
BIOGRAPHY

Dezső Révai (Alias TURAI) (1903 - 1996)



Dezső Révai (alias Turai) was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1903 the youngest of four children in a secular Jewish family. His mother was a teacher and his father was sales representative within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on behalf of Haas & Czejek porcelain.

By the age of 16 he was already a keen amateur photographer and had set up his own photo laboratory in the bathroom of the family home. He continued his formal education at business school while offering his fellow students tuition in order to support his family. Around the same time he developed an interest in social activism and joined the Communist Party in 1926. He was involved in the preparation of photo montages that were used in the propaganda of the time. He was imprisoned twice in 1930 and 1934 for these activities. After he was released from prison for the second time, he emigrated to Paris and began work as a photo reporter. Before his emigration he studied photography under the tutelage of Mariann Reismann.

In Paris he set up a photo laboratory on Rue Bellier Dedouvre. With his friends they built the necessary photo development equipment and cameras. The photo laboratory soon became popular. During his time in Paris Dezső Révai met Robert Capa and was an acquaintance that would continue during the Spanish Civil War. In Paris he also became acquainted with a wide circle of artists - including the likes of Pierre Marton, Brassai and Picasso - and left wing activists.

In 1936 Dezső Révai joined the Hungarian Unit of the International Brigades fighting in the Spanish Civil War. He worked in the International Brigades as a photo reporter and his photographs from this period were signed as 'Foto Turai'. His most significant works date from this period perhaps the most famous of which is the 'Metro Madrid' series of photographs taken in 1937 depicting the people of Madrid as they take shelter from the Nationalist air raids in the metro stations. This series of photographs, along with other photographs taken by photo reporters working in Spain at the time, was submitted for competition and awarded first prize.

Another significant series of photographs, "Los Ninos Espagnoles y los Brigades Internationales" taken by 'Foto Turai' during the Spanish Civil War captured life in Benicasim where the Republicans set up an education programme for children displaced or orphaned by the war. Here Dezső Révai became friends with Dr. Françoise E. Brauner and her husband, Dr. Alfred Brauner who were pioneering research and therapy for children suffering from war induced trauma. Together they published a book of children's drawings made during the war that recounted the children's experiences.

In 1937 Dezső Révai collaborated in the preparation of a photo album "Un Año de las Brigades Internacionales" celebrating the one year anniversary of the International Brigades.

In 1939 the Spanish Republic collapsed and along with many of his compatriots Dezső Révai was placed in an internment camp in Gurs, southern France. With some of his fellow inmates he organised a secret photo laboratory where they prepared photographs, montages, booklets and other documents. Following two years of imprisonment he volunteered for work through the internment camp administration and was relocated to Germany where he escaped back to France and joined the Resistance between 1942-44.

After the end of World War II he returned to Hungary from France and was appointed as head of the photography department at Mafirt known today as MTI. Later he was appointed director of the Hungarian Film Production Company. Many famous Hungarian films were produced during his time as director, including: 'Somewhere in Europe' (Valahol

Európában), 'A Foot of Land' (Talpalatnyi föld), 'Ludas Matyi', 'Unusual Marriage' (Különös házasság), 'The Resurrected Sea' (Feltámadott a Tenger). From 1954 he worked as deputy head of the Hungarian TV and Radio and was responsible for the launch of the first Hungarian TV station.

On his retirement in 1962 he continued to work as a photographer well into his eighties producing many classic images used on postcards across Hungary.

In 1969 Dezső Révai received EFIAP distinction from the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP) as a recognition for his life's work.

He died in Budapest, Hungary in 1996. He considered his participation in the Spanish Civil War and in the Antifascist Resistance the most important activities in his life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT US

Web: www.phototurai.com | E-mail: info@phototurai.com | Tel: +3670 363 3989