

Preface:

The United States and Hungary, Hungary and the United States

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The United States and Hungary, Hungary and the United States, Americans and Hungarians, Hungarians and Americans: these might all be appropriate titles for this collection of essays. We began preparations for the publication of such a volume three years ago. In time it became evident that we had material at hand to fill more than one volume. It also became clear that some of that material would not be ready to go to print till the second half of 2004. Accordingly, we decided to split the project into two and publish the papers, review articles, etc. that had come in by the end of 2003, in this volume and leave the rest for a future one.

The appearance of a scholarly compendium dedicated to the subject of the interaction of the United States and Hungary, of Americans and Hungarians, of the government of the U.S. and Hungarians in America and in Hungary, is both timely and appropriate. Only recently, the U.S. and Hungary, officially enemies throughout much of the twentieth century, had become allies when Hungary became a member of the NATO alliance. Further, despite the appearance in recent years of two major works on the history of the Hungarian community of the United States, the literature on our wider subject remains woefully limited. It is this lacuna that we hope to help fill with our present volume, and the one that will follow soon.

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From the time of the creation of the American Republic to our days multiple levels and forms of interrelationship existed between the U.S. and Hungary. At first the Republic acted as a model of a state and society that was admired by many Hungarian intellectuals and even some

Hungarian statesmen. Some of these men and women strove to introduce reforms in Hungary that imitated the American model.¹ Before 1867 Hungary was a kingdom within the Habsburg Empire with a certain degree of autonomy the extent of which kept changing depending on prevailing political tendencies in Vienna. In these circumstances the implementation of reforms patterned on the American experience was difficult at best, as the Habsburg Court often thwarted such reforms. Of course, sometimes these or other reforms were opposed by elements of Hungary's own ruling classes. On the whole, however, ideas emanating from America served as impetus to reform in Hungary throughout the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries.

Such trends were reinforced starting with the second quarter of the nineteenth century when contacts between Americans and Hungarians increased, mainly as a result of visits by Hungarians to North America.² Some of the visitors came for a short period, others were in effect sojourners as they spent considerable time in the Republic. Still others settled there on a long-term or even permanent basis. After the unsuccessful Hungarian War of Independence against the Habsburgs in 1848-49, the trickle of Hungarian visitors to, and sojourners in the United States, became a torrent. The most famous of the new visitors was Louis Kossuth, the leading statesman of Hungary throughout the tumultuous years of 1848 and 1849.³ While he was "only" a visitor, many of his followers stayed longer in the American Republic and some even tried to establish colonies of their own,⁴ always with the idea that they would return to Hungary if changes in political and strategic circumstances warranted. Indeed, after Hungary gained full autonomy in 1867 within the reorganized Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, many of these "forty-eighters" abandoned their plans for settlement in the United States and returned to their homeland.

During the last quarter of the century, the phenomenon of gentlemen adventurers, ex-soldiers, and middle-class entrepreneurs spending more or less time in the United States was replaced by that of Hungarian agricultural workers, poor peasants and other elements of Hungary's lower classes coming to the New World — not so much to settle but to spend enough time there to save some money and to return to the mother country. By the turn of the century this "new immigration" had turned into a torrent and was responsible for the growth of colonies of Hungarian

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newcomers in America's industrial centres. Although the initial plans of probably the vast majority of these new arrivals were for a temporary stay, a great many of them did in the end settle in the United States as political and other developments — above all the turmoil brought to Hungary by World War I and its turbulent aftermath — time and again postponed, and in many cases prevented, their return to the country of their birth.⁵

Still another consequence of the war was the establishment of direct diplomatic relations between Hungary and the United States. Despite this, Budapest and Washington had little to do with each other during the interwar years. Isolationism in foreign affairs was the order of day in the United States while the Hungarian government was more interested in developing better and more intense relations with certain European powers than in cultivating friendship with the U.S.. During World War II, the United States and Hungary became enemies. Unfortunately for many Hungarian Americans, poor relations between their adopted land and native country continued during the decades of the Cold War. It was not till the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the late 1980s and early 1990s that better relations between Washington and Budapest became possible — and interstate hostility could be replaced by friendship and even a formal alliance.

As Professor Tibor Frank explains in his study in this volume, the mass influx of Hungarians into the United States was interrupted by World War I. It never resumed in the 1920s because Congress imposed the so-called Quota Laws that greatly restricted immigration to America of newcomers from Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, by that time such large numbers of Magyars had put down roots in the United States that Hungarian immigrant life began to flourish in many of the country's large cities, above all in Cleveland, Chicago and New York.⁶ Though the new immigration regulations severely limited the number of Hungarian citizens who could enter the country, during the late-1930s and even during the early years of the Second World War — when Hungary was still a neutral power — newcomers from Hungary kept arriving, driven mainly by the fear of expanding Nazi influence in Central and East Central Europe. The evolution of this immigration is told in Professor Frank's study in Part 1 of our volume, while the story of one refugee family is discussed in the paper of Dr. Judith Szapor. Many of the intellectuals mentioned in the

other papers in this volume were also members of this small wave of immigration, while others came after the Second World War and the political and economic upheavals that followed it.

The 1930s and 1940s were difficult times for America's Hungarian communities, even beyond the fact that the restriction of immigration from Hungary put an end to such phenomena as family reunification. In the long term, of course, the ban on large-scale immigration from Hungary threatened most Hungarian-American communities with cultural extinction. The 1930s were also times of acute economic difficulties for the vast majority of Hungarian-American families. The hard times no doubt increased inter-generational conflicts within America's Magyar communities that, in turn, helped to accelerate the disintegration of their organizations and, in general, their assimilation into the "melting pot" of American society.

The Great Depression was followed by the war which may have solved some of the economic problems of Hungarian Americans, but it caused others for them. These included the interruption of contacts with friends and relatives in the old country. The war also meant that, beginning in 1942, Hungarian immigrants to the Republic became "enemy aliens" — some officially, others only in the eyes of the American public. Fortunately for them, their enemy alien status was a fairly benign one, unlike what it became for German Americans and, especially, the Japanese. Still, Hungarians in the U.S. — and, particularly, their organizations — were watched by the authorities in wartime Washington, as I make evident in my documentary article in Part 2 of this volume. In the following part of this collection of studies, Dr. András Csillag reviews Béla Várdy's new book on Hungarian-American history, while in the last part, three scholars discuss a handful of outstanding Hungarian Americans, two of whom had passed away only recently.

In conclusion let me say that, undoubtedly, this volume is a substantial contribution to the subject of the inter-relationship of the United States and Hungary, and of Americans and Hungarians. The two lead articles are extensively researched in scattered, in some cases obscure, public archives and private collections. Furthermore, the volume's contributors include authors with massive publication records and fine national and international reputations. For some of them this is the first time that they are published in our journal. The document excerpted and partly

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reproduced in my article: "Keeping an Eye on Hungarians in Wartime America" contains a great deal of hitherto unknown and /or little-known historical information. To my knowledge, this document has never been reproduced in print elsewhere. The article by Dr. Szapor includes, in its appendix, a letter by Albert Einstein, also reproduced in print here for the first time. We believe, moreover, that our follow-up volume of studies, *The United States and Hungary Part II*, will be a similarly valuable contribution to its subject. In the meantime, work on a regular issue of our journal, as well as two more special volumes, continues.

This Preface offers an opportunity for me to report on the trials and tribulations of our journal during the past few years. We have rarely included such commentary in our publication in the past, but because significant events had happened in recent years while others are about to happen soon, we consider it important to inform our readers about them.

The journal continues to exist despite the financial constraints that it has been facing for many years now. Our ability to persist is due in part to the help we receive from our two co-publishers, the National Library of Hungary and the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada. The former handles — more precisely, contracts out — the printing of our journal, and absorbs much of the postal costs involved in its distribution. The latter collects subscriptions for us from its members and recently has helped me with replacing some of my outdated computer equipment. Mrs. Éva Tomory has continued her invaluable work, always on a volunteer basis, of handling most matters connected with subscriptions. In addition to this help, our journal has been receiving, in some cases on an annual basis, financial contributions — ranging from one hundred to several hundred dollars — from a handful of faithful friends. The Széchenyi Society of Calgary has also helped with our finances by placing bulk orders for some of our special volumes, for the purpose of distributing these to its members.

One misfortune the journal faces is the discontinuation by the University of Toronto of the Chair of Hungarian Studies at that institution at the end of the 2004 academic year. Although a handful of courses, as yet undetermined in their exact nature, will continue to be offered by the university, there will not be an office there that could serve as an institu-

tional address for the journal. The change will mean that Professor George Bisztray will no longer serve as our journal's co-editor, but will continue to make his expertise available to us as an editorial adviser. And, the journal's editorial address will become my office address, as indicated on the inside cover of this volume. We can only hope that the scholars who will be involved in teaching courses for the Hungarian program that will survive at the University of Toronto will do whatever they can to support the work of our journal.

NOTES

¹ Géza Zavodszky, *American Effects on Hungarian Imagination and Political Thought* (Boulder, Colorado, and Highland Lakes, N.J.: Social Science Monographs and Atlantic Research and Publications; distributed by Columbia University Press, 1995), transl. Amy Modly.

² Perhaps the best-known of these visitors was Sándor Bölöni Farkas. See his *Journey in North America, 1831* (Santa Barbara, CA and Oxford: ABC-Clio, 1978), trans. and ed. Arpad Kadarkay; also, another edition of this work: *Journey in North America* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1977), trans. and ed. Theodore and Helen Benedek Schoenman.

³ On Kossuth see above all István Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848-1849* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979; paperback edition: London: Phoenix Press, 2001). On his visit to the U.S. see Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848-1852* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1977), as well as Steven Béla Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban: Az észak-amerikai magyarság rendhagyó története* [Hungarians in the New World: the irregular history of the Hungarians of North America] (Budapest: A Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000), 44-55.

⁴ Várdy, pp. 56-81; also, Béla Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi on Establishing a Colony of Hungarian 48-ers in America," *Hungarian Studies Review* 6, 1 (Spring 1979): 21-46.

⁵ See Julianna Puskás's works, especially: *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban, 1880-1940* [Emigrant Hungarians in the United States, 1880-1940] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1982).

⁶ The history of the Hungarian colonies of Chicago can be found in Zoltán Fejős, *A chikagói magyarok két nemzedéke, 1890-1940: Az etnikai örökség megőrzése és változása* [Two generations of the Hungarians of Chicago, 1890-1940: The preservation and transformation of the ethnic heritage] (Budapest: Közép-Európa Intézet, 1993). For those of Cleveland, see Susan M. Papp, *Hungarian Americans and their Communities of Cleveland* (Cleveland: Cleveland Ethnic Heritage Studies, Cleveland State University, 1981).