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## **New Street Names in Budapest**

Street names in Hungary tend to have been changed from time to time. Major historical events and political transformations were as a rule followed by street name changes. (Here should be noted that the notion 'street name' includes the name of all kinds of public domain, such as of avenues, boulevards, squares, embankments etc.) Among these changes the most conspicuous ones were made in the middle and at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now let us see the preliminaries.

With regard to the street names of the present Budapest seven periods can be distinguished in historical context.

1. The first and the oldest era was one prior to the Turkish conquest (before 1526). At that time street names were given spontaneously, e.g. *Saint George Square* after Saint George Church, either ethnic origin or profession of their inhabitants (*Old Jewish Street, Goldsmith Street* etc.).

2. During Turkish conquest which lasted almost 150 years natural names were typical, too. The specific feature of this period was the appearance of Turkish street names, which had disappeared with the expulsion of Turks.

3. The third and a relatively long period lasted from the recapture of Buda Castle (1686) until 1872, the year when Budapest emerged through the unification of three independent towns, Pest, Buda and Óbuda (Old Buda).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the designation of spontaneous and natural street names were dominated in the above three towns. As the official language in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was German and the majority of citizens of Pest, Buda and Óbuda were German speakers, the streets also bore German names. Nevertheless, each street name had its Hungarian equivalent. During this period it was widespread that a street bore the name of a shop, a tavern, a workshop shown on its sign-board (e.g. *Drei Trommel Gasse = Three Drums Street, Schwärze Bären Gasse = Black Bear Street*). That was the period when the streets could be named for the owner of a shop or tavern (e.g. *Unger Gasse* was named after a smith called *Unger*, who had a workshop in that street).

4. At the very beginning of the fourth period (1873-1918) the authorities tried to settle the matter of street names in Budapest. The number of streets with the same name had been reduced, German names were translated into Hungarian ones, and numerals were cancelled from the street names. This procedure went together with artificial renaming of many streets. Previously several streets were called *Church Street* or *Main Street*. They were renamed, and many of them were designated for persons. This time e. g. *Three Drums Street* became *Drum Street* and *Two Hearts Street* was renamed *Heart Street*.

5. It was the fifth period (1919-1944), when street names of political origin appeared and spread. After First World War many streets were renamed and got personal names after historical personalities, kings, princes or contemporary political leaders etc. Present *Bartók Béla Avenue* was named *Horthy Miklós Avenue* (after Governor of Hungary) in 1920 (earlier called Fehérvári Avenue). *Oktagon* became *Mussolini Square* in 1936, *Körönd* (now Kodály Körönd /Circus/) was named after *Hitler* in 1938. Due to the serious territorial loss suffered by Hungary from Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920 was 'compensated' mentally also by renaming public places after historical Hungarian landscapes and settlements beyond the new state borders (e.g. *Pozsony*, *Zsolna*, *Arad*, *Beregszász*, *Nagyszalonta*, *Csík*). Most of these designations survive up to the present day.

6. With the advent of the sixth period after Second World War (1945-1989) a large rechristening campaign started. Not only the name of Horthy, Mussolini, Hitler and other fascist and anticommunist leaders or war criminals disappeared from the map of Budapest but all kinds of street names that did not fit in the new (Soviet) ideology did so. Former *Kings' Avenue* (III<sup>th</sup> district) was renamed *Avenue of the Red Army* in 1945, *Stefania Avenue* (Stephanie, the wife of Rudolf von Hapsburg, crown prince of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) became *Vorosilov Avenue* in 1946 (Voroshilov, marshal of Red Army). In the same year *Prohászka Ottokár Street* (O. Prohászka, Roman Catholic bishop) became *Engels Street*. *Mária Valéria Street* (she was a Hapsburg princess) first was renamed *Móricz Zsigmond Street* in 1945, then *Apáczai Csere János Street* in 1951 (J. Apáczai Csere, author of the first Hungarian encyclopedia). The *Templom* (Church) *Street* in Óbuda became Óbuda Street and *Piarista Street* was renamed *Pesti Barnabás Street* in 1953 (B. Pesti, antifascist martyr). The new street names were not related to labour movement directly in each case, but they had to represent the values of political left (or at least not to contradict them). This period

lasting till the change of regime in 1989 – mainly in the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s – showed a steady pressure of communist ideologists for changing the names of public places.

Renaming procedures were destined to advocate the new ideology everywhere, still in the streets. For example *Lehel Square* was renamed *Élmunkás* (Ace worker) *Square* for this reason. In this era there were eight *Avenues of Red Army* throughout the 22 districts of Budapest. Though this sixth period lasted only for four and half decades, a great number of new street plates appeared all over the capital.

7. The seventh period started in 1989, in parallel with the processes involved by the change of regime. An official campaign started to cancel the street names given by the previous political regime and to restore the historical ones. This campaign was widely supported by the citizens of Budapest. A short introduction to the recent practice of the designation of street names in Budapest is to be presented below.

A decree referring to the necessity of changing certain street names in Budapest was issued in 1989. It regulated the practice and range of changes. There was a double objective: to preserve traditional names and to choose prominent persons who really deserved naming a street after him/her within the territory of the Hungarian capital. These two criteria must have had to be balanced.

Of course, the first task was the elimination of the ‘ideologically harmful’ names, but occasionally district councils have replaced ‘ideologically neutral’ street names by those of great importance in the history of Budapest.

City map of Budapest of the latest edition contains 7820 street names. Approximately 1250 of them have been designated since 1989. 425 names are not really new, but previous ones restored. Considering their previous names and the reason and mode of changes, street names can be classified into the following groups.

The previous names as a rule referred to

- a name after a well-known person of the international or Hungarian labour movement (*Marx, Engels, Lenin, the Rosenberg couple, Dimitrov, Thälmann, Joliot-Curie, or Béla Kun, László Rajk, Tibor Szamuely, László Rudas, István Dobi, Árpád Szakasits, Ferenc Münnich, Endre Ságvári*),

- a name of leftist person known within a limited social circle only (*Béla Kruzslák, Albert Szepessy, Imre Knopp, Ede Chlepko, Ferenc Kis, Imre Kémery Nagy, Eta Geisler*),
- an event, phenomenon, occasion etc. In a close context with communist ideology (*7th November, 4th April, Red Army, Peoples' Army, Red Star, Ace Worker*)
- politically neutral persons or places (*Lajos Hatvany, Szófia, judge Farkas, Loránd Eötvös, Károly Kisfaludy*)
- names deprived of their former attribute "Saint" (*Erzsébet, Gellért*).

The motivation for name change practically can be divided into four categories:

- previous names belonging to the first three groups of were changed for political or ideological reasons (*Marx Square > Nyugati Square, Münnich Ferenc Street > Nádor Street* etc.)
- previous 'neutral' names were replaced by traditional street names for historical reasons, e. g. *Hatvany Lajos Street* have regained traditional *Kard* (Sword) name.
- some neutral street names found in several districts were also changed.
- in certain cases there might emerge combined reasons for an alternative designation. Notably, a street name of political origin was replaced by the traditional name and at the same time it served to decrease the number of the identical street names. (E. g. *Sallai Imre Street > Tátra Street*)

Name changes were carried out according to the above principles using two methods.

1. Restitution of the traditional name (christening back). It was only possible in the case, when the street had a relatively long history. Some streets or squares got back not their previous name, but an even earlier one.
2. Designation of a brand new name (rechristening). This option might emerge in two cases, when a) the previous name was not acceptable; b) the street was of recent origin, so its name of political character was the original one.

Besides christening back and rechristening streets this period there were born brand new street names, too. As a consequence of revitalisation and reconstruction in old districts and of urban sprawl when new housing estates were built, with new streets and other common places, which had to be given names. Usually these streets are found in groups, practically they are designated within so called street name clusters. These clusters belong to a group of common logical association. For example in 1999 streets were named for different mushrooms (*Fülőke, Laska, Tinóru, Susulyka, Pöfeteg Street*) in the newly built-up area of the XI<sup>th</sup> district. (The reason was that these species of mushrooms can be found and picked up in the neighbouring forest.)

It is worth mentioning that a considerable part of street names given after 1945 survived into the 21<sup>th</sup> century, because there was no reason to rename them. For example in 1953 the previous *Kaplony Street* was renamed after *Henszlmann Imre*, who was a famous art historian, protector of historic buildings. In 1949 the place situated in front of the former *Péter Pázmány* (now *Loránd Eötvös*) *University* in the downtown of Budapest (V<sup>th</sup> district) had got a new name that still exists (*University Square*). In 2002 most of the faculties of this university moved from Pest to Buda side (XI<sup>th</sup> district) and a walkway along the new buildings of the University was named after cardinal *Péter Pázmány*. Also street names keep on preserving the memory of progressive left-wing activists who did not serve the communist regime but have become martyrs of the struggle against fascism, for example: *Stollár Béla Street, Fürst Sándor Street, Sallai Imre Street*. Earlier there were more streets named after *Fürst* and *Sallai*, but a lot of them have been rechristened.

After 1989 the procedure of street renaming in Budapest reflects mainly political motivations. If you wish to get detailed information about the main results of this process, have a look at maps and table attached. They show the street names of different years (1988 and 1992) in the inner part of Pest.

It can be seen clearly how the name of most important streets and squares has changed. Lot of them have got back the close previous name or the name used in 1945. These are: *Hollán Ernő, Tátra, Pannónia, Balaton, Falk Miksa, Nádor, Zoltán, Sas, Hold, Podmaniczky, Király, Lónyay Street; Andrássy Avenue, Martyrs' Square, Erzsébet Square, Main Customs Square; Erzsébet, Teréz* and *Customs Boulevard* and *Oktogon*.

*Lehel Square* received its current name firstly in 1945. Its name used to be *Ferdinand Square* (after a Hapsburg king). Today's *Károly Boulevard* was renamed *Somogyi Béla Avenue* in 1945. Previously its name was *King Károly Avenue*, and this place had born the name *Károly Boulevard* from 1919 to 1926 and from 1874 to 1916: it was renamed in every

new political regime. Finally this central thoroughfare regained its initial name in 1991. *Hercegprímás Street* and *Nyugati Square* have got completely new name. *Nyugati Square* was named after *Western (Nyugati) Railway Station*, the most important building of this square, reviving the traditions of giving natural names. In 1991 what now is *Hercegprímás Street* bore the traditional name of the public place (*Nagykorona Street*) for a few months, but the closeness of Saint Stephens' Cathedral prompted the authorities to change this decision, and in same year the street became designated to commemorate cardinal *Mindszenty*, who used to be the Roman Catholic primate of Hungary. So there is no *Nagykorona Street* in Budapest any more, but earlier there were three streets was called *Nagy Korona*. This street name is missing from the line of traditional names in Budapest. It is still a question, whether this new name will be able to preserve the memory of cardinal *Mindszenty*.

Surveying the names of streets mentioned, it is interesting to see that a majority of them has had many different names since late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from the adoption of Hungarian street names from their origin German ones ('Magyarization') or cancelling their numerals, we can understand that the history, especially the current policy has always played an important role in changing of street names in Budapest. *Andrássy Avenue* is a good example for it. It was said 'played', and the last change will hopefully be the final one. It is also hoped that the new practice of giving street names will be independent from the actual politics in the future, and foreign tourists returning to the Hungarian capital from time to time will not have to buy new citymaps on each occasion to find their way among streets, avenues and squares of Budapest.

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*Budapest térképe [Map of Budapest]* Scale: 1 : 20 000. Budapest. Cartographia. 1988.

*Budapest térképe [Map of Budapest]* Scale: 1 : 20 000. Budapest. Cartographia. 1992.

## Changes in street names of Budapest by political reason after 1989

Recent street name	District	Year of change	Previous name	Year of change	Earlier names with the years of change
1. Hollán Ernő u. <sup>1</sup>	XIII.	1992	Fürst Sándor u.	1945	Hollán u. 1900
2. Tátra u.	XIII.	1992	Sallai Imre u.	1945	Tátra u. 1908
3. Pannónia u.	XIII.	1990	Rajk László u.	1969	Pannónia u. 1860s
4. Lehel tér <sup>2</sup>	XIII.	1990	Élmunkás [ <i>Ace Worker</i> ] tér	1951	Lehel tér 1945, Ferdinánd tér 1884
5. Balaton u.	V.	1991	Pálffy György u.	1969	Balaton u. 1949, Moszkva u. 1948, Balaton u. 1945, Rothermere u. 1936, Balaton u. 1872
6. Falk Miksa u.	V.	1991	Néphadsereg [ <i>People's Army</i> ] u.	1953	Falk Miksa u. 1945, Juhász Andor u. 1943, Falk Miksa u. 1910
7. Vértanúk [ <i>Martyrs'</i> ] tere	V.	1990	Ságvári tér	1945	Vértanúk tere 1936
8. Zoltán u.	V.	1991	Beloianisz u.	1952	Zoltán u. 1875, Attila Gasse 1858, Raben Gasse 1838
9. Nádor [ <i>Palatine</i> ] u.	V.	1990	Münnich Ferenc u.	1968	Nádor u. 1874
10. Sas [ <i>Eagle</i> ] u.	V.	1990	Guszjev u.	1951	Sas u. 1874, Két Sas u. 1850, Zwei Adler Gasse 1822
11. Hercegprímás [ <i>Archbishop</i> ] u.	V.	1992	Alpári Gyula u.	1952	Nagykorona [ <i>Big Crown</i> ] u. 1991, Wekerle Sándor u. 1925, Nagy Korona u. 1874, Drei Kronen Gasse 1804
12. Hold [ <i>Moon</i> ] u.	V.	1991	Rosenberg házaspár [ <i>couple</i> ] u.	1953	Hold u. 1947, Klebersberg Kuno u. 1938, Hold u. 1874, Mond Gasse 1850, Mondschein Gasse 1830
13. Erzsébet tér	V.	1990	Engels tér	1953	Sztálin tér 1946, Erzsébet tér/ Elisabeth Platz 1857
14. Károly körút <sup>3</sup>	V, VII.	1991	Tanács [ <i>Soviet</i> ] körút	1953	Somogyi Béla út. 1945, Károly király [ <i>king</i> ] út 1926, Károly kör-út 1919, Nép [ <i>The people</i> ] körút 1919, IV. Károly király körút 1916, Károly körút 1874
15. Nyugati [ <i>Western</i> ] tér	V., VI.	1992	Marx tér	1945	Berlini tér 1914
16. Podmaniczky u.	VI.	1990	Rudas László u.	1969	Podmaniczky u. 1874, Lämmer Gasse 1850, Drei Lämmer Gasse 1820
17. Teréz körút	VI.	1990	Lenin körút	1950	Teréz körút 1882
18. Andrássy út <sup>4</sup>	VI.	1990	Népköztársaság [ <i>People's Republic</i> ] útja	1957	Magyar Ifjúság [ <i>Hungarian Youths'</i> ] útja 1956, Sztálin út 1950, Andrássy út 1886, Sugár út/ Radial Gasse 1883
19. Oktogon	VI.	1990	November 7. tér	1950	Oktogon 1945, Mussolini tér 1936, Oktogon 1920
20. Erzsébet körút	VII.	1990	Lenin körút	1950	Erzsébet körút 1875
21. Király [ <i>King</i> ] u.	VI., VII.	1990	Majakovszkij u.	1950	Király u. 1874, König Gasse 1836, Drei König Gasse 1820, Englischer König Gasse 1810
22. Lónyay u.	IX.	1990	Szamuely u.	1953	Lónyay u. 1885, Nyúl [ <i>Hare</i> ] u. 1874, Zwei Haasen Gasse 1855, Belgrader Gasse 1811
23. Vámház [ <i>Customs house</i> ] körút	IX.	1990	Tolbuhin körút	1946	Vámház körút 1945, Horthy Ist-ván út 1942, Vámház út 1919, Ferdinánd bolgár cár útja 1915, Vámház út 1874, Fleischer Gasse 1787
24. Fővám tér	V., IX.	1990	Dimitrov tér	1949	Fővám tér 1873

<sup>1</sup>u.= utca 'street' <sup>2</sup>tér, tere 'square' <sup>3</sup>körút 'boulevard' <sup>4</sup>út, útja 'avenue'