The only photographer who is known by his name is Márton Fáy, the owner of the local photographer's studio.<sup>39</sup> Apart from him, also László Horváth and Károly Szabonáry from Német-Bogsán provided templates for picture postcards. The latter was also active as a publisher of picture postcards.<sup>40</sup> Before 1918 more than 500 different picture postcards were published on Resicza, among them one picture postcard in different coloured editions. Most probably, the publishers in Resicza had their picture postcards made at the Hungária print of József (Joseph) Eisler, which became the property of Adolf Weiss even before 1918. Apart from Adolf Weiss, also local merchants and shop owners such as Irén Boskowiz, the owner of a toy shop, or Karl and Anton Neff, the owners of a coffeehouse, of a glass and chinaware shop as well as of a stationery shop, were active as publishers. Also known are the names of Lambert Braumüller and Otto Schwarz.<sup>41</sup> There is also evidence of non-resident publishers, from their monograms or their names, such as Josef Funk or Lipót Weiss from Budapest, who published several thousands of picture postcards on cities and places in Hungary even before 1918.

When we ask about the senders and addressees of picture postcards, the address lines are somewhat informative. The here analysed copies<sup>42</sup> with motifs of Resicza were sent to the most different kinds of villages and cities in Hungary, however also to places abroad, from Vienna via Berlin as far as to Stockholm. Short notices and greetings were sent on the most different occasions, in the German, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian and Czech languages: One was returning to Resicza from a trip and expressed thanks for the hospitality of one's hosts, or one was on holidays or a short visit to the city and sent greetings to those at home.

Often one informed in telegram style about important events by sending a picture postcard. One sender, for example, told Miss Erzsike Raschewitz in Hódos that he was on the train because he had got a new and well-paid job at the iron works of Ózd in North Eastern Hungary. In passing, the young lady was also told that the fast train to Temesvár/Timișoara the sender had taken had already killed five cows.<sup>43</sup> Also popular were picture postcards on the city and the factories where it could be marked where in Resicza the senders were living and working.

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<sup>38</sup> Tropper, E. (2010).

<sup>39</sup> Since when Fáy could call himself 'photographer of StEG' could not be investigated. At least this was what he called himself on the backside of one of his photographs from the year 1900.

<https://fortepan.hu/hu/photos/?q=Resicabánya> (06.01.2024). For Fáy see also Pesti Hírlap 02.04.1907., 1.

<sup>40</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 113.

<sup>41</sup> On this see *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*; website „Hungarian Cultural Heritage“; Portal „Helytörténet.com. Online papírrégiség antikvárium. Magyarország településeinek régi dokumentumai“; <https://kepeslapok.wordpress.com/2012/12/29/resica> (06.01.2024).

<sup>43</sup>

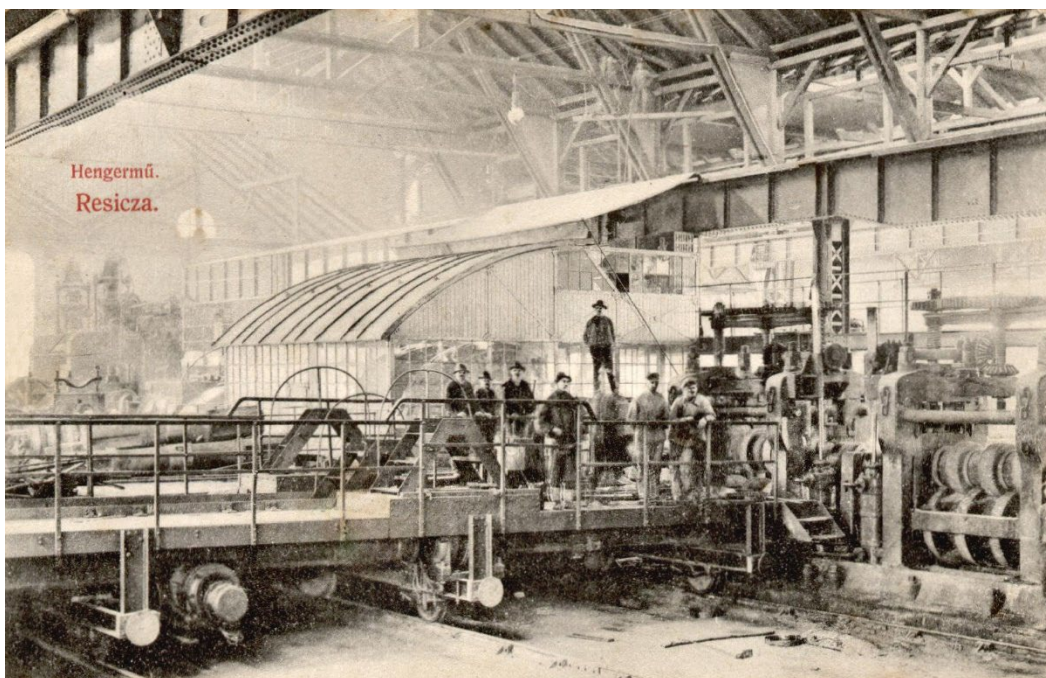
<https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/SzerencsKepeslap/1383328/?list=eyJmaWx0ZXJzJjogeyJEQVRBQkFTRSI6I FsiUE9TVENBUkQiXX0sICJxdWVyeSI6ICJyZXNpY3phICJ9&img=1> (06.01.2024).



Picture postcards were also meant for maintaining friendly contacts. For example, on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1897, a sender cheerfully expressed his thanks for having the opportunity to “exchange a few words” with his friend in Makó, if not personally, then at least via the picture postcard.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, shortly before the end of World War I, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Resicza lawyer Hugó Dezső told his friend by way of a picture postcard that he was still alive.<sup>45</sup>

Other senders were on business trips to Resicza. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1911, Ede Freibauer at Schlick Iron Foundry and Engineering Works in Budapest was informed by “Tata” Hesz that he was on his way back from Resicza, having achieved only moderate results. He had only been able to see the rolling mill at night, but about this he told: “What beautiful things I have seen, I could watch them for days.”<sup>46</sup>

*Figure 3 Interior view of the rolling mill, 1908; Kulhanek collection*



Sándor Stricker, an Inspector of Hungarian State Railways (MÁV), on the other hand, received short greetings from a colleague, as he wrote: “from the great number of acquired and rejected iron cast pipes”.<sup>47</sup>

Another group of senders is easily identified, and that is those visiting the works in Resicza. For example, the participants in the outing congress of Hungarian physicians and natural researchers of August 1866, or, in September, 1911, the members of the Temesvár branch of the Society of Hungarian Engineers and Architects visited the factories and the environment.<sup>48</sup> Groups of students from schools and universities were frequent visitors to the Resicza works, who visited individual factories and mines during their class and year outings. On such an occasion, József Potoczky in Budapest was told by his son on a picture postcard of June, 1913,

<sup>44</sup> <https://helytortenet.com/54276-resica-re-i-a-1917-ontode-regi-kepeslap> (06.01.2024)

<sup>45</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 283.

<sup>46</sup> <https://helytortenet.com/54284-resica-re-i-a-1911-nagyolvaszto-acelmuvek-regi-kepeslap> (06.01.2024).

<sup>47</sup> <https://helytortenet.com/54287-resica-re-i-a-1909-hengermu-regi-kepeslap> (06.01.2024).

<sup>48</sup> Budapesti Hírlap 20.08.1886., 6; Építő Ipar 17.09.1911., 386.

which showed the ammoniac factory, not only that the iron works of Resicza were much bigger than those of Diósgyőr but also that the group was well supplied with food.<sup>49</sup> Class outings were a fixed element of the educational programme of secondary schools in Hungary. Visits to factories served for extending the economic and geographic knowledge of the young people. Furthermore, they were supposed to teach the young people “how to observe in the right way”, as it was stated in the yearly report of one school.<sup>50</sup>

Picture postcards also give testimony to a particular relationship of the mining academy of Selmecbánya/Banská Štiavnica and the works of Resicza, which went as far back as to the beginnings of the iron works in 1771.<sup>51</sup> Frequently the future mining engineers took part in study trips to Resicza and in visits to the mines, steel mills and engineering works of StEG, under supervision of their professors.<sup>52</sup> Such visits did not only serve for informing the students about technological and practical procedures, rather this was an opportunity even for professors and engineers to enter into exchanges about the latest knowledge of their subjects. Also the professor of drawing at the Catholic main grammar school of Selmecbánya, János Zsitvay, must have been a member of one of these groups in the 1890s: For Zsitvay, who was also active as a painter, made two art postcards about the interior of the steel mills.<sup>53</sup>

### **The picture postcard as self-representation**

Most senders described the city of Resicza as being everything but urban and beautiful. For example, on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1909, the author of one postcard wrote that now he was back “in this factory of city which is full of smoke and soot, [...] where except for the beautiful and wild-romantic environment there is nothing so see except chimneys, iron mills, workshops and those working at the works”.<sup>54</sup> At about the year 1900 the locations of modern mining in Hungary, which provided the basis for mining and metallurgy as well as the iron industry such as in Resicza, Diósgyőr, Salgótarján or Petrozsény/Petroșani, experienced a rapid demographic development. However, they did not have any civic traditions and only very gradually took on urban features. Some urban institutions such as Resicza were provided with district administrations, several schools,<sup>55</sup> two hospitals,<sup>56</sup> and banks but – despite the more than 200 engineers, civil servants and white collar workers of the StEG – there was hardly any urban middle class. The majority of the people living in the city were industrial workers and day

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<sup>49</sup>

<https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/OSZKKepeslap/1428699/?list=eyJmaWx0ZXJzIjogeyJEQVRBQkFTRSI6IFsiUE9TVENBUkQiXX0sICJxdWVyeSI6ICJyZXNpY2EgIn0&img=1> (06.01.2024).

<sup>50</sup> Rákóczy, G. (1910): 111.

<sup>51</sup> Zsámboki, L. (2005).

<sup>52</sup> A Bánya 21.04.1912., 5.

<sup>53</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 151.

<sup>54</sup>

<https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/OSZKKepeslap/1428695/?list=eyJmaWx0ZXJzIjogeyJEQVRBQkFTRSI6IFsiUE9TVENBUkQiXX0sICJxdWVyeSI6ICJyZXNpY2EgIn0&img=1> (06.01.2024).

<sup>55</sup> In 1882 it was seven German, Hungarian and Romanian elementary schools and one secondary school. Nemzet 28.09.1882., 3.

<sup>56</sup> In 1892 the company hospital had 26 beds and two doctors as well as its own pharmacy. The municipal hospital was equipped with seven beds. Hieronymi, K. (1893): 192.

labourers. According to Pál Beluszky, who analysed the situation of 330 Hungarian cities in the year 1910,<sup>57</sup> Resicza took the 105<sup>th</sup> position when it came to its significance,<sup>58</sup> but only the 220<sup>th</sup> when it came to its urban infrastructure.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, on the picture postcards published between 1898 and 1918 Resicza rather looks like an appendix of the works which dominate the entire view of the place. If it was views of streets, churches or schools, inevitably the shot included one of the more than 30 factory chimneys.

*Figure 4 The Roman Catholic church with the factory chimney in the background;  
Kulhanek collection*



The attempts by publishers and photographers to present the city at its very best – what is frequently depicted on the picture postcards is unpaved streets and single-storey residential buildings. Only here and there two-storey buildings stand out, such as the community building, the forestry office, hotel, the post office with its massive telephone and telegraph pole, the secondary school and the state elementary school – all made of concrete – or “Palais Scheuchenstein” which hosted the fashion and shoe store of Gyula (Julius) Philipp.<sup>60</sup> If one wanted to present Resicza by a bit of bourgeois flair, the photos had to be reedited, and one had to reach back to photomontage to show elegant ladies and gentlemen e. g. on the dusty main street<sup>61</sup> or in front of the Apollo cinema.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Beluszky, P. (2018).

<sup>58</sup> By significance Beluszky means most of all: number of population, the extent of the economic activities of the inhabitants as well as of their savings, the fame of their products and of the local historical monuments.

<sup>59</sup> Beluszky, P. (2018): 134.

<sup>60</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 181, 185, 203-204, 223.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 219.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 27.



Figure 5 The Main Street with a group in front of the civilian school, photo montage; Kulhanek collection



The heart of the city was the factories, which were depicted on many picture postcards. They were the true sights of the city, and the countless visitors to Resicza from Hungary and abroad wanted to see them with their facilities and machines being at work.<sup>63</sup> Impressed by what they had seen, the visitors preferred picture postcards with industrial motifs, to tell about their first impressions or to at least send greetings from the city to those at home which presented the famous works. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the people considered the century which was now lying behind “a time of wonderful progress”.<sup>64</sup> Railways, bridges, viaducts, and other iron constructions, like also the locomotives made entirely of iron and steel, carriages and ships were symbols of unprecedented modernity. And in Hungary, Resicza was one of those places where this experience cumulated. In this sense, at about 1900 a woman sent a postcard showing the electricity hub to her friend from the small village of Újszász in the County of Pest, writing: “This morning I saw part of the wonderful factories, which are astonishing. It is only that my husband is so busy that in such a short span of time I cannot look at everything as thorough as I would like.”<sup>65</sup>

The management of StEG was aware of this symbolic meaning of the works. Simply because of this it allowed the public to gain insights into the otherwise screened rooms and areas. However, on the picture postcards this view looks like being purposefully directed. The photographs made on the factory premises and in the halls were supposed to provide evidence not only of the wide range of the production but also of the constant modernisation of the works. Accordingly, the construction of the electricity hub in 1905/06 as well as of the new blast

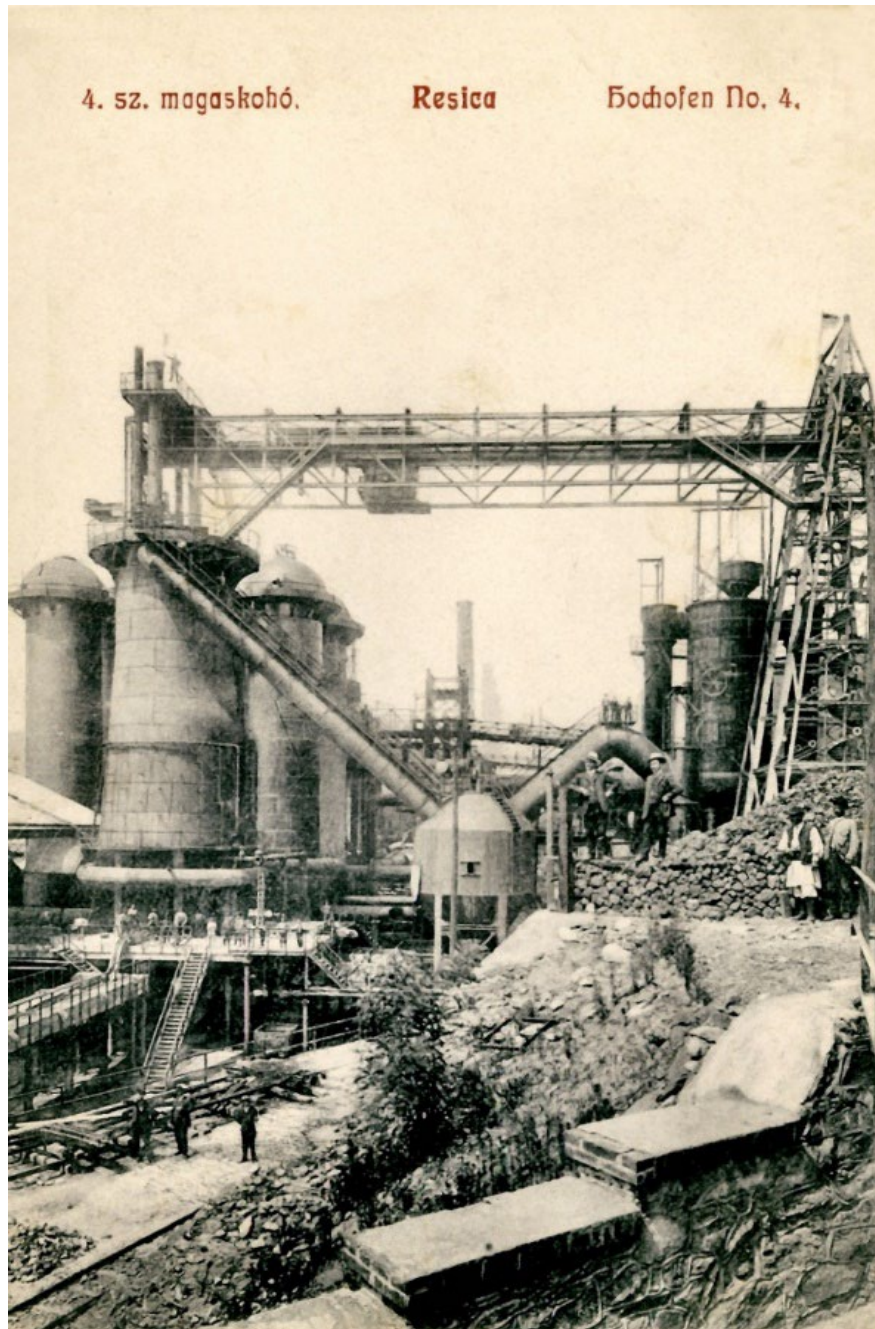
<sup>63</sup> Here, just the delegation of the Iron and Steel Institute in 1883 may be given as an example. *Pesti Hirlap* of 31.01.1883., 18. – The Japanese scientist Yasumi Shirasawa, a doctor of forestry, an engineer of the Bureau of Forestry, and a staff member of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Trade, was not interested in the factories but in the forests and the forestry methods of the domain. *A Bánya* 11.09.1910., 6.

<sup>64</sup> *Magyar Gépipar* 01.10.1901., 118. On the topic in general see Kuchenbuch-Henneberg, Th. (1992): 30-35.

<sup>65</sup> <https://helytortenet.com/46136-resicabanya-1912-villamos-kozpont-regi-kepeslap> (06.01.2024).

furnace, “made in American fashion”, in 1912<sup>66</sup> or the new turbo-blower with 2,300 horsepowers were also shown on picture postcards.

*Figure 6 Smelter No. 4, 1912; Kulhanek collection*

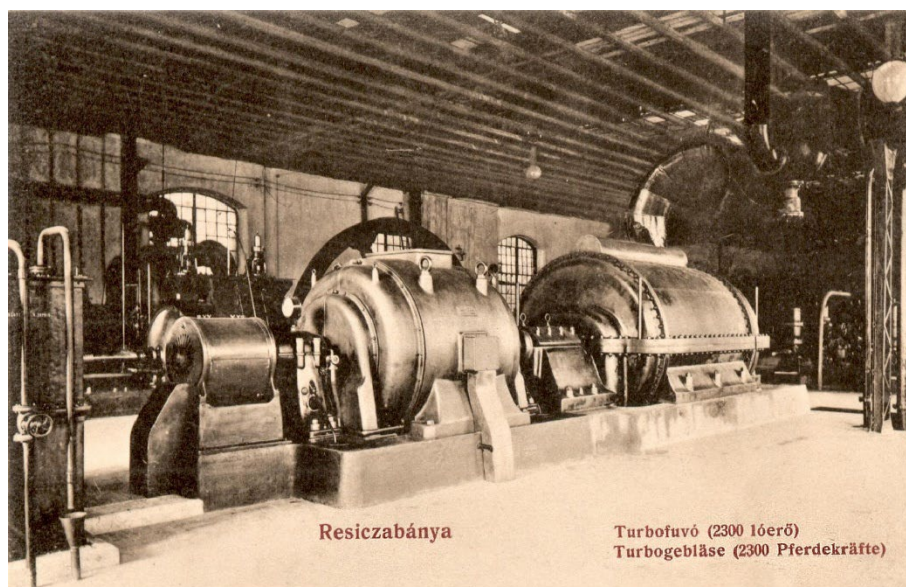


*Figure 7 The new turbo blowers for smelters; Kulhanek collection*

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<sup>66</sup> Among his engineers and workers, also Director General Veith is depicted in front of the blast furnace. According to Kulhanek, H. (2013): 304.





A comparison of outside views of the factory buildings and courts with interior views of the halls produces a striking difference: the number of interior views is rather limited. This is due to the technological limitations of photography in those days, which still required a long exposure time of several seconds. Thus, shots in the factory halls required the use of artificial light or flashlights, however even then the strong contrasts in the factory halls, caused by the sometimes black, sometimes polished and much shining machines, made photography difficult.<sup>67</sup> Not least because of this, with a few exceptions the picture postcards show hardly any work processes and only a few workers, whose inclusion would have resulted in additional problems for the photographers. Despite the technological limitations it was possible to buy picture postcards showing even interior views and facilities, such as open-hearth furnaces, the ladle cranes, the tool and steel tyre smithy, the rolling mill, and the adjustment device for rolling mill products, the locomotive factory or the electricity hub and the electricity transformers which, by way of frontal views and especially chosen angles, impressively illustrated the monumentality of facilities and machines. If workers were photographed, they were really dwarfed by their machines.<sup>68</sup> The depicted gigantic furnaces and turbo-machines represented a sense of life as it was expressed, on one of Zsitvay's art postcards, by lines like these: "Szikrázik a vas,/ Döng a verő:/ Miénk a világ,/ Ész és erő" (The iron emits sparks/ The hammer bangs:/ Ours are the world,/ reason and power).<sup>69</sup>

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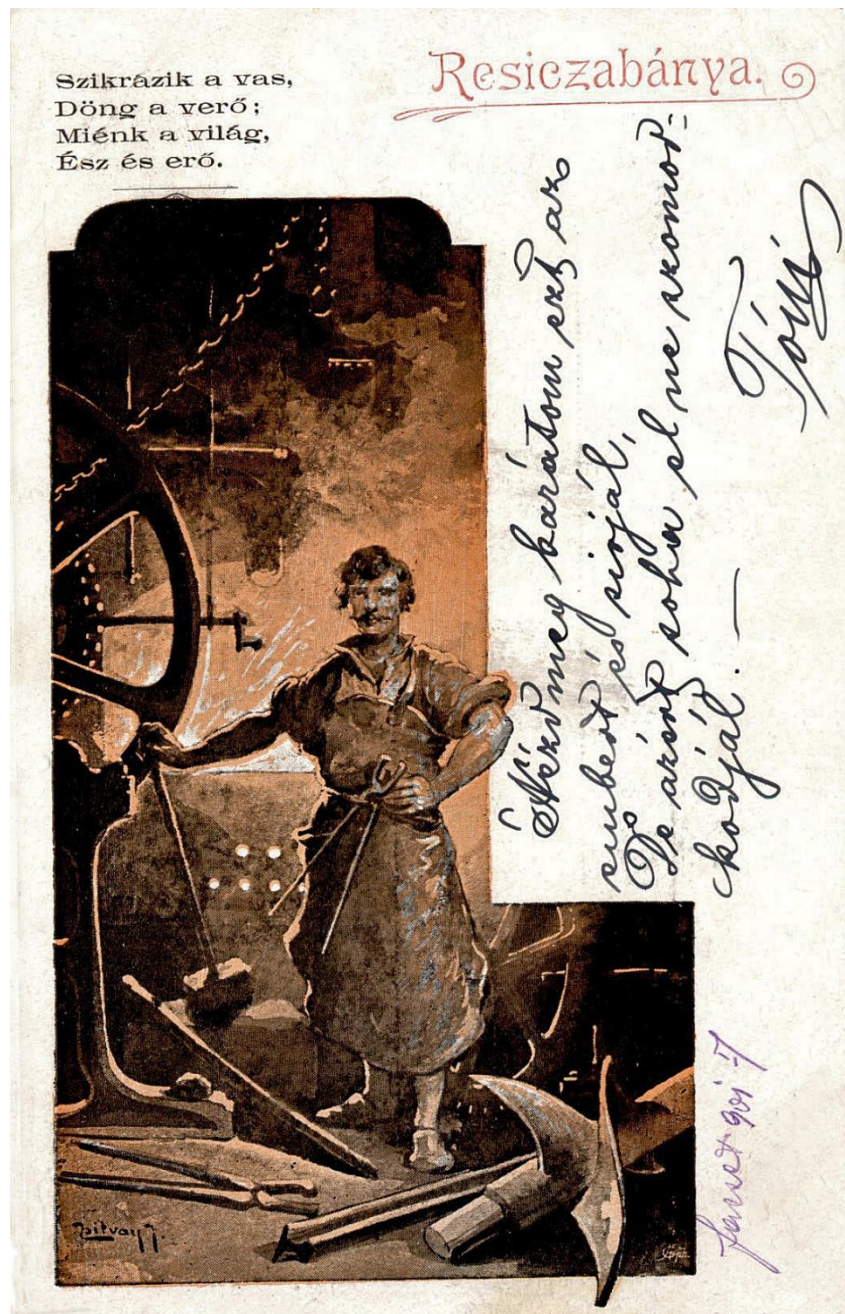
<sup>67</sup> Lüdtke, A. (1993).

<sup>68</sup> Matz, R. (1987): 74-81.

<sup>69</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 151.



Figure 8 Postcard with János Zsitvay's drawing; Kulhanek collection

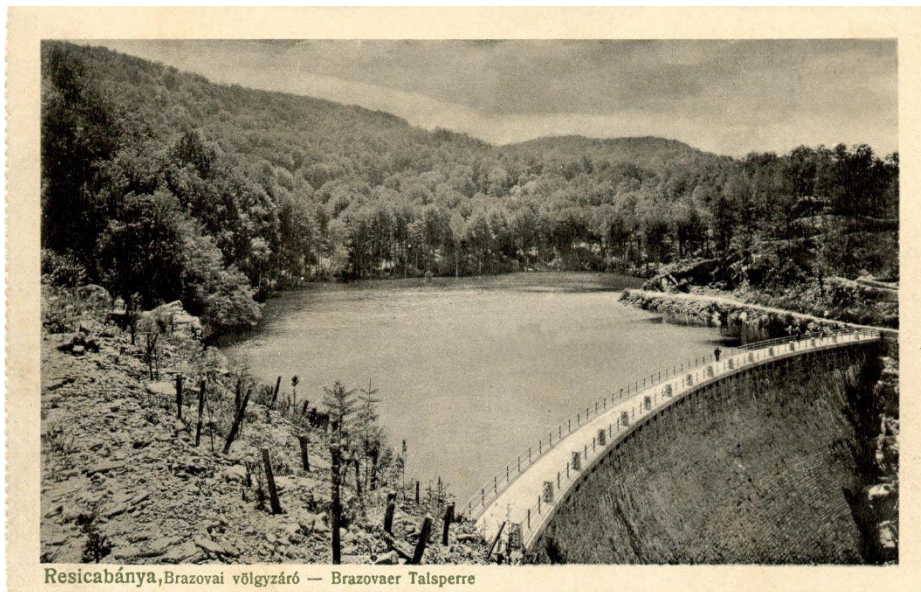


Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the building of railways and industrialisation changed the ways in which nature was perceived by humans. In accordance with the idea of progress, nothing seemed to be impossible when it came to restructuring nature and to its exploitation. The supply of raw materials for the StEG factories was based on the ores and the coal mined in the vicinity, for the processing of which a forest of 92,341 hectares was established on the company's own domain.<sup>70</sup> Apart from the large-scale floating and transportation of wood from the Krassó-Szörény ore mountains, the picture postcards also depicted the use of water power. Between 1901 and 1904 the Resicza water power and wood floating system was newly extended. To run

<sup>70</sup> Beschreibung (1896): 20.

the system, the water of the creeks and rivers coming from the Semenik Mountains was collected by help of ten canals of a total length of 78 kilometres and directed to Resicza via the Berzava/Bârzava, by way of aqueducts and tunnels. To secure a continuous water supply for the power station, the water was directed to a dam near the neighbouring place of Ferencfalva/Văliug, which had been built between 1907 and 1909. During and after the construction works the engineers made shots of each building at regular intervals, which were even published in journals, as illustrations of technological and hydrographic descriptions.<sup>71</sup> It seems that publishers made use of some of these photographs for picture postcards.<sup>72</sup>

*Figure 9 The water reservoir in Breazov; Kulhanek collection*



At the same time when the intensive exploitation of natural resources started, there happened an awakening of an increased perception of unspoiled nature. At least this is reported by the picture postcards on this topic, which were also published in great numbers. Several series about native species of trees around Resicza, such as the Turkey Oak and the Common Oak, the Common Beech, or about the waterfalls at Beusnica/Beuşnica Creek, the dripstone cave at Komarnik/Cormarnic as well as about the Doma Valleys were published. On June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1906, a visitor told his family at Csorvás in the County of Békés: “Dear Mum! We have happily arrived at Resicza. We even went by different kinds of railways, the express railway, the passenger railway, and the mountain railway. The trip went along routes which were so beautiful that I could hardly see enough; on our way we have seen four different waterfalls.”<sup>73</sup> Ferencfalva, which is about 30 kilometres away from Resicza, in the mountains on the edge of primeval forests, developed increasingly into a climatic health resort which was visited for recreation not only by inhabitants of Resicza but also by ever more people from all over the Banat.<sup>74</sup> Thus it was no wonder that enterprising publishers also published several motifs of Ferencfalva with its striking farm houses. Suggesting idyllic nature, at the same time these picture postcards were

<sup>71</sup> Dieter, J. (1912a); Dieter, J. (1912b).

<sup>72</sup> See e. g. the photograph of the reservoir near Kulhanek, H. (2013): 192.

<sup>73</sup> <https://helytortenet.com/74056-resicza-1906-latkep-panorama-kepeslap> (06.01.2024).

<sup>74</sup> Mihalik, S. (1900): 63.



meant for the support of early tourism which was increasingly connected to advantages for the national economy and public health.

*Figure 10 Tourists in the Doma Valley; Kulhanek collection*



However, neither the beauty of nature in the environment nor great technological achievements at the works could belie the damages to the environment. However, the picture postcards rarely depicted the negative consequences of the massive impairment of nature; even the constant billows of smoke above Resicza were retouched over time. The picture postcards were meant to present a beautiful and perfect world, they did not communicate any social- or technology-critical contents. They left this to the newspapers which, in words and pictures, occasionally reported environmental damage at Resicza. In January, 1907, the *Magyar Földművelő* (Hungarian Peasant) newspaper,<sup>75</sup> for example, reported that below the brickworks, which employed hundreds of workers, there was a fire for several days. The years-long dumping of large amounts of slag had started a subterranean burning process the engineers were unable to stop. One expected the burning process to last for two years. In 1912, *Népszava* (The Voice of the People) discussed the poisoning of the Berzava. According to the newspaper, as far as to Bogsán the water of this river, which was running through Resicza, was constantly covered by an oil layer which smelled like carbolic. As a consequence of the poisons directed into the river, not only the fish population of the Berzava was on the decline, but all along the river livestock and pets were dying. As the cause the author of the article identified the lack of a sewage plant which was long overdue in Resicza.<sup>76</sup> Although environmental damage could not become one of its topics, the picture postcard did not always stage the “beautiful order”, as it is proven by the picture postcard about the flood in Resicza, which was published in 1912.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Magyar Földművelő 13.01.1907., 15-16.

<sup>76</sup> Népszava 09.05.1912. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Kulhanek, H. (2013): 313.

*Figure 11 Flooded highway and railway track, 1912; Kulhanek collection*



*However, this picture postcard did not show the whole extent of the flood, with 63 collapsed houses, with cellars being flooded, and with effects such as the cancellation of the railway connections and the production at the works.<sup>78</sup>*

### **Greetings to Resicza**

After all, Resicza could not compete with Pittsburgh, although such a plausible remark by Godfrey L. Carden was appreciated by the people of Resicza. Nevertheless, city and works were hubs of the industrialisation of Hungary, and the mountainous environment was a destination which became ever more popular among tourists. These self-narrations were reflected by the picture postcards, most of which were indeed published in Resicza. The picture postcard with its simple language, focusing on a representative presentation of the depicted object, was capable of increasing the motifs and attributes which were chosen for self-representation and could take them to the world. This way, not only one's own way of seeing oneself was communicated to a larger audience. Rather, by the information feedback it was possible to confirm and increase one's self-presentation. This way, by the interplay of clients, photographers, publishers, senders and addressees, the image of Resicza was consolidated as a first order industrial hub on the south-eastern periphery of the Dual Monarchy.

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<sup>78</sup> Az Ujság 31.05.1912., 7.

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