



Vanished by the Danube: Peace, War, Revolution, and Flight to the West (Excelsior Editions)

Charles Farkas

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A story of loss and survival.

Germany's invasion of Hungary in 1944 marked the end of a culture that had dominated Central Europe from the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. In this poignant memoir, Charles Farkas offers a testament to this vanished way of life—its society, morality, personal integrity, wealth, traditions, and chivalry—as well as an eyewitness account of its destruction, begun at the hands of the Nazis and then completed under the heel of Soviet Communism. Farkas's recollections of growing up in Budapest, a city whose grandeur embraced—indeed spanned—the Danube River; his vivid descriptions of everyday life in Hungary before, during, and after World War II; and his ultimate flight to freedom in the United States remind us that behind the larger historical events of the past century are the stories of the individual men and women who endured and, ultimately, survived them.

“Charles Farkas has written his life story not as a Hungarian, but as a Hungarian American, which is to say that his memoir *Vanished by the Danube* is a kind of farewell to all that he and his family lost, but he is neither bitter nor mournful ... This is the story of a lost world, but this is also a story about survival.” — from the Introduction by Margaret McMullan

“This memoir is like a photo album of images from Farkas' life arrayed alongside all the contextual details of the four decades of Hungarian history the author covers ... what makes his account interesting is the incredible detail with which he relates events, down to the food served, the songs played, and the jokes told at parties.” — *Foreign Affairs*

“Written with an impeccable memory for detail, and with excellent and interesting vignettes and anecdotes, along with a conscious sensitivity to the interests of the reader, *Vanished by the Danube* is a thoughtful, brilliantly written tribute. Farkas' love for his family and his vanished homeland is always evident but never veers into sentimentality. He carefully paints 'what was' so the contrast with 'what became' is even more garish and traumatic. Readers cannot help but be moved by his love and his loss.” — *San Francisco Book Review*

“[Farkas's] tales of adventure and hardship are set against the looming shadow of war in precise, careful prose ... [his] memoir is a dear and thorough effort to give life again to those turbulent years, to animate his old ghosts. In a way, it is his return home.” — *Los Angeles Review of Books*

“In his evocative new memoir, *Vanished by the Danube*, Charles Farkas walks us gracefully through the Hungary of his youth. Through stories that extract beauty from everyday events, Farkas pays tribute to the simple elegance of his native country in the years preceding World War II, while never sparing us the truth about the horrors to come. In his story we are reminded that resourcefulness and optimism can prevail even in the face of great struggle.” — President Bill Clinton

“This is an important addition to the history of one of the most violent chapters of the twentieth century, told

by an eyewitness. Charles Farkas brings back those nightmare years at a crucial moment for Europe. We ignore their lessons at our peril.” — Kati Marton, author of *Paris: A Love Story*

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