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Special Issue:

# **Hungarians in North America 1840-2010**

**Edited and introduced by  
Nándor Dreisziger**

**Articles, review articles by**

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Forthcoming in our next issue (vol. 40, no. 2, 2013):

## **Gender and Nation in Post-1919 Hungary**

Edited by Agatha Schwartz and Judith Sapor

Essays by:

David Frey on Katalin Karády  
Dorottya Rédai on homophobia and nationalism  
Róbert Kerepeszki on the Turul association in interwar Hungary  
Eszter Tóth on abortion policies in the Kádár-era  
Tímea Jablonczay on Ilona Zrínyi in literature

and others

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## Preface

**Over the decades** our journal has presented several special volumes devoted partly or exclusively to Hungarian-American contacts and/or Hungarians in North America. This little volume is still another special issue in this series. It offers three articles and two review articles dealing with the subject of Hungarians in the United States — as well as a documentary article dealing with Hungarians in Canada.

While the mass migration of Hungarians to North America did not start until the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, individuals or small groups from Hungary have been coming to this continent, mainly as visitors or sojourners, ever since North America's colonial days. One of these early visitors was Ágoston Haraszthy who, after a visit to the United States in the early 1840s, returned to settle there, in particular in the newly developing region of the West Coast. He is perhaps the most famous of the early Hungarian settlers of California. His achievements — real and invented — are the subject of the first paper in our collection of essays.

The most famous Hungarian who visited the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Lajos Kossuth the leader of the Hungarian War of Independence against the House of Habsburg in 1848-1849. Although he was received with great enthusiasm in the end he left America as a disappointed man who achieved none of his expectations. He had no ambition to settle in any part of North America but a few members of his extended family did. Their lives and adventures are the subject of the second paper in our special volume.

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century began the immigration of large masses of ordinary citizens from Hungary to North America, at first mainly to the United States. The pre-1914 wave of these immigrants was by the largest but another wave came in the aftermath of the Second World War and still another arrived after the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary. One of the largest communities of Hungarian immigrants to emerge as a result of these migrations was that of Cleveland, Ohio. In that city the Hungarian cultural presence continues to our days. Its survival is the subject of the third of our studies presented in our special issue.

Canada, unlike the United States, experienced four streams of Hungarian immigrations. In the USA these streams were the pre-1914 one, and the two post-1945 ones. Canada had a large influx of Hungarians in the second

half of the 1920s as well, when the so-called “Quota Laws” kept Hungarians from settling in the US. The newcomers of the 1920s at first settled in the Canadian West, but with the beginning of the Great Depression they began migrating to parts of Canada that were not hit as hard — or not hit as early — by the economic recession. One of these places was the city of Montreal where the full force of economic hard times was felt a little later than it was experienced in the Canadian West. In the fourth paper of our volume a document is presented that offers new insights into the lives of these immigrant trans-migrants in particular in Montreal of the early 1930s.

These papers are followed by two review articles. One of these deals with a book that documents Hungarian participants of the American Civil War and the other reviews a monograph that describes the “American career” of a radical leftist immigrant from Hungary.

While our present volume spans sixteen decades and deals with various subjects it still has an over-arching theme: the Hungarian presence in North America. Hopefully in the fifth decade of the life of our journal we will be able to re-visit this theme with still other special issues or volumes dealing with Hungarians on this continent or contacts between the US and/or Canada on the one hand and Hungary on the other.

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#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

Our most recent special issue dealing with Hungarians in North America is the 2011 volume of our journal. It is entitled *Hungary and North America: Links and Interactions, 1850-2010* and it contains articles by István Kornél Vida, Susan Glanz, Thomas Sakmyster, Myron Momryk, Katalin Pintz and Judith Galántha Hermann. In 2003 and 2004 we published two special volumes entitled *The United States and Hungary in the Twentieth Century Part I* and *Part II* (volumes 30 and 31 respectively). The 2003 volume contained articles by Tibor Frank, Judith Szapor, Kenneth McRobbie and others, while the 2004 volume featured papers by Tibor Glant, Gergely Romsics, Kálmán Dreisziger, Stephen Beszedits and others. The combined bulk of these three volumes was almost 500 pages. For earlier special volumes of our journal — as well as individual articles — dealing with similar themes see the index published in volume 26 (Spring-Fall, 1999, pp. 175-195) of the journal.

## **Ágoston Haraszthy: “Father of California Viticulture”? Debates in the Mirror of Recent Revisionist Literature**

**Csaba Lévai**

**Ágoston Haraszthy** (1812-1869) is a well-known figure of the history of Hungarian-American relations. He authored the second travelogue written by a Hungarian author about the United States, which was published under the title *Utazás Éjszak-Amerikában* [Travels in North America] in 1844 in Pest.<sup>1</sup> In this paper it is not my aim to analyze Haraszthy's book or to compare it to the famous 1834 work of Sándor Bölöni Farkas (1795-1842), *Journey in North America*, as this has already been done by other scholars.<sup>2</sup> Instead, I propose to focus on the role he played in the founding of California viticulture.

It is not easy to reconstruct Haraszthy's activities in California, since the story of his career is surrounded by myths: some of these were self-created others were invented by people who wrote about him. The main aim of this paper is to examine these myths in the light of the “revisionist” Haraszthy literature of the last two decades produced by American scholars. I will concentrate on three works. Haraszthy is not in the main focus of two of them, since they examine the history of wine culture in California from a wider perspective.

Two decades ago Thomas Pinney published a two-volume history of wine-making in the United States in which he devoted a whole chapter to Haraszthy's California activities. In 2003 Charles Lewis Sullivan, who is a well-known expert of the history of wine-making in California, published a book about the origins of the famous California grape, the Zinfandel. In this work he, like Pinney, outlined in detail Haraszthy's role. The author of the third book under my scrutiny is Brian McGinty, the great-grand-child of

Haraszthy, who produced a biography of him with the title *Strong Wine: The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*.<sup>3</sup> The results of this revisionist literature are practically unknown to Hungarian scholars. For this reason it should be useful to contrast the image created of Haraszthy by these authors with that produced by earlier commentators.

While the main focus of this paper will be Haraszthy's wine-growing and wine-making activities in California, I will also deal with some other aspects of his life regarding which the American literature of the last two decades also made new discoveries. One of these is the question of where Haraszthy was born. On the basis of a statement that Árpád Haraszthy, Ágoston Haraszthy's son, made in California in 1866, all the major biographical accounts of Ágoston Haraszthy published in Hungary claimed that he was born in Futak in the county of Bács-Bodrog in August, 1812.<sup>4</sup> (In our days Futak is called Futag, located in the outskirts of Újvidék [Novi Sad] in Serbia.) But Brian McGinty found the documentation of his birth and baptism in the archives of the Roman Catholic Church of Terézváros in Budapest. According to these, Haraszthy was born in Pest (today's Budapest) on August 30, 1812.<sup>5</sup>

Ágoston Haraszthy was the only son of nobleman Károly Haraszthy and his wife Anna Halász. The family could trace its roots back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of a statement Haraszthy made once in America, another recurring theme of the Hungarian biographies of him is that in 1828, at the age of sixteen, he had joined the Royal Hungarian Bodyguard. Even such noted authors as Péter Szente and Béla S. Várdy had accepted this assertion. Again, Brian McGinty did extensive research in Hungary in this regard but could not find any proof supporting Haraszthy's claim.<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of his alleged service in the Royal Hungarian Bodyguard, while living in California and towards the end of his life in Nicaragua Haraszthy claimed to have been a colonel. We have to note however that if Haraszthy had really served in the Royal Bodyguard he couldn't have reached the rank of colonel in just a few years. He also told an attorney in San Diego at the end of 1849 that at the age of nineteen he had organized a company of 120 men and joined the Polish troops fighting against the invading Russian forces during the Polish insurrection of 1830-31. According to this statement, he took part in the fighting and was wounded. He also informed this same attorney that as the captain of a regular hussar company of the Habsburg Imperial Army he took part in a campaign in Northern Italy. Historians never found any evidence that supported these allegations.<sup>7</sup>

Haraszthy was a clever person who at a very early age recognized the importance of self-promotion and image building. He wanted his American

neighbours to accept and respect him, and he also wanted to substantiate his new life in America. Haraszthy exaggerated some elements of his career and he also simply invented some new “facts” in order to create a good impression of himself in his American environment. He was probably well-aware of the sympathy the American public felt towards the participants of the Polish insurrection since they thought that the Poles continued the struggle the Americans initiated during their own revolution against Britain. Haraszthy presumably also knew the widespread custom in America that country gentlemen of good standing were usually addressed by their neighbors as “colonels” — whether they had really served in the army or not.<sup>8</sup>

It was also probably also a part of such tactics that while he was residing in Wisconsin he started to call himself a “count” (Wisconsin was the site of Haraszthy’s first residence in the United States). In all likelihood, he also recognized the romantic and mystical affinity of republican Americans to European titles of nobility the real meaning of which they did not really know. According to Brian McGinty, in the eyes of contemporary Americans Hungary appeared as “an exotic kingdom fragrant with the mingled odors of Eastern potentates and Asiatic warriors, a country that was in Europe, but not really of Europe.”<sup>9</sup> As historians Zoltán Sztáray and Béla Várdu pointed out it was quite common among Hungarian immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to use imaginary titles. Haraszthy probably hoped that as a Hungarian aristocrat he would be able to attract more of his countrymen as settlers to the small settlement he had founded in Wisconsin.<sup>10</sup>

Haraszthy had made even more outrageous statements regarding his Hungarian past. At one point he claimed that, following his service in the Royal Bodyguard, he became private secretary to Archduke Joseph (1776-1847), the Habsburg Palatine (Governor) of Hungary. Neither Péter Szente nor Zoltán Sztáray — and not even Brian McGinty — found any proof of this claim.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately we do not know much about the real life of Ágoston Haraszthy in Hungary. The Haraszthy family hailed from the village of Mokcsa in the County of Ung in the northeastern part of the kingdom; however Antal Haraszthy, Ágoston’s grandfather, left Ung County for Szeged in southern Hungary in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Ágoston’s father Károly was born there in 1789. By the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Károly lived in Pest where he married in 1811 and, as has been mentioned, Ágoston was born a year later. Some time between 1825 and 1833 the family moved to the south again, this time to Bács-Bodrog County where they came into possession of an estate near the villages of Szenttamás and Pacsér (nowadays a wine-producing region in Serbia). In 1833, at the age of twenty-one, Ágoston Haraszthy

married Eleonóra Dedinszky. The marriage took place in the town of Futak. The record of this marriage is the first written proof of the presence of the Haraszthy family in Bács-Bodrog. Eleonóra Dedinszky was the daughter of Ferenc Dedinszky, the manager of the neighboring estate of a member of the aristocratic Brunszvik family. Within two years the newlyweds had had two sons, Géza and Attila. Soon Ágoston Haraszthy became an appreciated member of the local community of noblemen and he was elected the vice-notary of Bács-Bodrog County.

On March 27, 1840, Haraszthy left Hungary for the United States in the company of his nephew Károly Halász. We do not really know much about Haraszthy's motivation. Why did a well-to-do landlord decide to travel to North America? In the book he published about his first trip to the United States in Hungary in 1844, he stated that he had wanted to see life in North America. Péter Szente also called attention to the fact that Haraszthy declared in the very same book that he did not want to emigrate from Hungary. He repeated this statement after his return from his first trip to North America — after he had purchased an estate in Wisconsin. A few years later in California Haraszthy claimed that, even before his first trip, he had been persecuted by the Austrian authorities due to his liberal views and his support of Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894) the leader of the Hungarian liberal opposition, and that this was the main reason behind his emigration from Hungary. Haraszthy also proclaimed in California in 1849 that he was not only the friend of Kossuth but he had also taken part in the work of the Hungarian Diet. Since he left Hungary for the first time on March 27, 1840, the only session of the Diet he could have taken part in was the session of 1832-1836. It can be taken for granted that Haraszthy, hardly out of his teens, was not a member of the Diet; he might have been one of the young men visiting the sessions of the Diet and cheering for the liberal opposition. It is also conceivable that he met Lajos Kossuth, who was not yet a prominent figure of Hungarian politics, at that time. But, again, historians could not find any proof of all this. Regarding his alleged persecution by the Austrian authorities, it is true that there was an investigation against him in 1837, but it was conducted by the authorities of his county and he was not prosecuted for his political views or activities. Haraszthy was the honorary vice-notary of Bács-Bodrog County at the time and he was accused of having used the pair of horses provided for him by the county for private purposes.<sup>12</sup>

I wish to point out that when in 1849 Haraszthy was talking about his connection to Kossuth and his alleged persecution by the Habsburgs he must have been aware of the sympathy of the American public towards the parti-

participants of the defeated Hungarian War for Independence, Kossuth being the symbol of the Hungarian cause. His claim about his support of the Hungarian liberals and about his alleged connection to Kossuth is likely to have been part of a self-promotion exercise.<sup>13</sup>

After the conclusion of his first stay in the United States, in early 1842 Haraszthy returned to Hungary. He had traveled extensively and, as already mentioned, purchased an estate in Wisconsin. This latter act can surely be considered a proof of his intention to return and settle permanently in North America. The most important result of his first trip to the United States was the publication of his travelogue. Haraszthy and his family returned to the United States in the fall of 1842: they wanted to settle on the estate Haraszthy had purchased in Wisconsin. Back in Hungary his book was published only two years later, in 1844. The book covers not only the events of his first trip but also the experience of his first years in Wisconsin.

Haraszthy was a real entrepreneur who pursued several different activities in Wisconsin. He and his family remained in the state for six years but at the end of 1848, probably inspired by the news of the California gold rush, decided to re-locate to that part of the country. One of the most important elements of the Haraszthy legend is that he introduced wine-growing and wine-making in his newest homeland, mainly by the help of the importation of Hungarian grape varieties. Two well-known pioneers of the history of American-Hungarian relations accepted this idea. Jenő Pivány in his path-breaking study *Magyar-amerikai történelmi kapcsolatok* (Historical Contacts between the United States of America and Hungary) declared in 1926 that “Haraszthy was the founder of vine growing in California, and he imported many grape varieties from Europe and Hungary, including the California Tokay, which became well-known all over the country.” Another Hungarian historian, Ödön Vasváry, was of similar opinion. According to him, “Haraszthy was the founder of vine growing in California.”<sup>14</sup>

The legend of Haraszthy as the “founder of viticulture in California” remained popular in Hungary even after World War II. We can find several incorrect statements regarding his life in the widely-used *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* (Encyclopedia of Hungarian Biography), for example. Although the author of the entry on Haraszthy stated correctly that he had “played significant role in the establishment of viticulture” in California, he declared wrongly that he had “toured America in the 1830s.” As it is well-known, Haraszthy visited North America for the first time in 1840. The entry also mentions that Haraszthy founded a settlement called “Saul City” in Wisconsin, while the township founded by him was called “Sauk City” later on. Mihály Sárkány,

the author of a short biographical note of Haraszthy published in the volume entitled *Messzi népek magyar kutatói* (Hungarian Explorers of Nations Far Away), stated that, due to his wine-growing activities, Haraszthy was called “the father of viticulture in California.” More recently, Béla S. Várdy declared in his book published in 2000 that Haraszthy was not simply the founder of Californian but the “founder of American viticulture” and that he published “the first American handbook on viticulture.” As it is clear from such works as Thomas Pinney’s *A History of Wine in America*, several studies had been published about wine-growing and wine-making in North America well before the publication of Haraszthy’s treatise of 1862.<sup>15</sup>

Even today there are several websites still endorsing elements of the old Haraszthy legend. Regarding his activities in California the Hungarian version of Wikipedia declares that the “creation of wine culture in California” was the achievement of Haraszthy, and that he played major role in the introduction of the Zinfandel grape. The author of this article also took over almost all of the other mistakes mentioned above concerning the Haraszthy’s career, from his service in the Royal Hungarian Bodyguard, through his participation at the Hungarian Diet, and the friendship of Kossuth. The entry cites a wrong version of the title of Haraszthy’s travelogue (*Észak-amerikai utazások*), and contains such false statements that he emigrated to the United States for good in 1840, and that he also went to Hungary during his visit of Europe in 1861. Regarding his wine-making activities, the author declares that the “creation of wine culture in California” was the achievement of Haraszthy and that he “gained long-lasting distinction in the improvement of the Zinfandel grape and wine.”<sup>16</sup> These mistakes are repeated by several other Hungarian websites, which is a clear sign of the fact that their authors are not aware of the results of the latest American researches. According to one of these websites, Haraszthy “created viticulture in California by the help of grape cuttings imported from Tokaj-Hegyalja.”<sup>17</sup> This mistake is quite surprising taking into account the fact that the English version of Wikipedia contains correct information about Haraszthy’s activities in California, mainly based on the book of Brian McGinty.<sup>18</sup>

The legend of Haraszthy proved to be even more popular in the United States. The main founder of it was Árpád, one of Ágoston Haraszthy’s sons. As we will see later on, Jenő Pivány, Ödön Vasváry and some other Hungarian-American authors also contributed to it significantly. Due to the writings of these authors, Ágoston Haraszthy became the official “father of viticulture in California” in the eyes of the American public, especially among Hungarian-Americans. You can find his plaque on the main square of Sonoma

and also in front of the House of Hungary in San Diego. Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, California Governor Edmund Brown planted a vine-cutting in the park next to the building of the state legislature of California in Sacramento. You can read in the *Dictionary of American Biography* published in 1960 that Haraszthy imported from Europe “the first vines which were... Tokay and Zinfandel, sent to him by friends in Hungary.”<sup>19</sup>

It was the principal aim of the “revisionist” historians of the last two-and-a-half-decades to rectify these myths and to construct a realistic picture of Haraszthy’s the wine-growing activities in California. The question arises in what ways and to what extent the revisionist authors had modified the traditional evaluation of Haraszthy’s activities in that state. As Brian McGinty pointed out, researchers had to answer two fundamental questions regarding this problem: Does Ágoston Haraszthy deserve the title “the father of California viticulture” and was he the person who imported to California the Zinfandel grape?

The answer to the first question depends fundamentally on our understanding of the term “father or founder of viticulture in California.” If it is used — as many of the above-mentioned authors and websites — in the sense that Haraszthy was the first person who started to grow vine and make wine in California, he was obviously not the “father of California viticulture.” According to Thomas Pinney, by 1849, when Haraszthy arrived in California, “there had been a history of nearly three-quarters of a century of practical winegrowing, and a strong effort towards improving the selection of grape varieties had already been well under way.” Pinney also added that it was not Haraszthy who imported European grape varieties into California for the first time.<sup>20</sup> But if this is true, could Haraszthy still be called the “father of Californian viticulture”? In order to answer this question we need to outline briefly his wine-growing and wine-making activities in California.

First of all, it needs to be clarified what kind of wine-growing skills Haraszthy had when he arrived in California? Although he never mentioned it in his writings, he had presumably been growing vine in Hungary according to Brian McGinty. The Haraszthy family was originally from Mokcsa (today the village is in Slovakia. It is known to Hungarians as Mokcsamogyorós, and to Slovaks as Krišovská Liesková) in Ung County, which is located relatively close to the famous wine region of Tokaj-Hegyalja, and some references suggest that Ágoston Haraszthy’s father was growing vine there. Sometimes between 1825 and 1833 the family moved to the southern part of Hungary, to Bács-Bodrog County, which at the time was not one of the well-known wine regions of the country but was close to others that were. It is also true that when Haraszthy became acquainted with noted viticulturists in California none

of them questioned his wine-growing skills, and we also know that he had experimented with wine-growing in Wisconsin in the second half of the 1840s. It means that in all likelihood Haraszthy had experience in wine-growing before he came to California.<sup>21</sup>

Haraszthy established his first vineyard in California near San Diego in 1850, and, according to his son Árpád, he imported some grape varieties from Europe the following year. Unfortunately, we have no proof of this. He became the first sheriff of San Diego County in 1851, and he was elected by his fellow citizens to the state legislature one year later — which is another proof of Haraszthy's ability to endear himself to his neighbours. The seat of the state legislature was in Sacramento and this fact prompted him to move north where he purchased an estate south of San Francisco. He called it Los Flores and he started to grow vine. This site, however, soon proved to be unfavourable from the point of view of wine-producing, consequently, Haraszthy decided to sell one part of it and purchased another estate near San Mateo in 1854. Unfortunately, the location of this estate was also unfavourable, so he bought still another vineyard in the Sonoma Valley one year later, where he established his famous estate called Buena Vista. Haraszthy liked the local wine and decided to concentrate on wine-growing. We have to add that it was not Haraszthy who started to grow vine in the Sonoma valley. Among others his neighbour and future father-in-law of his sons General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (1807-1890) had started to grow vine almost a generation earlier. It is also true on the other hand that it was the Hungarian who initiated the real wine-making boom in the region. As Charles Sullivan pointed out: "Everyone agreed that Sonoma was having a boom and that Haraszthy, more than anyone else, was its author."<sup>22</sup>

Haraszthy won first prize with one of his wines at the state agricultural fair in 1859 and the California State Agricultural Society asked him to write a pamphlet about the state of affairs of wine-growing and wine-making in California. The result was Haraszthy's *Report on Grapes and Wine in California*, which was not the first such work published in the United States. Nevertheless, according to Thomas Pinney, "it was the first such treatise really written by a Californian." But Pinney also added that there is nothing "notable or original" in this essay, except perhaps Haraszthy's instructions for making Tokay wine.<sup>23</sup> Haraszthy claimed that he owned more than 150 grape varieties, which according to Charles Sullivan "was pure puffery. The Hungarian was employing the great American entrepreneurial tradition of substituting his hope for facts in public statements about his enterprise."<sup>24</sup>

Haraszthy’s prominent position in California’s wine-producing community probably played a role in his appointment in 1861 as one of the state’s three commissioners who were charged with the task of exploring the possibilities of improving viticulture in the state. The establishment of this commission was initiated by the California State Agricultural Society, and the state legislature voted for it unanimously. The task of the first commissioner was to report about the state of viticulture in California, while the two others were to make field trips to South America and Europe respectively. Haraszthy was tasked with traveling to Europe to study the latest wine-growing and wine-making practices. As Thomas Pinney pointed out: “The purpose of his trip, according to the terms of his commission, was simply to make observations upon European practices in viticulture and winemaking and to report on these.... But in his own mind Haraszthy seems to have had the collection of grape varieties as his first and most important business.”<sup>25</sup>

Haraszthy left California on June 11, 1861 and arrived in New York on July 4, where he received letters of recommendation from secretary of state William Henry Seward (1801-1872) to the ambassadors of the United States in Europe. He also made a contract with the publishing house Harper and Brothers concerning the publication of his report. Haraszthy left North America for Europe on July 13. First he visited various wine-producing regions of France, from where he went to Germany and Switzerland. Then he continued his trip to Italy and then, via the southern regions of France, he went to Spain. He intended to visit Greece and Egypt also, but eventually he decided to go back to Paris, from where he returned to North America. I would like to stress that, contrary to the information provided by some authors and websites, Haraszthy did not visit Hungary during his European trip and did not bring back any Hungarian grape varieties to California. He arrived in California on December 5, 1861. On his tour he had purchased some one hundred thousand vine cuttings of some three-hundred varieties in Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Haraszthy submitted his report to the state legislature about his European activities in January 1862. In this he pointed out that climatic conditions of California were very favorable for wine-growing. He also made recommendations for the establishment of a state agricultural experimental station and state support for the development of new grape varieties. He also urged the appointment of a state agency to regulate commerce in wine in order to eliminate fraud. Next Haraszthy published a book about his experience entitled *Grape Culture, Wines and Wine-Making with Notes upon Agriculture and Horticulture*. As he had signed a contract with Harper and Brothers publishers even before his departure for Europe, it is clear that he hoped to make some money from his trip.

Haraszthy's work was not the first treatise on wine-making in the United States and was not a very original publication. As Thomas Pinney pointed out, the first part of the work contained a description of his travels in Europe and in the second part he reproduced European and American writings about wine-growing. Haraszthy also re-published some sections of his former treatise in this book and only rarely mentioned Californian or European wine making methods at all. To sum up the opinion of Thomas Pinney, the merit of the book is that this was "the first discussion in book form of California as a winegrowing region" written by a Californian viticulturist that became known nationwide.<sup>27</sup>

Haraszthy thought that the state of California would take upon itself the distribution of his cuttings and hoped that it would reimburse him for his expenses amounting to \$12,000, but in April of 1862 the state legislature refused his request. Zoltán Sztáray argued that Haraszthy became the victim of political intrigues, since he was a Democrat and by the time of his return to California there was Republican majority in the state legislature. We should keep in mind that in April, 1862, the American Civil War was well under way and California supported the Northern cause. Haraszthy had been elected to the state legislature on a Democratic ticket, and many in the Democratic Party had supported the South during the debates before the war's outbreak.<sup>28</sup> According to the representatives of the "revisionist" literature, politics had nothing to do with the refusal by the state legislature of the payment of Haraszthy's expenses. As Thomas Pinney and Charles Sullivan pointed it out, there were two fundamental reasons for the refusal of Haraszthy's request. First, as I have mentioned earlier, according to the terms of Haraszthy's commission the official purpose of his trip had been "to make observations upon European practices in viticulture and winemaking and to report on these to the state," and not to purchase grape cuttings. Second, it was clearly stated in the official instructions of the commissioners that they could not ask for any compensation from the state for their expenses in connection with their commission. This means that the legal situation was absolutely clear and in all likelihood Haraszthy was fully aware of this.<sup>29</sup>

But, if this was the situation, why did Haraszthy decide to purchase thousands of wine cuttings contrary to his instructions? I think that there could be only one rational answer to this question: he wanted to make money. As Thomas Pinney found out, Haraszthy had started to collect subscribers for the cuttings even before his departure for Europe.<sup>30</sup> This means that the Hungarian was not an innocent victim of political intrigues, but was a skillful speculator

who acted contrary to his instructions in the hope of making a big sum of money.

According to the Haraszthy legend his importation of thousands of grape cuttings had a decisive impact on the development of large-scale wine industry in California. But the representatives of the “revisionist school” see this differently. As Charles Sullivan summed it up:

There was nothing special about the importation of good European vines. It has been going on since 1852. What made the Haraszthy importation unique and potentially valuable was that it could have been distributed to vineyardists, had an agency for such an operation existed. But there was none. The claim that the Haraszthy vines were distributed throughout the state became part of the legend constructed by Árpád (i.e. Haraszthy’s son) years later. There is nothing to support such a claim.

Thomas Pinney even added that there were hardly any varieties in Haraszthy’s shipment which play important role in California’s wine industry nowadays.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that the most special vine of California, the Zinfandel, was not among the varieties Haraszthy imported in 1862. Zinfandel is a red vine that played a crucial role in the early days of the Californian wine industry, and it is still quite popular. Thirteen per cent of table wine produced in California in 2007, for example, was made from Zinfandel grape.<sup>32</sup> It is also true that Haraszthy never mentioned Zinfandel among the grape varieties he owned. Why then did it become an integral part of the Haraszthy legend that he imported the trademark of its wine industry into California? According to Charles Sullivan who devoted a book to the history of the Zinfandel grape, this legend was invented by Haraszthy’s son Árpád.

Árpád Haraszthy also played an important role in the history of California’s wine industry, since he was the person who “produced what eventually would be California’s first, commercially successful bottle-fermented sparkling wine.”<sup>33</sup> By the end of the 1870s Árpád Haraszthy became an influential member of the Californian wine-making community as a result of which he was elected the president of the California State Viticultural Society in 1878. It was at that time that he started to spread the idea that the Zinfandel grape had been imported by his father from Europe in 1862. This idea had been included in the official reports of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, so it was confirmed officially. But some wine-growers in the state called the attention to the fact that the Zinfandel had been grown even before 1862 in California. As a result of this claim, Árpád Haraszthy changed his

mind and started to argue that his father imported European grape varieties into California for the first time at the beginning of the 1850s, and the Zinfandel was the part of this earlier shipment. In regard to this claim Charles Sullivan calls our attention to a few very important facts. First of all, aside from the statement by Árpád, there is no other proof of the importation of any European grapes before 1862 by Ágoston Haraszthy. Sullivan also added that at the beginning of the 1850s Árpád Haraszthy was about ten years old and he had not been present in California since he had been sent by his father to the east coast to pursue his studies there. Consequently, he could not be the eyewitness to the importation of European grapes by his father at that time. Maybe his father informed his son about the importation of European grapes later, but Ágoston Haraszthy never mentioned this in any of his writings. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1880s the Árpád Haraszthy version of the story became the accepted view about the origins of the Zinfandel grape in California. This myth was endorsed even by the influential nationwide newspaper the *New York Tribune* which in a long article about the Haraszthy family included Árpád's story about the origins of the Zinfandel in California.<sup>34</sup>

Starting with the 1970s scientists began to investigate the origins of the Zinfandel grape with the help of modern genetics. Historians also managed to find new evidence. Thomas Pinney pointed out that a grape called Zinfandel had been mentioned in the catalogue of the exhibition of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1834, and it was also included in the book entitled *Fruits and Fruit Trees of America* published in 1845. The first evidence about the Zinfandel in California is from 1858 when it was exhibited by the viticulturist A.P. Smith. This means that in all likelihood the Zinfandel arrived to California from the east coast sometimes around 1855.<sup>35</sup>

But from where did the Zinfandel arrive to North America? Árpád Haraszthy asserted that his father had imported the Zinfandel to California from Hungary and Brian McGinty called the attention to the fact that there was a grape in Hungary called *cirfandli*, and it is still the most characteristic variety of the Mecsek region in southern Transdanubia. McGinty also added that the Mecsek region was relatively close to Bács-Bodrog County where the estate of the Haraszthy family was located. This means that Ágoston Haraszthy could have been familiar with the *cirfandli* grape. The name *cirfandli* is probably the Hungarianized version of the German term *Zierfandler*. The latter, in all likelihood, comes from the Latin name *sylvaner*, which refers to the fact that this grape originally was a wild wine. Brian McGinty maintains the opinion that the Zinfandel could have originated from Hungary and that

Ágoston Haraszthy could have played some role in its importation to California.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand Thomas Pinney and Charles Sullivan squarely reject this possibility. They can reject it on the basis of the findings of genetic research, since genetic scientists had found out that the Zinfandel originated from Dalmatia, and not from Hungary. There is grape called *crljenak kaštelski* in Dalmatia (in present-day Croatia) and it is genetically identical to the Zinfandel.<sup>37</sup>

American researchers also found that an American viticulturist in Long Island, George Gibbs, had imported grape cuttings from the Imperial Nursery of Vienna several times between 1820 and 1829. Since Dalmatia was part of the Habsburg Empire at the time it is highly probable that the ancestor of the American Zinfandel arrived to North America as part of one of Gibb’s shipments.<sup>38</sup> We should also keep in mind that the American Zinfandel is a red vine preferring the hot climate of California, while the Hungarian *cirfandli* is a white vine preferring cooler climate and humid soil. On the basis of the above-mentioned evidence, Thomas Pinney and Charles Sullivan dismiss the idea that the Zinfandel grape was imported into California by Ágoston Haraszthy from Hungary, whereas Brian McGinty tries to maintain this idea, but he can rely only on assumptions and not on concrete evidence.

By the time of his return from Europe, Haraszthy’s estate became the largest vineyard in California. Haraszthy even argued that he owned the largest vineyard on Earth. Obviously, he declared this without investigating the subject. With eight businessmen from San Francisco he established the Buena Vista Vinicultural Society which, however, did not prove profitable. Soon, the debt-ridden Haraszthy decided to move to Nicaragua, where he disappeared on July 6, 1869.

How then we can evaluate Ágoston Haraszthy’s contribution to the development Californian wine industry? Was he really the “father of California viticulture”? I share Thomas Pinney’s opinion that “Father after all, is not a very useful metaphor: a literal father must have an exclusive claim, but a man who pioneers in a decisive way may share credit with a good many predecessors.”<sup>39</sup> I believe that Haraszthy belongs to the second category. He was one of the ardent supporters of the development of viticulture in California, but he was definitely not the exclusive creator of wine industry in the state. He was not as unique and independent actor as he is often portrayed by Hungarian historians, but he was the part of a longer process of the development of large-scale wine-making in California. He was clearly not the first person who started to grow vine and make wine in California and he was not even the first man to import European grape varieties into the state. I think that

we should pose the question differently. Instead of asking if he was the first person who grew vine and made wine in California, we should ask the question to what extent and how he contributed to the development of wine industry in California that had already existed in the state when Haraszthy arrived there? The answer to this question is that in this sense he played a significant role. The representatives of the revisionist school agree on this, but their judgment is not unqualified.

Thomas Pinney is the most critical towards Haraszthy's activities. According to him all the fundamental claims in the Haraszthy legend have been proven false. "He was not the 'father' of California winegrowing. He was not the man who first brought superior varieties of grapes to California. He was not the man who introduced the Zinfandel. He was not a martyr to public ingratitude whose financial sacrifices for the good of the state went uncompensated." On the other hand, even Pinney acknowledges the Hungarian's merits. As he pointed out, Haraszthy authored California's first treatise on grapes and wine. Through his pamphlets and articles he published in the American press throughout the 1860s he promoted California's wine industry on the East Coast. The success of Haraszthy's Buena Vista winery was a "notable exhibition of entrepreneurial skill." To summarize the opinion of Thomas Pinney, Haraszthy "certainly was an energetic flamboyant promoter, combining the idealist and the self-regarding opportunist in proportions that we can only guess at. He will remain an interesting a highly dubious figure, of the kind that always attracts historians; but we should no longer take seriously the legend that has grown up about him."<sup>40</sup>

Charles Sullivan is somewhat more sympathetic towards the Hungarian. He unambiguously rejected the idea that Haraszthy imported the Zinfandel grape into California — as he noted "It is laughable to assert that he was the 'father' of the industry, but I don't believe that anyone contributed more to its growth and development. He was a great publicist. He was the young industry's public conscience, promoting better wine through the use of better grapes and rational cellar practices. He advocated vineyard and cellar techniques in the 1860s that were considered prescient in the 1880s."<sup>41</sup>

Among the three authors under my scrutiny Brian McGinty proved to be the most sympathetic to Haraszthy. McGinty's main ambition was to reformulate and modernize the legend of his great-grandfather, Ágoston Haraszthy. Not unlike Thomas Pinney, he also argued that "the early writers who chose to call Haraszthy the 'father of California viticulture' chose their word inexpertly, for the word 'father' does connote a kind of primacy in time, and there is no doubt that there were winemakers before Haraszthy [in Califor-

nia].” But if the term father “means a man who came on a winemaking community that in the early 1850s was so tiny as to be barely recognizable as an industry and, in the course of a dozen years, built it by force of his example and preachments into one of the most important agricultural industries in California — indeed, in the whole United States — he was surely the ‘father’.” Nevertheless, McGinty recommended that “another term might have described him more appropriately. He might have been called ‘The First Important Commercial Winemaker in California’ or ‘The First Pioneer of California Viticulture’ or ‘The Great Name in California Wine Industry’.” Regarding the problem of the importation of the Zinfandel grape into California by Haraszthy, McGinty tried to separate it from question of the general role of the Hungarian in the promotion of viticulture in the Golden State, and his opinion also proved to be more sympathetic in this respect. According to him “my research has uncovered no direct evidence either proving or disproving that Ágoston Haraszthy was the first man to bring the Zinfandel into California, [but] I have found some new and intriguing evidence that he could well have been that man.”<sup>42</sup> As mentioned before, Thomas Pinney and Charles Sullivan unequivocally rejected this idea.

On the basis of the works of the revisionist school we can clearly dismiss the notion that it was Ágoston Haraszthy who started to grow vine and make wine in California, or who first imported European grape varieties into the Golden State. It is also highly probable that he was not the man who introduced the Zinfandel grape into California. But it is also my impression that it was not the intent of these authors to diminish Haraszthy’s stature completely. They simply wanted to offer a more realistic picture of Haraszthy’s activities in California. All three of them acknowledge the important role he played in the promotion of wine-making on the West Coast of the United States. And for us Hungarians this flamboyant and interesting character means much more. He remains the author of the second travelogue about the United States that had ever been published in Hungary, and a man who played an important role in the early history of Hungarian-American interactions. I have no doubt that we remain faithful to his memory even if we strive to formulate a more realistic picture of his activities in California and elsewhere.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Mokcsai Haraszthy Ágoston, *Utazás Éjszakamerikában I-II.* (Pest, 1844). On the impact of Haraszthy’s book in contemporary Hungary see: Géza Závodszy,

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*American Effects on Hungarian Imagination and Political Thought 1558-1848.* (Highland Lakes, New Jersey: Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. 1996), 186-187.

<sup>2</sup> Závodszy, *American Effects*, pp. 233-237. Farkas's book was published originally with the title *Útazás Észak Amerikában* [Journey in North America] (Kolozsvár: János Tilsch Jr., 1834). One English translation of it is by Theodore and Helen Benedek Schoenman (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Pinney, *A History of Wine in America. Volume I. From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Charles Lewis Sullivan, *Zinfandel: a History of Grape and its Wine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine. The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Péter Sente, "Egy elfelejtett Amerikás magyar — Haraszthy Ágoston," *Századok*, CXII (1978), 112. *Magyar Nagylexikon*. Vol. 9 (Budapest: Magyar Nagylexikon kiadó, 1999), 215. *Amerikától Óceániáig. XIX. századi magyar utazók*, ed. Mária Dornbach (Budapest: Park kiadó, 2006), 41.

<sup>5</sup> McGinty, *Strong Wine*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Sente, "Egy elfelejtett," p. 112. Béla S. Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban. Az Észak-Amerikai magyarság rendhagyó története* (Budapest: Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000), 39. McGinty, *Strong Wine*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> Sente, "Egy elfelejtett", p.112; Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban*, p. 39; McGinty, *Strong Wine*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> On the sympathy of contemporary American public towards the Polish insurrection see Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume I* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.), 302-303. On the Haraszthy's custom of styling himself "colonel" see Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban*, pp. 39, 110. McGinty, *Strong Wine*, 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> McGinty, *Strong Wine*, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Zoltán Sztáray, *Haraszthy Ágoston, a kaliforniai szőlőkultúra atyja* (San Bernardino: Kossuth Foundation, 1964), 8. Béla Várdy devoted a whole chapter in his book to the topic of Hungarian pseudo-aristocrats in America. Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban*, pp. 108-121.

<sup>11</sup> The opinion of Sztáray is quoted by Sente, "Egy elfelejtett," p. 113; McGinty, *Strong Wine*, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> On the details of the investigation against Haraszthy see Sente "Egy elfelejtett," pp. 113-114.

<sup>13</sup> On the impact of the European and Hungarian revolutions of 1848-49 in the United States see: Csaba Lévai, "Charles Loring Brace és Magyarország képe az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban, 1848-1852," in Charles Loring Brace, *Magyarország 1851-ben* (Gödöllő: Attraktor, 2005), 293-327. Timothy M. Roberts – Daniel W. Howe, "The United States and the Revolutions of 1848," in *The Revolutions in*

*Europe 1848-1849. From Reform to Reaction*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and H.P. Strandman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 157-179.

<sup>14</sup> Jenő Pivány, *Magyar-amerikai történelmi kapcsolatok a Columbus előtti időktől az amerikai polgárháború befejezéséig* (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1926) p. 30. Ödön Vasváry, *Magyar Amerika* (Szeged: 1988), 187.

<sup>15</sup> *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon Volume I*, (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1967), p. 675. Mihály Sárkány, ‘Haraszthy Ágoston’, in *Messzi népek magyar kutatói*, ed. Tibor Bodrogi (Budapest: Gondolat, 1978), 151. Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban*, pp. 39-40, 89. Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 140., pp. 277-278. On page 140 Pinney mentions that an American viticulturalist named John Adlum had published several treatises on wine-making in the 1820s well before the publication of Haraszthy’s work. On pages 277-278 Pinney analyzes Haraszthy’s work and he mentions that it was not the first in America. It was only the first such treatise written by a Californian.

<sup>16</sup> <http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/haraszthy>

<sup>17</sup> <http://metapedia.org/wiki/haraszthy>

<sup>18</sup> Even the English language Wikipedia site contains one mistake. In contrast to it Haraszthy was not the first Hungarian who settled in the United States permanently. Sándor Bölöni Farkas who visited the country in 1831 met several Hungarians living in the United States permanently. See: Sándor Bölöni Farkas, *Journey in North America, 1831* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-Clio, 1978), 158-159, 206.

<sup>19</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography. Volume IV*, A. Johnson and D. Malone eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), p. 236.

<sup>20</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 269.

<sup>21</sup> McGinty, *Strong Wine*, pp. 41-44.

<sup>22</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, pp. 272-273. Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, pp. 272 and 275.

<sup>24</sup> Agoston Haraszthy, *Report on Grapes and Wine in California*, (Sacramento: 1859); Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>25</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> On Haraszthy’s European trip see Sullivan, p. 56; Pinney, pp. 275-277.

<sup>27</sup> Agoston Haraszthy, *Grape Culture, Wines and Wine-Making, with Notes upon Agriculture and Horticulture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1862); Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 277.

<sup>28</sup> Sztáray is quoted by Sente, “Egy elfelejtett,” p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> Haraszthy’s instructions are quoted by Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 279; see also Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, p. 57.

<sup>30</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>31</sup> Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, p. 57; Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 280.

<sup>32</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/zinfandel>

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- <sup>33</sup> Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, p. 57.
- <sup>34</sup> Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, pp. 63-71; Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, pp. 280-281.
- <sup>35</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 281.
- <sup>36</sup> McGinty, *Strong Wine*, pp. 45-46.
- <sup>37</sup> On the genetic identification of the Zinfandel and the *crljenak kaštelanski* grape see <http://www.zinfandel.org>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/zinfandel>
- <sup>38</sup> <http://www.zinfandel.org>
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*, p. 284.
- <sup>41</sup> Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, p. 58.
- <sup>42</sup> McGinty, *Strong Wine*, pp. 7-9.

## **The Kossuth Nephews in America**

Stephen Beszedits

**One of the most** eagerly anticipated events in the United States in the early days of December 1851 was the imminent arrival of Lajos Kossuth, the leader of Hungary's fight for independence against the Hapsburg dynasty during the great revolutionary years of 1848-49. The American public had much sympathy for the Hungarian cause. Abraham Lincoln, Congressional representative from Springfield, Illinois, presented a resolution of sympathy with the cause of Hungarian freedom to a mass meeting on September 12, 1849. President Zachary Taylor even sent an envoy, A. Dudley Mann, to Europe to ascertain the political situation as he was contemplating to recognize the revolutionary regime. However, by the time Mann arrived, it was too late; the Hapsburg forces, aided by a massive army dispatched by Czar Nicholas of Russia, were victorious.

Kossuth and several thousand others sought and found asylum in the neighboring Ottoman Empire. Following considerable diplomatic wrangling, Kossuth and a small group of exiles constituting his entourage were interned. The internment lasted until the arrival of the *Mississippi*, a warship dispatched by the United States government to convey Kossuth and his followers to the United States. On September 10, 1851, the *Mississippi* cast off with Kossuth and some fifty others aboard. As the vessel entered the western Mediterranean, Kossuth insisted on interrupting the journey to pay a quick visit to Great Britain. Accompanied by his family and a handful of retinue, he disembarked at Gibraltar. The *Mississippi* entered New York harbor on November 10th while Kossuth was touring England to enormous popular acclaim, all of which was faithfully reported in the American media.

On December 6, a frenzied throng of over 100,000 headed by Mayor Ambrose Kingsland greeted Kossuth upon his official entry into New York City. In the ensuing weeks, he attended numerous banquets, received individuals and delegations, and addressed various assemblages. He made a

most favorable impression and the public's fascination with him — dubbed “Kossuth fever” — continued to rage unabated.

Kossuth's enormous appeal has been attributed to a variety of reasons. Perhaps the best summation has been advanced by long-time politician Galusha A. Grow: “Kossuth was worthy of all the honors that were heaped upon him. His handsome presence, the marble-like paleness of his complexion, caused by hardship while in prison, and the picturesqueness of his foreign dress, captivated the popular fancy; while, more than all, his wonderful eloquence and the fervor with which he pleaded his country's cause, left an influence upon the hearts of those who heard him that nothing could destroy.”

On the way to Washington, DC, the enthusiasm of the people was as tumultuous as that exhibited in New York. However, his reception at the White House was far more subdued, to say the least. Unlike Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, who succeeded to the presidency on the death of Taylor, had no interest in Hungary nor was he inclined to make any promises of support. Fillmore insisted on adhering to America's traditional policy of “staying clear of foreign entanglements.” Given the situation in those days, any form of aid, whether military or diplomatic, would have been extremely difficult, if not outright impossible, and certainly not beneficial whatsoever to the United States.

Determined not to abandon the struggle for the Hungarian cause, Kossuth toured most of the United States east of the Mississippi River to proclaim his mission. With the exception of the Deep South, the reception accorded was favorable. His visit to New England was particularly rewarding as many of the nation's foremost figures residing in this region spoke out in support. But popular enthusiasm didn't translate into tangible official help. A disappointed Kossuth left the United States on July 14, 1852, and took up residency in London, England.<sup>1</sup>

While Kossuth didn't stay, memory of his visit lingered for decades. Years later many ordinary and distinguished Americans — among them Alexander K. McClure, Samuel Gridley Howe, George F. Hoar, and William Dean Howells — nostalgically recalled that the opportunity to see and hear Kossuth constituted a highlight of their lives and the deep and lasting impression he made upon them.

Today, statues, plaques and sundry other reminders throughout America attest to that historic tour. Perhaps the best known of the statues is the imposing creation of artist János Horvay on Riverside Drive near Columbia University. Kossuth has also been honored by the U.S. Post Office in the Champion of Liberty series of stamps.

### **Kossuth's Sisters and their Children in America**

Although Kossuth didn't settle in America, three of his sisters and their families did. Kossuth had four sisters: Zsuzsanna (Susanna), Lujza (Louise), Emilia (Emilia), and Karolina (Caroline). Zsuzsanna was the widow of Rudolf Meszlényi with two young daughters (Gizella and Ilona, nicknamed Ilka) when the revolutionary tide swept over Europe. Lujza was the wife of József Ruttkay, and they had three sons (from oldest to youngest): Lajos (Louis), Béla, and Gábor (Gabriel). Emilia was married to an ethnic Pole by the name of Zsigmond Zsulavszky (written as such in Hungarian) and they had four sons (ditto, from oldest to youngest): Emil (Emil), László (Ladislás), Kázmér (Casimir), and Zsigmond (Sigismund). Karolina's husband was István Breznay, a physician.

When Kossuth took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, members of his family remained in Hungary. His wife and children were able to elude the Hapsburg authorities and join him in the Ottoman Empire. However, Zsuzsanna, Emilia, and Lujza and their families were not so fortunate. They, as well as Kossuth's aged mother, were placed under surveillance and subjected to incessant harassment. Because Karolina and her husband did not take an active role in the events of 1848-49 they were spared from these tribulations.

At last, thanks in large measure to the relentless efforts of Charles McCurdy, American diplomatic representative in Vienna, Zsuzsanna, Lujza, Emilia and their families along with Kossuth's mother were granted permission to leave the country. When József Ruttkay refused to emigrate, Lujza promptly divorced him. Kossuth's mother, already in precarious health, died in Brussels, Belgium.<sup>2</sup>

On July 6, 1852, Emilia, her husband, and three of their sons — Emil, Casimir and Sigismund — boarded the steamer *Humboldt* at Southampton, England, for New York City, arriving on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Ladislás remained behind in Europe for a while to complete his studies. Lujza and her children made the trans-Atlantic voyage almost a year later; they arrived in New York on May 11, 1853, aboard the passenger vessel *Hermann*.<sup>3</sup> The entire journey of the families was carefully observed by agents of the Hapsburg government who made frequent reports about their whereabouts and activities.

It was Kossuth's fervent hope that his sisters would settle on some bucolic farm in Iowa, where a number of Hungarian refugees had already established themselves. However, sisters emphatically declared that they had no intention whatsoever to live in a remote wilderness, preferring to domicile in New York.

To make matters easier for their new friends and neighbors, the Zsulavszky family began to write their name in a quasi-Americanized form: Zulavsky. They as well as members of the Ruttkay family began to use the English version of their given names. Since Béla, a popular male name harking back to the old pagan days, has no such equivalent and is rather similar to Bella, Béla Ruttkay became Albert Ruttkay. However, in the intimate family circle he was still called Béla, leading to understandable confusion among Americans. As a matter of fact, stories about “Mr. and Mrs. Bella Ruttkay” persisted in the press for decades.

Notwithstanding generous help from a number of prominent and well-to-do Americans — notably George Luther Stearns — the sisters struggled in the new homeland. To support themselves and their families, Lujza and Zsuzsanna opened a shop on Broadway selling “laces, silks and other articles of female apparel.” In several of its issues — e.g. on September 27, 1853 — the *New York Times* urged its readers to patronize their shop: “While these ladies have a collection of articles selected with a degree of taste which cannot fail to commend them to favor, their characters, accomplishments, and conditions as strangers among us, entitle them to the aid of those whose sensibilities enable them to appreciate their situation. We solicit for them the attention and friendly consideration of the public.” With Christmas fast approaching, the December 5, 1853, edition of the *New York Times* reminded its readers that “the stock of fine laces kept by Madame RUTTKAI, No. 769 Broadway, is well adapted for the selection of such articles, as will never fail to please the most fashionable and fastidious City lady.”

Emilia set up a boarding house from the funds raised by American supporters. Serious marital problems with her husband, described in several memoirs as a rather frivolous and ill-tempered individual, culminated in divorce. He then faded from the scene, leaving Emilia alone to raise their four sons.

Zsuzsanna, already stricken with tuberculosis, died in 1854. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, the outstanding pioneer reformer in many spheres, wrote a touching tribute to her entitled *Memorial of Madame Susanne Kossuth Meszlényi*. The two little orphaned girls were then adopted by a lady from the wealthy and prominent Cruger family. Subsequently, when they grew up both returned to Hungary. Gizella died young, in 1865, like her mother a victim of tuberculosis. Ilka, however, survived her sister by many years, passing away in 1926.

Giving up shop-keeping after Zsuzsanna’s death, Lujza, a highly cultured woman, established a private school for young ladies in Cornwall,

just north of New York City. For several years ads for the school were a regular feature in the *New York Times* and other leading local papers. Commenting on the institution, the *New York Times*, May 23, 1859, wrote: "Mme. R. is a sister of KOSSUTH, and a lady of high accomplishments and most estimable character... her school is spoken of in the highest terms by those best qualified, by opportunity and experience, to express a judgment in regard to it."

Even though Lujza and Emilia lived under very modest circumstances, they ensured a good education for their boys and their homes were always open to fellow exiles. Among the notable ones paying frequent calls on the sisters were Károly László, the Reverend Gedeon Ács, and Alexander Asboth, all of whom came to America aboard the *Mississippi*. Asboth occupied a particularly fond niche in the hearts of the Kossuth family. An engineer by education, he was an aide with the rank of lieutenant colonel on Kossuth's staff during the war, was at Kossuth's side when they crossed the border into the Ottoman Empire, and shared the entire Turkish internment with him.

Also among Emilia's circle of friends was the Reverend Samuel Longfellow, brother of the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, himself an ardent admirer of Kossuth. According to a retrospective article printed in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, Emilia maintained contacts with Lola Montez, the legendary international courtesan and one-time mistress of King Ludwig of Bavaria, now a neighbor.

Within a few years after the passing of Zsuzsanna, Emilia also began to show the symptoms of the dreaded disease. She became so debilitated physically that even the simplest chores taxed her to complete exhaustion. Fortunately, a well-to-do and generous neighbor, Mrs. Richard Manning, took Emilia into her home and cared for her. It's here that she died on June 29, 1860. Her passing and funeral were covered by all the local newspapers. She was laid to rest in Brooklyn's sprawling Greenwood Cemetery in the presence of virtually the entire Hungarian colony of the city. Family intimate Alexander Asboth delivered the farewell address at the graveside.

### **The Kossuth Nephews, 1859-66: Fighting to Liberate Others**

Almost immediately after the death of their mother Emil and Ladislav left the United States to join the Hungarian Legion in Italy where tumultuous and profound political currents were reshaping the map of Europe. In 1859 the Kingdom of Sardinia, in alliance with Napoleon III's France, fought a brief

but bloody war against the Hapsburg Empire in northern Italy. The outcome of the war was a grave disappointment to Italian patriots as well as Hungarian exiles, but the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples by the legendary Giuseppe Garibaldi in the spring of 1860 revived their spirits. Both events drew a large contingent of Hungarian expatriates to Italy. During Garibaldi's campaign in Sicily, the Hungarian volunteers formed a unit of their own, and it was this Legion that the Zulavsky brothers enrolled in.

After the decisive defeat of the Neapolitans at the battle of the Volturno, October 2-3, 1860, the Hungarian Legion was retained in the service of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy. Ladislav, the most militarily talented of the brothers, became an officer on the staff of General Antal Vetter, commander of the Legion at the time. The highest rank attained by Emil was corporal. The brothers remained with the Legion until late 1862.<sup>4</sup>

Their return to the United States via England aboard the *Glasgow* was reported by several newspapers, e.g. the *New York Times*, December 29, 1862, and the *Lowell Daily Citizen and News*, January 12, 1863. They immediately offered their services to the Union cause, joining their brothers Casimir and Sigismund and cousin Albert Ruttkay in the fight against the Confederacy.<sup>5</sup>

Albert Ruttkay began his military career as captain with the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment US Colored Heavy Artillery Infantry. Transferring to the 1<sup>st</sup> Florida Cavalry through promotion, he became the regiment's major.

Contrary to claims in certain writings, neither of the other two Ruttkay brothers, Louis and Gabriel, served in the Civil War. Louis' health was far from robust and Gabriel was only 14 years old when Fort Sumter was fired upon. Károly Kertbeny's massive 1864 tabulation of Hungarians abroad has both of them as civil servants employed at the customs house in New York City. Louis, who graduated from Union college in 1857, obtained a law degree from Columbia University in 1865. His graduation from both institution was noted in the newspapers, and he is listed in Columbia's alumni directory.

Ladislav Zulavsky's military acumen was quickly recognized and appreciated; he became colonel of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry, originally organized as the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment Infantry Corps d'Afrique. Emil and Sigismund also served in this regiment; Emil rising to the rank of first-lieutenant while Sigismund was a second lieutenant. Sadly, Sigismund's tenure was brief; he died on September 16, 1863 at Port Hudson, Louisiana, a victim of typhoid fever, aged 19 years. He was buried next to his mother in Greenwood Cemetery.

For a substantial period in the latter stages of the war the 82<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry and the 1<sup>st</sup> Florida Cavalry were assigned to the District of

West Florida. Their commanding officer was none other than old family friend Alexander Asboth, holding the rank of brigadier-general.

Florida wasn't a major theatre of the war; the primary mission of Asboth and his troopers was to scatter bands of Confederate regulars and irregulars and to wreak havoc on enemy supply lines. They pursued these objectives relentlessly and effectively, raiding far and wide. Several Hungarians besides the Kossuth nephews served under Asboth. According to William Watson Davis' monumental and influential *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, dating from 1913, Asboth and "his fellow Hungarians were hated, dreaded, and condemned by the country people" of that region on the triple charge of being "furreners [*sic*], Yankees, and nigger lovers."

In the last week of September 1864 an expedition of over one thousand soldiers with Asboth himself at the head and Ladislav Zulavsky second-in-command set out against Marianna, the seat of Jackson County. There, they were met by a hastily assembled force of locals. Due to overwhelming numbers and superior firepower, the Federals swept through the town, easily dispersing the defenders. During the brief but intense fighting Asboth was severely wounded in the arm and face, incapacitating him. Command thereupon devolved upon Ladislav, who guided the expedition safely back to base. Official reports praised Ladislav's conduct and leadership. Albert Ruttkay also received favorable citation for gallantry.

Ladislav and Emil were mustered out with their regiment on September 10, 1866. In the waning days of the war Albert Ruttkay was an aide-de-camp on the staff of General Nathaniel Banks. Because of their service with the US Colored Troops, the names of Albert Ruttkay and the Zulavsky brothers — Ladislav, Emil and Sigismund — are inscribed on the African-American Civil War Memorial.<sup>6</sup>

Casimir's career as a Union soldier took a very different path. George Luther Stearns, long involved in the Kansas conflict between pro- and anti-slavery elements that included outright support for John Brown, had excellent connections in that troubled land and used his influence to secure a position for Casimir. He was mustered in July 24, 1861, as first-lieutenant and adjutant of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kansas Infantry. In April of the following year, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and a portion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry regiments were consolidated to form the 10<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry. Casimir retained his rank in this regiment and acted as adjutant until June 1, 1862. Letters and diaries by several comrades describe him as a pleasant young man and an accomplished piano player.

Calling Casimir implicitly or explicitly the black sheep of the family, a number of Hungarian and American writings claim that while he was in the

Union army he became involved with dubious characters and was party to certain criminal acts. One of the books that dwells in some detail about Casimir's unsavory activities is Frank Preston Stearns' biography of his famous uncle *The Life and Public Works of George Luther Stearns*, published in 1907. According to this work, young Casimir wasn't above skimming and stealing while in the elder Stearns' employ. However, despite Casimir's irresponsible and unrepentant behavior, the elder Stearns remained kind and generous toward him.

This particular book, like other writings encountered, is extremely vague about the specifics of the "grave crimes" committed by Casimir, giving rise to the speculation that they were perhaps nothing more than exaggerations blown out of proportion.

In 2003 I was contacted by Howard Mann who was researching the story of the 10<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry because an ancestor served in the regiment. Mann was very much interested in the Casimir Zulavsky story. We exchanged the information we each had on Casimir in our possession at the time. Howard told me that sifting through massive piles of official documents, newspaper stories, and various other sources, did not yield any evidence of "crimes" by Casimir.

Since 2003 there has been a veritable explosion in the availability of historical information and tremendous advances in tools to sift through vast mounds of printed and handwritten papers reposing in sundry archives. Therefore, not surprisingly perhaps, as I delved into an array of databases to double-check various facts connected with this particular treatise, two newspaper articles popped up that substantiate Casimir's involvement in thievery.

The first, from the March 31, 1863, edition of *The Smoky Hill and Republican Union*, of Junction City, Kansas, reports on Casimir's capture and arrest by Deputy Sheriff Soule in St. Joseph. The second, published in the same paper on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, covers the legal proceedings against Casimir for stealing knives from the Express Office and money from a certain Mr. Haskell. Having been found guilty on both charges, he was sentenced to 18 months in the State Penitentiary for the first offense and to three years on the second indictment.<sup>7</sup>

Like their native-born comrades, the majority of the Hungarian participants of the Civil War joined various veterans' organizations, such as MOLLUS (Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States) and GAR (Grand Army of the Republic). However, the only Kossuth nephew known to have enrolled in such an association was Ladislav Zulavsky; he was a member of MOLLUS, New York Commandery, insignia #: 01167.

### **Kossuth's Relatives in Post-Civil War America**

Following his demobilization, Albert Ruttkay became involved in the cotton trade. Soon his business, A. Ruttkay & Co., became active in Houston, Galveston, and Dallas, Texas. That he was esteemed and respected by his associates and fellow businessmen can be ascertained by the important posts he was entrusted with, including a director of the Houston Cotton Exchange and Board of Trade.<sup>8</sup> Advertisements for his firm were a regular feature in Galveston newspapers, such as *Flake's Bulletin* and the *Galveston Daily News*.

Interestingly enough, one of principal founders of the Galveston Cotton Exchange was also a Hungarian veteran of the Civil War but on the Confederate side, Charles Vidor, remembered nowadays as the grandfather of famed film director King Vidor. Since Ruttkay and Vidor both maintained offices in Galveston's Strand Street, were in the same line of business, participated in similar civic affairs, and enjoyed the same cultural venues, their paths must have crossed often.

Albert Ruttkay met his wife, Laura Wiley, in Plainfield, New Jersey, while visiting his mother there. Laura was the youngest daughter of Alexander Wiley, a principal of the firm of Morgan & Wiley, New York City. Their first child, Albert Kossuth Ruttkay, died in August of 1874 while still an infant. Another one also died in infancy, but three others survived: Louis, Paul and Gabriel.

Louis, Albert's older brother, married Delia, the only daughter of Captain John Collins and niece of E. K. Collins, of the Collins Line of steamers. They eventually moved to Des Moines, Iowa. A prominent attorney in the city, he was forced to abandon the legal profession in favor of real estate and finance as his health continued to decline. He often spoke and wrote about his famous uncle, by then residing in Italy. Louis and Delia had four children, two boys and two girls. Apparently the children inherited their father's weak constitution; in 1894 only one was still among the living, namely Anne C. Ruttkay. Louis himself died in 1881 and his widow in 1900.

After Casimir Zulavsky's difficulties in Kansas had been resolved, he moved to Texas and joined Albert Ruttkay's business. For several days early in January 1866 the Galveston papers, e.g. *Flake's Bulletin*, carried announcements that S. A. Masters was no longer a partner in A. Ruttkay & Co., that role now being filled by Casimir. Advertisements for the firm of appearing in the newspapers displayed both of their names in the boxes: Albert Ruttkay in the upper left and C. B. Zulavsky in the upper right.

This business arrangement lasted only until May when its termination was publicized in a terse notice in the local papers. *Flake's Bulletin*, May 20, 1866, printed the following: "By mutual consent, the undersigned withdraws from the firm of A. RUTTKAY & CO., in which Firm he was heretofore a partner." The signatory below is identified as C. B. Zulavsky and the notice attests that it was made on May 10, 1866, in Galveston, Texas. None of the newspapers in Galveston, Houston or Dallas contained stories about the dissolution or offered reasons for it.

Albert Ruttkay was also instrumental in introducing his younger brother Gabriel to the cotton trade. Sadly, Gabriel perished when the ship *Varuna* foundered off the Florida coast while on its way from New York to Galveston in November 1870. The tragedy, triggered by powerful gales, was covered in the principal papers of the nation since nearly two dozen prominent citizens of Galveston died in the sinking of the vessel. The *New York Times*, November 11, which listed the victims, denoted Gabriel as "Ruttkey [*sic*]" and described him as "an estimable young merchant of less than thirty years. He was until recently, and we presume at the time of his death, with the house of DUNCAN & SHERMAN. His mother was a lady of remarkable character, and took an active part in the political affairs of Hungary. Gen. Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, was an uncle to Mr. RUTTKAY." Lujza was utterly devastated by the loss of her youngest son.

Albert Ruttkay died at his residence on November 13, 1888, after a protracted illness. Presenting some personal facts about him and the pending funeral, the obituary notice in the *Galveston Daily News* added that "During his few years' residence in this city, by his strict business integrity, noble traits of character and general disposition, he commanded the respect and friendship of a large circle of warm and true friends."

Like Albert Ruttkay, Ladislav Zulavsky took up the cotton trade after the war, setting up business in Augusta, Georgia. According to the local papers, he enjoyed considerable respect for his integrity and other personal traits. For a while his enterprise thrived. When his affairs encountered reverses, the stress and strain he experienced led to his mental breakdown. He was taken back to New York and committed to the asylum at Middletown. The tragic deterioration of his mental health was reported tactfully and sympathetically in a number of newspapers, e.g. *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 9, 1883. Ladislav remained institutionalized until his death which occurred on April 22, 1884; he was but 47 years old.

After terminating the partnership with Albert Ruttkay, Casimir Zulavsky vanished into obscurity. Even more puzzling is the fate of his brother

Emil. No researcher has reported any definitive facts about his post-Civil War fate. Albert Ruttkay's obituary in the November 13, 1888, edition of the *Galveston Daily News* referred to him as "the sole surviving nephew of Kossuth," implying that Emil and Casimir Zulavsky had died prior to this date. Whether this is accurate or not remains a moot point. Concrete facts about both Casimir and Emil would be most welcome.

In 1881 Lujza Ruttkay left the United States to join her illustrious brother, now long a resident of Turin, Italy. The vast distance notwithstanding, she didn't break off contacts with friends and relatives in America; on the contrary, she maintained a brisk correspondence with loved ones. The chapter entitled "At the Seminary" in *Scenes and Portraits* by the renowned literary historian and novelist Van Wyck Brooks vividly recounts Lujza's life with Kossuth until his death.<sup>9</sup>

The death of the revered patriot in 1894 at the age of 92 attracted worldwide media coverage. Hungarians in the United States held memorial services; particularly imposing and elaborate services were held in New York City. Among many attendees, which included many Americans harboring fond recollections of Kossuth, were members of the Zulavsky and Ruttkay families. While the only notable representative of the Zulavsky family at these functions was Ladislav's widow; the Ruttkays, led by Albert Ruttkay's widow Laura, were more numerous.

The occasion unleashed a flood of articles about Kossuth in the American media, naturally reminiscing about his tour of the United States and his moving and inspiring speeches. The saga of his sisters wasn't neglected either; a particularly interesting and valuable article was penned by Louis Ruttkay, son of Albert and Laura, for the *New York Herald Tribune*, April 16, 1894. While it provides ample details on Lujza Ruttkay and her three sons and their descendants, the discourse on the four Zulavsky brothers is sparse and vague.<sup>10</sup> This seems to indicate that the Ruttkay family didn't maintain ties with Emil and Casimir Zulavsky after the Civil War.

Following the death of her brother, Lujza returned to Hungary permanently. Enjoying universal public esteem as one of the few living links to the great patriot, she died in 1902. All the leading American papers printed her obituary, varying from succinct perfunctory notices to lengthy reviews of her life. The terse announcement in the *New York Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1902, in the column headed "DIED" read: "RUTTKAY — at Budapest, Hungary, Europe, October 13, at noon, Louise Kossuth Ruttkay, widow of Joseph Ruttkay, and sister of the late Louis Kossuth, erstwhile governor of Hungary, in the 86<sup>th</sup> year of her life."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In addition to countless newspaper and journal articles, there is a slew of books about Kossuth's American tour. Regarding Kossuth's political agenda, an especially clear and comprehensive picture is presented in John H. Komlos's *Louis Kossuth in America, 1851-1852* (Buffalo, New York: East European Institute, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> The circumstances prompting the departure of the three Kossuth sisters and their families as well as their voyage to America are recounted in considerable detail in the sundry documents compiled by Dénes Jánossy in *A Kossuth emigráció Angliában és Amerikában* [The Kossuth emigration in England and America], published by the Hungarian Historical Society in 1948. The memoirs of several exiles, notably those of Károly László *Naplótöredék* [Diary fragment] (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1887) and the Reverend Gedeon Ács, *Mihelyt gyertyámat eloltom* [Before I extinguish my candle] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1989), also contain interesting odds-and-ends about the three sisters and their children during the 1850s.

<sup>3</sup> While reliable information is readily available on the Atlantic Ocean crossing of Emilia and Lujza, the opposite is true for Zsuzsanna's departure from Europe and arrival in the United States. However, the memoirs of certain émigrés living in New York City indicate that Zsuzsanna arrived around the same time as Emilia.

<sup>4</sup> There is a vast array of writings in Hungarian, Italian and English about the Hungarian Legion in Italy. Arguably the most scholarly and thorough of these and also giving the most information on Ladislav and Emil is Lajos Lukács' *Az olaszországi magyar legió története és anyakönyvei, 1860-1867* [The History of the Hungarian Legion in Italy and Biographical Sketches, 1860-1867] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> The Civil War careers of the four Zulavsky brothers and Albert Ruttkay are more than amply recounted in the documents held at the National Archives and Records Service as well as in a host of reference books concerning the war. In deference to his father's ethnicity, Ladislav Zulavsky appears in a number of Polish-American books. The information presented in these publications on the Zulavsky family was invariably gleaned from Hungarian or American sources, often carelessly, resulting in a number of glaring errors.

<sup>6</sup> Actually, Emil Zulavsky's name is conspicuously absent on the Memorial while his brother Ladislav appears twice. As pointed out by István Kornél Vida in his recently published *Hungarian Émigrés in the American Civil War*, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2012, one of the inscriptions should read Emil Zulavsky. Hungarians serving in African-American units are also discussed to some extent in Martin Ofele's *German-Speaking Officers in the U.S. Colored Troops, 1863-1867* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004).

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<sup>7</sup> Considering the accounts in these two newspaper articles, it is surprising that other documents pertinent to the case are so difficult to come by. One possible reason for this could be the unstable and turbulent situation in Kansas in 1863. With vicious guerrilla warfare raging throughout the land, Casimir's "crimes" may have been deemed trivial compared to the atrocities perpetrated by the ubiquitous border ruffians. It's also possible that relevant records have been destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Ruttkay's post-Civil War years are described in James Patrick McGuire's *The Hungarian Texans* (San Antonio: University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, 1993). This book also includes a number of other Hungarians who lived in Texas before and after the war.

<sup>9</sup> The treatise in Van Wyck Brooks' book is based on some 70 letters written by Lujza to Eliza Kenyon, a dear friend living in Plainfield, New Jersey. A very cultured lady like Lujza, Miss Kenyon was a relative of Brooks' wife. Brooks found the letters while sorting out Miss Kenyon's effects after her death. There are some minor factual errors in Brooks' account due to his lack of first hand familiarity with the Kossuth sisters and their families.

<sup>10</sup> The lengthy article about Hungarians in America printed in the *New York Herald Tribune*, November 3, 1880, is similarly erroneous about Ladislav Zulavsky and has nothing on Emil and Casimir, suggesting that not only the Ruttkay family was ignorant about the post-Civil War fate of the three surviving Zulavsky brothers but so were members of the Hungarian community.



## **Growing up Hungarian in Cleveland: Case Studies of Language Use**

**Endre Szentkirályi**

**According to** the 2000 American Census data, the last census for which data is readily available, approximately 8% of Americans of Hungarian ancestry reported speaking Hungarian in the household. Of Ohioans, that percentage was 10.3%; for residents of Cleveland, it was 11%. The other 89-90% assimilated into American culture, one can assume.

Alan Attila Szabo researched Hungarian-American communities of the greater Cleveland area and submitted a cultural anthropology analysis as his Master's thesis at Kent State University in 2001. Drawing on information collected while selling life insurance and determining potential customers' interest in a Hungarian mail order business, he attended hundreds of Hungarian events in Northeast Ohio and assembled a database of 400 individuals and their families, who all defined themselves as being Hungarian or of Hungarian descent. He then randomly selected 100 individuals from his database and found similar results to the US Census proportions of Hungarian speakers to Hungarian ancestry. Additionally, he found that of his sample, 10% married another Hungarian-American, and those who did, 40% had at least one sibling also marry a Hungarian. 10% of the offspring of these unions married another Hungarian-American, which points to a standard assimilation process.<sup>1</sup> If the odds are that 90% of Hungarian-Americans will assimilate in one generation, what then are the factors that allow the other 10% to maintain their language and culture, many times even in the second and third generations, in spite of overwhelming odds favoring their assimilation?

Qualitative research is well accepted in the fields of sociolinguistics and ethnography to get at substantive reasons for cultural and language maintenance. Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, Fontana and Frey, and Spradley have all traced the importance and accepted methodology of interviewing and case studies to elicit insights not normally available using

quantitative methods of research. Mónika Fodor has applied these methodologies specifically to Hungarian-Americans and the narratives they construct about their cultural identity, and I drew heavily on her work in constructing my research.

In an extensive sociological and sociolinguistic study of a similar Hungarian-American community, published in a previous volume of *Hungarian Studies Review*, Katalin Pintz looked at New Brunswick, New Jersey's Hungarian community, and found several factors that impacted language and cultural maintenance. Among these were close-knit friendships among parents who valued education and their ethnicity, and taking an active part in the ethnic community. The families she studied tended to "speak Hungarian as much as they can among themselves and to their children. Many of them watch DVD's, television shows, and the news in Hungarian through cable TV or the internet. It is also an important factor for them to find a Hungarian spouse. Nevertheless, they cannot and do not want to exclude themselves from the American cultural sphere."<sup>2</sup> This type of characterization contrasts with the ethnic neighborhoods of forty or fifty years ago, both in New Brunswick and in Cleveland, in which entire city blocks had families of mainly one ethnicity. Today, ethnic communities in any given American city tend to stick together not geographically, but rather culturally, gathering on a regular basis from throughout the suburbs, perhaps weekly or more frequently, to take part in a city's ethnic activities.

Pintz also found that although some of the respondents did not like being forced to speak Hungarian as children, they nevertheless all "value this kind of parental education, for they would also like to pass on their mother tongue to their children."<sup>3</sup> Parental involvement and consistency was definitely a factor in keeping the Hungarian language alive. But perhaps even more important than the parents, or rather, due to the involvement of the parents, the community itself as a social environment reinforced and became the determining factor of ethnicity.

New Brunswick's Hungarians, she found — whether attending Hungarian church services, folk dance rehearsals, scout meetings, a Montessori kindergarten, or the weekend Hungarian school — are known for the high level of Hungarian that is spoken there. The main reason for this is the fact that "the members of the community form a close-knit unit based on friendships and family ties. They organize cultural events several times a week, ranging from scouting to Hungarian language education and dance classes. The members of the community are active in several Hungarian activities simultaneously."<sup>4</sup>

My first reaction upon reading Katalin Pintz's study was to realize the similarities between New Brunswick's Hungarian community and Cleveland's Hungarian community. Both consist of fairly close-knit groups based on friendship and family ties, both organize cultural events regularly, both include scouting and dance groups and Hungarian language education, and the experiences related in Pintz's study were common to my own experiences growing up Hungarian in Cleveland. Rather than conduct a sociological overview, as she did in New Brunswick, I decided to focus more on the specific factors that impact language use, using a case study approach.

### **Research Methodology**

Nine Hungarians living in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, were chosen for my case studies. Three separate group discussions were held, with three participants each. Small-group discussions were chosen to allow a degree of intimacy that comes from being around other participants from similar backgrounds, and to allow study participants to hear each other's answers, agree or disagree with each other, and spawn new thoughts based on what they heard from each other. Listening to each other answer the same questions allowed each study participant to reflect upon what was being said and decide whether that applied to them or not. The group discussions were recorded and transcribed word for word for later analysis, and all took place in the greater Cleveland area during October of 2010. As the writing and analysis of the data progressed, study participants were given rough drafts of the qualitative study results and given an opportunity to revise and add to comments given during their group discussions. Their cooperation and suggested clarifications allowed for a better contextualization of events and circumstances, as well as of a more concise description of the factors impacting Hungarian language maintenance.

Eight of the nine study participants were born in the Cleveland area, and the ninth was brought to Cleveland as a toddler, so she also spent her entire childhood in the Cleveland area. Study participants were chosen for their similar Hungarian-American backgrounds to provide a fairly typical experience of growing up Hungarian in Cleveland, yet their backgrounds and life circumstances provided a fairly broad spectrum of family immigration eras, including offspring of the DP and 1956 generation and more recent immigration. Their Hungarian language proficiencies and primary language spoken at home also varied, as did their degrees of Hungarian ancestry: the

parents of most were both Hungarian but a few had only one Hungarian parent; one had a Hungarian spouse and several had American spouses.

One of the three groups consisted of three siblings to control for family upbringing variables, and all three members of this group have their own children and the perspective of about twenty years distance from their own childhood, which allows for more introspection both about their family upbringing and also a considered viewpoint about their own decisions on imparting language and culture to their children.

The other two groups all live in the same suburban neighborhood to control for American environmental factors. They graduated from or currently attend the same suburban public high school, located about a half-hour's drive from Cleveland's downtown in a middle-class area. I chose some teenagers still in the process of forming their own cultural identities because of the possible insights they could contribute, being in the midst of their own transformations; the mixture of teenaged and adult participants offered both fresh, recent insights as well as considered, mature reflection in their revelations. The experiences of all nine study participants, although unique in their own way, are fairly typical of Hungarian-Americans who are part of Cleveland's Hungarian communities. In selecting my research subjects in this manner I took the advice of Rubin and Rubin who state that "observing life from separate yet overlapping angles makes the researcher more hesitant to leap to conclusions and encourages more nuanced analysis."<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors impacting second-language maintenance and cultural identity formation in an ethnic community, specifically those factors influencing growing up Hungarian in Cleveland. Before the interviewing started, the participants or their legal guardians signed a statement of informant consent to give them a chance to understand the research study goals and to clarify and safeguard their legal rights. The participants took part willingly, and it was easy to establish a rapport with them. Our rapport and the participants' openness was reinforced by our earlier relationships; some of them I grew up with, others I have known since their childhood, and some were former students of mine. The recorded group discussions ranged from 40 to 90 minutes, and the primary language was English, although Hungarian vocabulary was also used sporadically by the participants, depending on the concepts discussed. Two of the nine participants chose to remain anonymous and were given pseudonyms (marked with an asterisk \*) for the purposes of the publication of this study's results.

### **The Study Participants**

The youngest study participant was Gabe (Gábor) Kovács, a sixteen-year-old eleventh-grader. His father was born in Hungary and emigrated to the United States when he was twelve or thirteen and thus spent his formative years in Cleveland. Gabe's father works in the electrical and computer field, and has owned several businesses. His mother was born in a suburb of Cleveland and has never been to Hungary. She works in the healthcare industry as a physical therapist. Both parents were actively involved in Cleveland's Hungarian scouting movement. As a young child, Gabe's parents enrolled him, along with his younger siblings, in the scout troop on Friday evenings and in the Hungarian school on Monday evenings. The family attends a local Hungarian church on holidays like Christmas and Easter, and on major events such as baptisms and confirmations, but on average Sundays attends the suburban American parish church near their house. Gabe also is a member of the Hungarian Scout Folk Ensemble, the scout dance group which meets on Tuesday evenings. Gabe's language skills have remained pretty consistent throughout his childhood, understanding and speaking fluently with his reading and writing skills somewhat weaker nevertheless competent.

Matt (Máté) Kobus attended the same neighborhood catholic school as Gabe, and now is in the eleventh grade at the same suburban public high school as Gabe. Matt's mother was born in the Cleveland area, the child of a father who came to the United States after 1956 and a mother who arrived in 1964. She also attended Hungarian school and was involved in Hungarian scouting as she grew up in Cleveland. Matt's biological father is American, a nurse anesthesiologist, and he was not too keen on Matt's mother speaking Hungarian to him as a young child, so she did not force the issue. Later, Matt's parents divorced and his mother remarried. Matt's stepfather is an engineer and although he doesn't speak or understand any Hungarian, he does tolerate Matt's language use to some extent. Matt's language use has improved drastically as he grew older; at first he only understood and could produce only a few words. Then around the 3rd grade his school friend Gabe kept telling him about how cool Hungarian scouting was, but to join one needed a better command of the Hungarian language, so he improved to be able to join the scouting movement. According to his mother, she never forced him to use Hungarian; his improvement was of his own accord. Lately he visited Hungary with his grandmother, and now he switches to Hungarian when he speaks to

his grandmother on the phone. Matt is also a member of the Hungarian Scout Folk Ensemble, the scout dance group of Cleveland.

Megan Ramsey, the third participant in the group discussion, is Gabe's first cousin; his father and her mother are siblings. Megan is studying to be a dental hygienist at a local community college, and graduated from Gabe and Matt's high school in 2008. Her father, a carpet and tile installer, was an American of Scotch-Irish and French-Lebanese descent and spoke no Hungarian in the household. Her mother was born in Hungary but finished her university studies after emigrating to Cleveland. She is an engineer and lived for a long time with Megan and her own mother, Megan's Hungarian grandmother. Megan did not attend Hungarian school but did attend Hungarian scouting as she grew up, and was also a member of the scout dance group during high school. She has been to Hungary twice: once when she was four years old and once when she was twelve. Megan's Hungarian language use has remained fairly constant as she grew up, understanding and speaking fluently, and reading and writing at a slightly weaker level, but still competent.

The second group also consisted of three members who attended the same suburban high school. Jennifer Hegyi is the youngest member, currently in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She never attended Hungarian school and was only involved in the scouting movement for one year, but did have a private Hungarian language tutor for about a year when she was twelve or thirteen. She visited Hungary with her family multiple times as she grew up. Her parents were both born in Hungary and emigrated to Cleveland as adults in 1995; her father is in the roofing business and her mother is a nanny, and both speak Hungarian in the household. Jennifer understands and speaks Hungarian, but in Hungarian conversations with the researcher had a tendency to respond only in English. Her reading and writing skills are weak, according to her own account, and she could not pronounce the name of the Hungarian town that she was born in.

Samantha Dévai\* attended the same high school as Jennifer, graduating in 2007. She earned a biology degree in college and is now in her first year of medical school. She was involved in the Hungarian scouting movement from age five until the end of high school at age eighteen. She was also a member of the scout dance group during her high school years; she only attended Hungarian school for one year, however, in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at age thirteen. Her parents both grew up in Hungary and emigrated to the United States in 1982 but still speak Hungarian in the household. Her mother works in child daycare and her father in maintenance. She has been to Hungary three or four times for ten days each, and took part in a month-long tour of Hungary organized by the scouts when she was a teenager.

Samantha's Hungarian proficiency has remained somewhat constant during her childhood, remaining fluent in speaking, reading, and writing, but she has noticed a regression since she moved away for her college studies.

Samantha's cousin is Hanna Völgyi\*; their mothers are sisters. Hanna's parents were also born and raised in Hungary and emigrated to the United States in the early 1970's. Her mother is a bookkeeper and her father works in maintenance. She graduated in 2002 from the suburban high school of her cousin, attending college and earning a special education degree. She now works in a middle school as a teacher. Hanna never attended Hungarian school and started Hungarian scouting around the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, continuing until the end of high school. She also was a member of the scout dance group all through high school. Her Hungarian proficiency has remained stable, with solid fluency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.

The third group, consisting of three siblings, held the longest group discussion, probably because of their advanced age and maturity as compared to the other six study participants, and because of their inherent familiarity and rapport with each other, having grown up in the same household. Their parents emigrated to the United States after 1956, their mother as a thirteen year old girl with her parents, and their father spent three and a half years in Austria before arriving in Cleveland. Their father worked mostly in a factory. The family attended a Hungarian Catholic church on major holidays and family events, but usually attended the local Catholic church because of the children attending parochial schools. Grandparents on the father's side would occasionally come to visit from Hungary for several months at a time. All three siblings took part in numerous Hungarian community activities as they were growing up in the Cleveland area.

Ann (Anci) Graber, the oldest of the siblings, grew up in the suburb of Westlake and attended Magnificat High School, a suburban Catholic school for girls. She started her involvement in the scouting movement as a young child and joined the scout dance group during high school. Upon growing up, she also assumed responsibility as costume caretaker for the dance group, and currently is the treasurer for the Hungarian girl scout troop. She married Steve Graber, also the child of 1956 immigrants. He had a similar upbringing as her, attending Hungarian school, Hungarian churches, and taking major leadership roles in scouting and the dance group. Steve's brothers and sister, although they were also born in the United States, speak, read and write fluent Hungarian; his sister's children also do, and are involved in Cleveland's Hungarian community. Steve's brother Rick Graber founded Cleveland's Hungarian dance troupe Csárdás. Steve and Ann have three children, all of whom also speak Hungarian and also attended Hungarian school, scouting, and were or

are members of the scout dance group. Their oldest daughter is twenty-two years old and a college student, their second daughter is twenty-one years old and is also in college, and their son is sixteen years old and is in high school. Ann works as a computer teacher at a local Catholic elementary school. Ann's Hungarian proficiency is excellent with the exception of her spelling; she attributes this to her never attending Hungarian school.

Karl (Karcsi) Patay attended St. Ignatius High School and owns his own construction and landscaping business. He was involved in Hungarian scouting from a young age, attended Hungarian school and was a member of the scout dance group. His Hungarian language skills, although fluent, were somewhat weak in reading and writing. In recent years his oral language skills have significantly increased due to his working daily with recent Hungarian immigrants. His wife Denise, an American with no Hungarian background, attempted to learn Hungarian early in their marriage, but today almost no Hungarian is spoken in the household. Their children are both boys, aged thirteen and nine, and apart from some rudimentary words, neither speaks Hungarian. Karl is very proud of his Hungarian heritage and visits Hungary every three to five years.

Susan (Zsuzs) Linder is the youngest of the siblings. Also attending Magnificat High School, Susan was involved in scouting from an early age, attended Hungarian school only later, and also joined the scout dance group during high school. For three years she was the scoutmaster of the Hungarian girl scout troop, a position of influential responsibility in Cleveland's Hungarian community. Her husband, Dave Linder, is an American with no Hungarian background. At home Dave speaks English to the children and Susan speaks Hungarian, with the common language being English. Their three children, twin boys aged twelve and a daughter aged nine, understand and speak, read and write Hungarian, and attend the Hungarian school and scouts. Susan's Hungarian proficiency is excellent with near-native fluency.

## **Study Results**

The nine study participants in their three group discussions yielded over 24,000 words of data. According to the traditions of qualitative ethnographic research, their answers were coded into similar categories. Rubin and Rubin define coding as a "process of grouping interviewee's responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes one has discovered."<sup>6</sup>

Three major themes emerged from their responses. The first theme was the impact of parenting on language maintenance, both the role of their own parents as well as their own subsequent actions as parents. The second theme, repeated quite often and quite emphatically and emotionally, was the influence of their friends and peers through organized events in the Hungarian community, mostly through the scouting movement. The third major theme was the value of speaking a second language and the respondents' ties to their Hungarian culture as a sense of identity. Additional secondary topics that emerged from the discussions were reasons that people did not maintain their ethnic language as well as the role of American spouses in supporting or discouraging language maintenance.

### **The Importance of Parenting**

Many of the interviewees strongly identified one of the most important factors impacting their language competence as being their parents, even though some parents were of different generations, i.e. some of their parents were born in the United States, others had immigrated after 1956, and others much more recently. Parents had different reasons for speaking Hungarian to their children, but seven of the nine interviewees, both at the beginning and ends of the interview, came back to their own parents as being the single biggest factor impacting their language use.

One of the reasons given for parental use of language was the idea of broken English, i.e. the parents had immigrated to the United States and did not want their children speaking English incorrectly. "I remember my mom saying that she didn't want me to hear her broken English, so we spoke Hungarian at home," stated Jennifer Hegyi at the beginning of the interview. She returned to the same thought at the end of the interview as well, "my mom still speaks broken English so I still speak Hungarian to her." Hanna Völgyi echoed this sentiment when she said that "[my] parents being more comfortable probably with Hungarian, especially when I was little was probably the main determining factor in me speaking Hungarian." Megan Ramsey's mother was a little more utilitarian in her sentiments, as Megan related, "my mom always wanted to teach her daughter Hungarian, because it's always good to know a second language. That's what she always told me, just for being in the business world or going traveling anywhere."

Susan Linder, speaking of the Patay parents, reinforced the idea that parental involvement was paramount, not from a broken English perspective,

but rather comparing her generation to a previous cohort, speaking of the 90% of Hungarian-Americans who assimilate: “I’d say our parents first and foremost because there are plenty of people maybe ten years earlier who didn’t speak Hungarian to their kids because then they were really trying to fit into the melting pot more than that concept. So the fact that [my parents] spoke Hungarian to us and that brought us to cserkészet [scouts] and everything they did was... I would say that has to be number one as parents.” Her sister and brother concurred. Karl mentioned at the beginning of the interview that “growing up, that’s all we were allowed to speak at home.” Not only was their father’s English worse, said Susan, but all three siblings emphasized that no punishment or threats were ever used about their use of language. Indeed, the reason all three agreed they spoke Hungarian was respect. Karl mentioned that “I think [my father] was just very proud of where he came from and it was important for them, for us to speak Hungarian at home. It wasn’t a very strict something like ‘That’s all you’re going to speak at home,’ but it was just expected of us.” It was a respect towards their father, they agreed.

### **Friends and Community**

Although most interviewees talked about their parents, one disagreed, feeling strongly that in the matter of learning the Hungarian language peers were the most important, even more important than parents. Indeed, in terms of the amount of time during the interviews spent talking about parents or about peers, every single interviewee devoted at least three to four times as many sentences to reminiscing about their friendships and peers, as opposed to parents, as they were growing up. Peer impact on Hungarian language use seems, from their own words, the stronger overarching theme which emerges from their transcribed thoughts.

Most emphasized the incredibly strong bonds of friendship formed with peers due mostly to involvement in Hungarian scouting, but also in other Hungarian community activities. This bond of friendship, especially after puberty, is what drew the interviewees together, and community bonds are what caused most of them to decide to impart Hungarian to their own children.

Six of the nine respondents stressed the closer bonds that had developed between them and their Hungarian versus their American friends. Gabe Kovács explained it this way: “my best friends are probably the Hungarian ones, because I’ve been with them longer... my entire life.” He had been with these people his entire life, he said, “because our parents know each

other, and we would go hang out with each other when we were like, three, and I never really had that with that many people that are American.” When pressed to explain the reasons for a majority of her close friends being Hungarian, Megan Ramsey echoed Gabe’s sentiment, saying that “I feel like the Hungarian community respected me more because I spoke Hungarian and I was raised that way and they were raised the same way I was, pretty much.” In another instance, she alluded to the role of the Hungarian community in Cleveland: “I always really enjoy going to the Hungarian balls that we had, and I think I gained a lot of friendship by going to that, and definitely the camps, all the Hungarian camps. I definitely gained a lot of friendship there, too, and I never really had that at my high school, like going out on camping trips, doing huge projects together to gain closer friends, or traveling.”

Karl Patay, agreeing with his two siblings Ann and Susan, also highlighted the difference between parents and peers on language use: “it wasn’t the Hungarian that brought us together; it was our parents bringing us here, meeting friends and the times we had together, the bonds formed, the memories, and it was your life. I mean, school, your American friends were completely secondary. Everything you did was with Hungarian friends.” This commonality was stressed again by Megan Ramsey: “when you meet someone and you want to be able to have things in common with. I felt like I didn’t really have a lot of things in common with other students at high school. Maybe I never really gave it a chance, but because I was really really good friends with all the Hungarians.” Ann Graber at another point in the interview stressed that “it wasn’t our nationality sometimes, but the friends we had,” to which both of her siblings immediately replied, “it was a way of life.”

When asked to elaborate, Susan Linder explained that “the people that I hung out with in cserkészzet were the people I went to school with and I had all my social events with them, too. And then through cserkészzet we had locsolás [Easter folk tradition] and tea [dances] and bál [debutante balls] and all that stuff, so the social events were tied in.” Susan’s best friends, who were Hungarians, also attended her high school. Karl Patay, whose best friends did not attend the same high school he did, nevertheless agreed: “with me it was a way of life. I mean, we hung around, all our friends were Hungarian, typically. We socialized with them. It was just everything we did had something to do with cserkészzet, regös, or...”

When asked what the single most important factor was impacting Hungarian language use, Matt Kobus succinctly explained his theory of motivation, “I would probably say your peers, because in some ways those are the people you look up to most or are with the most and if you see that they’re doing a certain thing, then a lot of times you want to do the same thing.” Karl

Patay reiterated this theme independently, saying “you did the same things together, you know when you have the same interests and you get along with people, it’s just natural to want to be with them.”

Ann Graber saw this same phenomenon not only in her own teenage years, but in the lives of her own children and their friends. When speaking of Hungarian scouting, she said, “My girls have life-long friends. Pisti grew up with all the boys, too, so he had Joey, Gabi, Keve, Bende [referring to some of her son’s friends]. He’s really close with these kids, and that’s make it or break it.” She goes on to conclude that “it’s the language that pushes them together and the nationality, because they have that in common, thank goodness, but it’s a lot of socialization.” Some of Ann’s observations also transcended her Cleveland Hungarian experience, crossing into the realm of ethnic identity among other ethnic groups in the United States. “My best friend in high school was German and she was just as involved in the German, in, uh, Deutsche Zentrale as I was in cserkészzet and MHBK [a Hungarian veterans organization]. She was the bálkirálynő [queen of the debutante ball] with the Germans when I was at MHBK.” This common trait points to a shared experience with other ethnic communities, albeit one not shared with the average American high school friends alluded to by the other respondents.

### **Hungarian Scouting and a Way of Life**

Most of the respondents expressed the significant impact that being involved in Hungarian scouting from an early age had on their language use. Megan Ramsey, for example, said, “I started cserkészzet when I was four years old, and that’s what really helped me keep up with the culture, the heritage, learning about it, speaking Hungarian.” In her interview she mentioned attaining ranks in the scouting activities and how that motivated her to maintain her language; indeed, the Hungarian scouting movement demands basic levels of language proficiency and basic knowledge of Hungarian history, geography, and literature to attain each successive rank, and this motivates teenagers to learn, because they want to be with their friends to reach the next level. Ann Graber explained it thus: “And you’ll thrive, you’ll push yourself, you know, ‘If so-and-so is going to segédtszti [a rank in scouting] next year, I gotta do magyar iskola, I gotta get my segédtszti material down. I want to go with him.’ So it’s achieving different ranks and increasing your verbiage, your knowledge, your literature, your history, everything, so that you can do it so you can keep up with your friends.”

Friendship formed a deeper commitment and did more for their language maintenance even than attending Hungarian School, the Patays all agreed. Karl explained the commitment, “it was a way of life. I mean, every Friday and Saturday at seven, and you look forward to it. And I think you hit the nail on the head [referring to his sister’s earlier observation]. You did everything else so that you can go to tábor [camp]. And you studied because you wanted to have... all your friends were going and you wanted to be there. And it was a great time, so then you did whatever you had to, and learning whatever it was, and read the book regarding the different camps, so you could be there with your friends. And it was a great life.” Ann explained further: “Even Magyar iskola. I’ll be honest, I hated going, but it was a social thing, too. Your friends were there.”

The effect of scouting on language use commitment and its role in deepening friendships was perhaps most clearly explained by a sports analogy given by Ann:

To go to camp brought us so much closer together because it’s... it’s like playing the game of soccer: you cannot win a soccer game if you play on your own. You have to play as a team. And going to camp, you could not survive a week-long camp if you did not work together. And somehow that camaraderie that’s driving... I mean, yeah, there were tears, you know things sucked or whatever, and you leave the camp and get home and you’d say, ‘Man, that was the best time ever!’ And you could hardly wait to see the friends again. That’s something that a lot of people don’t have, something like a scouting or an ethnicity like that, they don’t ever really get to experience that, I don’t think, because day in, day out you don’t do that with schools.

Indeed, the deep commitment to friends and community caused both Ann and Susan to consciously choose to stay in Cleveland and not go away to college. Susan vividly remembers getting into the Ohio State University for physical therapy school, and deliberately choosing to stay because of her friends and because of scouting. There was no way anyone could talk her out of it, remembered her older sister Ann. Her brother Karl remembered that her parents did not encourage Susan to stay in Cleveland, because she did not need encouragement. “It didn’t need encouragement, because that’s what we wanted,” said Ann.

Samantha Dévai, Hanna Völgyi, and all three Patay siblings spent numerous years not only in the scouting movement, but in the Hungarian folk dance group organized by the scouts, with membership restricted to those Hungarian-American teenagers who worked with younger scouts on a regular basis and also must be able to read, write, and speak fluent Hungarian. The

Hungarian Scout Folk Ensemble, known locally as the Regös Csoport, also counts among its current members both Matt Kobus and Gabe Kovács. Now, as twenty years ago, the autumn harvest festival season runs throughout the fall, sometimes with multiple performance at Hungarian churches in the Cleveland area. Ann Graber characterized typical involvement in the dance group: “We did a szereplés [performance] every weekend, if not two or three... We would literally go to two, three on a weekend. And that’s what we did September through May and that was our weekend activity. We loved it. It was what pulled us in... we didn’t go away to college because we wanted to continue to be a part of what we were in.” Although the Regös dance group does not usually have multiple performances each weekend, only in the fall, Ann’s memory shows the use of a narrative construction typical of Hungarian-American discourse, as shown by Mónika Fodor’s work,<sup>7</sup> drawing on very real facts (the overall scouting movement in Cleveland does have a packed schedule, often with multiple events on weekends year-round). This packed schedule leads to intense emotional ties and deep friendships.

The friendships are based on shared difficult circumstances, for it is far from easy to maintain the Hungarian or any ethnic language in the United States, as shown by the 90% of the Hungarian population who assimilate. Susan ascribes the friendship commitments to a deep understanding: “You understand each other. You understand where everyone’s coming from.” Her sister Ann characterizes these friendships as “amazing. We’ve got such a base, such a core already that we could not see somebody for ten years, and you see them and you pick up where you left off, because you built so much on it.” Susan relates a recent incident connecting with an old friend at the jamboree, a scout camp held every five years: “You still have that common connection. Remember Róni? [Verónika Zidron] She was up at Jubi and I haven’t seen her since Körút [a European tour organized by Hungarian scouts] and I ran up to her, I went up to her at mass and I saw her and gave her a hug and then after zászlólevonás [camp ending ceremony], you know, we connected, but I hadn’t seen her in so long that, again, you just reconnect so quickly because of that commonality.”

Karl Patay, who has not been involved in Hungarian scouting for the last twenty years, nevertheless feels such an emotional bond that on occasion of our interview, held at a Friday evening scout meeting in Cleveland, it actually evoked a visceral reaction upon seeing Hungarian scouts of a newer generation:

I’ve been so far away from it for so long, it’s — when I first came in, I went into that other building and I saw them all line up and I haven’t seen it in

twenty years, and it — it was surreal. And it was so neat, I almost wished I was a part of it again, because it was such a part of my life back then, that it gave me the shivers to see and hear all that, yet. And I had no idea that there were still so many kids involved. I had no idea... it's so emotional to me. I mean, it was such a main part of my life... it's something I feel like I can step right back into tomorrow and I would just... The memories that it brings back, every camp that we went to and the times we had, the camaraderie... you can't take that out of me. As much as I've been away from it for twenty years, for 24 years it was everything to me... I mean, it was a tremendous memory for me, just walking in there and just, it brought tears to my eyes just thinking, 'Wow, it's still here.' So walking in here and seeing all this and, you know... I'm reciting everything they're saying, because I know it. And it's neat to see that.

Ann similarly alludes to the same emotional bond felt even years later when she talks about her daughter's friendship with Samantha Dévai, who both attend different colleges: "Deanna will not speak to Samantha for six months and then the next thing we know, Samantha's on the phone, 'I saw something on Facebook, are you okay?' Yeah, and then they'll talk for an hour. 'Anyuka, I miss her. She's my best friend.' And that's the way it is." The bonds are so strong, indeed, that Ann's social circle, probably also due to her husband being a Hungarian born in Cleveland who is also very actively involved in scouting, is mainly Hungarian. Much as in New Brunswick, NJ, as Katalin Pintz found, the Cleveland Hungarian community is also close-knit because of their shared experiences and commitment. Ann recounts, "and even nowadays, our adult friends, we hang out with only Hungarian people. As adults. Married couples. Only Hungarian people. My American friends that I met as a kid starting going to school, 'What are you doing New Year's? Want to get together?' 'Oh, we're with our Hungarian friends.' 'What are you doing this time?' 'Getting together with our Hungarian friends...'" Susan agrees, stating that the families she hangs out with stem from her scouting best friends, including a friend who grew up in New Brunswick in the parallel close-knit Hungarian community and later moved to the Cleveland area.

The Patay siblings also mention others who for various reasons left or drifted away from Cleveland's Hungarian community, that these people especially as parents often return years later and re-engage with the community. Karl surmises, "And you can probably go through cserkészlet and see who is in there now and kind of drifting, and then when they became parents, maybe somehow for whatever reason, um, you know, maybe married someone Hungarian or something, it kind of drew them back in. They left for a time. I think Balássy Pali was gone for a while, and after he had kids, and now he's a major part of it, probably for the last 10-15 years." His sister mentions Péter

Bogárdy as a similar example, and Karl continues, “I mean, you’ll get that. Feri, Jálícs Feri. You know, they were, they left. They did their college thing and then, you know, whatever the reason, whatever drew them back, you know, I think once they come back, I think they’re lifers... I think you kind of realize that maybe what you’ve been missing and then you don’t want to lose it again.” The examples they mention are all people who experienced Hungarian scouting as children, and now have their own children enrolled in the program.

Indeed, not only does the Hungarian scouting program organize activities that promote a deep bond of friendship visible even twenty years later, but it has an effect on language use by what it demands from its leaders, many of whom are teenagers working with younger scouts. Matt Kobus relates how scouting impacts his own language use, saying “whenever I’m at scouts or activities I try and speak it because there’s little kids there and I want them to speak better and I want to be a role model for them, I guess.” By Matt’s own account, his own Hungarian language skills are at about half of where his native English skills are, but what being involved in scouting does for him is it causes him to be cognizant of others and the community’s language usage, which in turn leads to a conscious choice to use Hungarian, even if it is harder to speak for second and third generation Hungarian-Americans.

In another thought-provoking example, being involved in scouting led to success in her career, recalled Susan Linder. “I remember it was June, when I was interviewing for this job and they tried to set up an interview when I was going to kiscserkész tábor. I said, ‘Sorry, I’m going to be cooking for 45 kids, you know, at scout camp and going whitewater rafting the day after with my family, so let’s do it the next week.’ And they emailed me back, ‘You’re taking 45 kids to scout camp? And whitewater rafting? You’re hired!’”

### **The Value of Speaking a Second Language**

All of the respondents emphasized the value of speaking a second language, in this case Hungarian. Gabe Kovács had the simplest, most common-sense insight, appropriately followed by a laugh, when he said that “we all speak it, so why not speak it?” The parents of Jennifer Hegyi felt that Hungarian was so important that they had a private Hungarian tutor for their daughter when she was about twelve or thirteen years old. Hanna Völgyi, reflecting on the Hungarian language use in her childhood, stated that “it was something that

made me stand out against my peers and I was always very proud of it.” Matt Kobus linked the pride of being Hungarian to peer influence when talking about the gradual shift as he got older: “the scouts and making friends there [caused the change]. Knowing people there and realizing that other people take pride in being Hungarian, so I should, too, I guess.”

The value of speaking Hungarian is not a sentiment limited to proud Hungarians, either. Knowing another language has practical benefits, as noted by several of the American spouses mentioned in the interviews. Susan Linder related how the subject of Hungarian language use with eventual children came up with her future husband Dave: “when we were dating, it came up, and it was a non-factor. It was the more the better... Dave always said that it’s a gift you can give to your children... it’s so easy to give it, why would you not? Why would you deny them that language?” Megan Ramsey also related how her father, who had originally been opposed to his daughter learning another language, changed his mind:

he actually changed his mind when I was like four years old because he has a niece, my cousin Bailey who lives in Maryland, she was living in Belgium at the time because her parents were CIA and FBI agents, so they were in Belgium at the time and she was learning French. So then my dad realized that, you know, ‘Maria should teach Megan some Hungarian.’ Because of his niece. I guess he realized, because he was a new father... he realized that it’s best to know another language, because he wasn’t raised that way. He was raised like typical United States citizen [monolingual].

When asked whether they plan on speaking Hungarian to their own children, the respondents were all affirmative. Matt Kobus replied that “I think it would be a shame if the whole Hungarian thing ends with me in my family.” Megan Ramsey, reflecting on her own childhood, said “Most definitely, because I think it’s just such a great thing to know, just knowing another language in general. So yeah, I would definitely put them through Magyar iskola and I hope they would like it a lot better than I did,” laughing as she finished. Gabe Kovács alluded to academic research, all the more noteworthy since he is sixteen years old: “I heard something, some sort of study once, that if you learn, if you’re bilingual at a young age, that it’s easier to learn, or something like that, I heard once. So I think it would be a benefit to them, and like it’s just a cool quality to have.” Indeed, decades of research in bilingualism has found that speaking two languages does, in fact, help when studying a third or fourth language.

Samantha Dévai spoke of her American friends' attitude toward her own language use: "I think especially when we started taking language classes in high school, and [her friends] realized that it was, like, such a hard think to get just the basic concepts down, I think that's when they're like, 'Oh my gosh, they have a whole other language already.'" Jennifer Hegyi concurred, adding, "they always say, 'Oh, I wish I knew a whole other language.'" Hanna Völgy reinforced the attitude described among American school friends, surmising:

I think they just are maybe envious, or they think it's really neat that we know an entire different language, an entire different culture aside from just being raised with the American ideals and the American language. I think that they can't even wrap their head around that we can communicate in another language and that we've known it since we were, you know, practically born.

Most of the respondents also emphasized how much of an impact visiting Hungary had not only on their language use, but also on their own sense of identity. Gabe Kovács linked his Cleveland Hungarian experiences, especially in the scouting program, when he said "after I went to Hungary, I think I really realized that it's not just some sort of activity on every Friday night, it's actually who I am, I guess." Samantha Dévai agreed in an independent interview, explaining that for her, visiting Hungary "made it more real, because living here it just seems so isolated, it's just a small community in Cleveland, so being there and that actually being the predominant language made it seem like, ok, there's a lot of people that speak this and they're from there and it's not just us in the scouting community of greater Cleveland." Hanna Völgyi's pride was brought out by her own visit to Hungary, "just seeing where my family came from, seeing the traditions, kind of, live and in action." She also explained that visiting Hungary positively impacted her language skills: "after returning, I mean, noticeably, it became even more, you know, spoken more at home, much more fluid and I was able to incorporate new words into my language base, so it definitely helped, even just being there for a few weeks. It showed huge gains in my language when I speak it, that's for sure."

Megan Ramsey even switched her Facebook page to Hungarian, alluding to the differences between the Hungarian spoken in Cleveland and the Hungarian spoken in Hungary:

Somebody told me the other day, when he went to Magyarország when he was about 18 years old, he told me that the way that he speaks Hungarian over

there in Magyarország is really old-fashioned and he didn't understand the language between the friends and peers and the younger crowd, because it was really fast and it kind of, everything went with the flow and there was a lot of slang involved that we're not really taught over here, because our parents all came in the '50's, '60s, '70's, during that era. So I think that the way we were raised is a little bit more old-fashioned, I think, and the way, the reason why I changed my Facebook to Hungarian and that sometimes I do text in Hungarian, too, is because I kind of want to learn a little bit how real Hungarians, like the modern-day Hungarians speak, because one day I would like to go there and not feel like a fool, you know? And be able to communicate on like the same level as other Hungarians.

Réka Pigniczky, in her documentary film *Inkubátor*, examined the Hungarian-American communities of California, New Brunswick, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, and numerous interviewees in the film expressed this same disconnect between being Hungarian in the United States and being Hungarian in Hungary. In her narration, Réka speaks of an almost artificial incubator that her parent's generation set up for their children, emphasizing only the positive parts of Hungarian culture.<sup>8</sup>

The Patay siblings reminisced about visiting Hungary in the 1980's, going to a dance in Füred, and feeling the same dismay the narrator in *Inkubátor* felt. Karl Patay tells of his sister Ann's entrance to the dance: "She's there, in her *hímzett díszmagyar* [handmade traditional dress], that she worked on for a long time, right, and many tears (laughs) and, but it shocked — I remember, this was my first impression — it shocked me to see the Americanized version of the Hungarian girls there. Nobody had anything on like that. They had westernized, just ball dresses on... Like here we are, the Americans, with all the Hungarians, and they had nothing on that was Hungarian." Ann continues: "We knew more of the folk customs than they did. We feel bad when we discuss, you know, this and this and this, uh, *locsolás* and, uh... they're like, 'Huh?'" Susan Linder mentioned a mutual friend, Klári, who said the same thing. Ann Graber surmises that "we're more Hungarian than they are," which her sister Susan clarifies: "or at least that we try to preserve the culture much better than they do, but they don't have to otherwise, they live there." Preserving the culture because of a perceived need to, as opposed to in Hungary, where there less of a need to, is a theme heard not only in Hungarian-American circles, but also often among Hungarians in Romania, Slovakia, the Ukraine, or in Serbia as well.

Ann recounts that here in the United States, we grasp for anything that's Hungarian, probably because "we wanted to preserve it so much." Her sister Susan explains:

for preserving it, because we see that each generation is going to get weaker. It's just, I think, inevitably it will, so you try to ingrain anything that you can and grasp on to anything that you can. Even as I just look around in my house, and see the Holloház or the Herendi and stuff like that, and see that my kids appreciate that, so you hope that that's one little thing that they will take with them, you know, when they get to their own house. So it's – or your *hímezett terület*... stuff like that that it's a part of us.

### **The Importance of Strictness**

Parenting, including the language skills and cultural values transmitted to their own children, again came into the spotlight several times during the study. Ann Graber realized that her own ethnicity was strengthened when she grew up and had her family:

Meaning my own kids. As soon as I started having my own children, my ethnicity was strengthened, I mean my language, because I wanted my kids to have the same thing.” She spoke of her struggles to keep her son in the scouting program: “there came that point in his life, I want to say between age 9 and 12, where he was like, ‘I don’t want—’ It was a fight to go every Friday, an absolute fight, and it was, ‘You’re going until you go to ÓV [the scout leadership training camp at age 14] and then it’s up to you.’ Then along came Magyar iskola for ÓV and he did that... He still had good friends. He went through the ÓV course for two years, went to ÓV tábor, and afterwards he hugged me and he said, ‘Thank you for making me do it. This was awesome, I’m so glad I’m a part of it.’ And he really, really enjoys it. There’s that point where you’ve got to reach...

Not only is consistent parenting important, she stresses, but her insights also show that the transmission of culture succeeds when parents create the conditions for friends to influence their peers in a positive way towards Hungarian language and culture. Her brother, referring to his own childhood, agrees, “as much as I fought it back then, especially in my younger years, is how much I appreciate it now.”

Grandparents being strict is a theme voiced by Ákos Fóty in the documentary film *Inkubátor*. He recalls Sunday afternoons growing up Hungarian in California, where his grandparents made him read Hungarian newspaper articles and summarize them, and how much he hated it. But there was no escaping it, especially since the reward for finishing was a trip to

McDonald's.<sup>9</sup> Ann Graber recalled a similar incident: "Nagypapa would make us read in Hungarian, and we would go hide and say, 'Zsuzsi will go first' (laughs). Mostly I would go hide. I hated reading with them." Yet later in life, as seen in the paragraph above, it is these same values that she transmits to her own children. The strictness was not limited to grandparents, however.

Sometimes the strictness of the scout leaders brought forth pride and accomplishment, as evidenced by the situation related by Karl Patay:

We were *róverek* [older scouts], so I was the, um, *őrsvezető* [patrol leader] for Kanyó Zoli, Csorba Béla, Sanyi, and I don't know who else was in there, but I mean, Miki, and you know we went on a two-day *portya* [hike] and Levente tried to push us and he gave us something like 25 miles or something the first day and we were pissed. And I'm thinking, 'How the heck is he going to think that we're going to finish this in one day?' We start early in the morning, 2 o'clock, and Levente came by at 11:30 with the van and at that point, we were determined. He was going to pick us up and finally take us to our destination where we were supposed to spend the night next to this creek. And we had compasses and you know how it was. We said no and we wouldn't take the ride. You know what, you're going to test us, so we refused it and we just kept walking.

Demanding a high standard evokes a proud reaction and camaraderie from the teenaged boys, and this camaraderie is what tied them together. Karl continues, "but you know what? I'll never forget it, because it was [not] wussy."

### **Linguistic Insights**

The Patay siblings also brought to the surface some linguistic insights regarding their Hungarian language usage. Speaking of the pragmatics of whether a conversation is mixed with English or Hungarian, Karl relates that "with Mom it's mixed, depending on how she answers the phone or how she starts the conversation. She'll start in English, too," as opposed to his father, who always started the conversations in Hungarian. This phenomenon of guiding or directing the language of conversation is well-known among Hungarian-American parents whose children's easier language is English. Continues Karl, "So, if she started in Hungarian, you know, 'Hogy vagy?' then, you know, I'd be speaking Hungarian to her... And it flows... For example, coming here today, when Feri was here. When you start a conver-

sation in Hungarian, most of it's spoken in Hungarian... how something is started, I guess, who starts the conversation." His sister Ann concurs: "You don't want to lose it. The less you practice it, the harder it is to go back. Pisti [her husband] and I will speak in Hungarian amongst each other more than I do with my own kids."

They speak of the natural phenomenon experienced by many ethnic language parents trying to maintain their language while living in the United States, which Karl characterized as "once we got into high school age, we would speak English amongst ourselves." Ann relates of how the shift from Hungarian to English came about as she saw it in her own children:

They spoke solely Hungarian in the house up until kis Pisti started first grade. Kindergarten was still part-time; it was two full days and a half day. And the girls only spoke Hungarian together. There's six and four years between Pisti and the two girls, and as Pisti started coming home, he was... all of the sudden he was cool, that he could speak English. The kids spoke Hungarian as their first language. Pisti didn't start preschool till he was four and a half, and when Deanna started when she was three and a half, she spoke Hungarian only and I would have to translate for her. So she understood English, but she didn't speak... As Pisti started going to school, so first grade, second grade, the language all of the sudden switched between the three kids. That was, it was very noticeable. All of the sudden, the three kids, who spoke Hungarian at home to each other, started speaking English, 'cause now Pisti understood English.

This natural switching is what the scouting movement and the other community activities seem to mitigate, inasmuch as the natural tendency of the children is to choose English, the easier language to communicate amongst themselves. Parents enrolling their children in organized Hungarian activities such as scouting gives their children, especially the teenagers, a structured outlet that channels the conversations to Hungarian by way of working with younger children. This allows the language to be maintained despite assimilation pressures, often late into the second and third generations, as one can see from the respondents and their children. Karl recalls his shift in high school where "I started getting more American friends, and in turn, talking with them and doing more things with them, I lost my Hungarian a lot."

This view is counterbalanced by the example of the friendship of Matt Kobus and Gabe Kovács, who relate the effect of their close friendship on their own language use. Says Matt, "Gabe's like one of my best friends. He's always been there for me, like I see when he speaks fluent Hungarian, so I

look up to him for that.“ The effect on Hungarian language use is mutual, continues Gabe, as he lists the top people in his life who impacted his language development: “I think that the top five people would be my grandma... my dad; and my two other grandparents, because it just comes easier for them; and probably, um, probably Matt, actually, because, since when he joined cserkészzet, he didn't know that much Hungarian, so I sort of pushed myself to speak it more with him so he would learn it.” So peer friendships can have a negative or positive role in impacting ethnic language maintenance.

### **Reasons for Assimilation**

In trying to ascertain what factors impacted their Hungarian language use growing up, the conversations among the respondents revealed some concerns and negative factors that illuminate why 90% of Hungarian-Americans do not in fact speak Hungarian in their households. Chief among these was the pressure faced by children to assimilate

Both Samantha Dévai and the Patay siblings mentioned cousins who were not living in cities with large Hungarian communities and where there was no Hungarian scouting. Says Susan Linder, “Well, the fact that [our parents] happened to land in Cleveland, you know? Because if they would’ve landed in, I don’t know, Kansas, you wouldn’t have the same culture surrounding you that would support that.” Samantha Dévai recounts a parallel situation: “And then my other cousin that’s still here in the States, um, in another part of Ohio, he didn’t participate in scouts very much, so I think his Hungarian language ability declined much more rapidly than ours.” To his credit, his cousin Hanna does say that “he did recently just go to Hungary, and now he’s come back and pretty much that’s all he speaks, so I think it made quite the difference for him, so he might be inching his way up to where we’re at,” much like the fact that Karl Patay, because he works with Hungarian laborers in his construction business, speaks better Hungarian, knowing more slang and having better pronunciation, than he ever did as a teenager. But having friends who speak Hungarian, whether in the scouts or in other organized Hungarian community activities, does seem to make a difference. Jennifer Hegyi, the only one of the respondents who did not spend many years growing up with the scouts, admits that she does not really know that many Hungarians that are her age, except for a few that don’t live in Ohio. In addition, the reason she no longer has a private Hungarian tutor is that she “got really busy in school so I couldn’t do any of it.”

Megan Ramsey also spoke of an American school culture that was not really supportive of or understanding of bilingualism. She characterized some of her peers in school as being very sheltered or narrow-minded. “They don’t really know much about culture and history and the old world. Like, they don’t really care that much, I kind of feel.” One in particular was surprised that Megan would go abroad. Megan describes the incident: “I just told my friend the other day at school that I’m going to Europe, and she’s like, ‘What?! Where are you going? You’re going there alone?’ I’m like, ‘Yeah.’ ‘It’s so dangerous, don’t go.’ I’m like, ‘No, it’s going to be fine, there’s, I’m going to go to a school there, a study abroad program, everything’s going to be fine. There’s going to be professors, classes... it’s going to be all right.’ And she’s like, ‘Oh, you’re a daredevil.’” Ann Graber remembers being chastised at her daughter’s preschool: “I got in a lot of trouble from Deanna’s preschool teacher, how could I do this to my child [speaking only Hungarian at a young age]? And I looked at her and I go, ‘Don’t worry, she’ll learn English.’ You know, I was not intimidated at all, because we had been through it, you know. And she knew her numbers, she knew her letters, she was fine.”

Another reason English becomes the predominant language in the household is simply easier communication. Ann Graber explains: “Because you’re at work all day, you come home, you do homework and everything. We’ll discuss an activity and you want a response from your kids. Their first language, unfortunately, even though they spoke Hungarian as a first language, is English. If you want to get something out of them, you have to just say it in English. It’s more important to have that communication going... it’s easier for them, communications-wise.” Karl Patay had the same situation brought on by his long working hours. He remembers, “I was working 10-12 hours a day, sometimes going at one point two jobs, and I was never home. You know, when I’d come home at 9 o’clock or 8 o’clock at night... the last thing I’m going to try to do for the half hour or twenty minutes I see my kids is to try to teach them Hungarian. I wanted to just communicate with them. I wanted to see them, I wanted to hold them, I wanted to hug them, see how their day went, the goods and the bads, and that’s a big difference between why my kids don’t speak Hungarian and her kids do.”

### **The Role of American Spouses**

Karl also related the support shown by his wife, Denise, who does not speak Hungarian. “She had all intentions of trying to learn Hungarian. She learned

the colors, the numbers, and that, but you know what, life takes over.” Difficulties in speaking Hungarian to his children he ascribed to his long working hours and some other private personal issues, never to his American spouse, but he did touch upon the difficulties experienced by an American spouse who marries into a Hungarian family. “She’s pretty easy going, but she has her things that bother her, too. And, you know, after the honeymoon was over, you know, she voiced to me that it did trouble her when we went to my parents’ house and she didn’t understand what people were saying. And it wasn’t until Susan got married and Dave came along that she started feeling more comfortable.” Susan confirmed, “Dave said he felt kind of like an outsider,” and Karl continued, “Yeah, you feel like an outsider and it’s like, the last thing they want to do after they’ve been through that is to go home and to speak it at home, you know, for me, anyway, the times I was there.”

Navigating the tightrope of emotions and being attentive to wives of husbands is a problem often voiced by Hungarian-Americans with American spouses. In a particularly nuanced insight, Ann put herself in her sister-in-law’s shoes and turned her own familiarity with and preference for Hungarian to Denise’s situation with English: “for me, to speak to an infant in English would’ve been foreign. There’s no way you could expect [Denise’s] nieces to speak to her little baby in Hungarian, a foreign language for her. I mean, you have to say those words of endearment in your own language and for us, it was Hungarian. I couldn’t imagine speaking to... even to a baby now, I speak Hungarian, because that’s what comes natural to a baby.” Susan agreed, stating, “So then you’re speaking a language that the spouse does not understand. So in my situation, Dave was not just understanding, but was agreeable to not understand his children’s first words. And that bothered him. I remember being in the car with him once, and we were going and the boys were babbling about something, and it was insignificant, it was nothing, and he said, ‘What are they saying?’ And I said, ‘It’s really, it’s nothing, it’s just...’ But to him it was everything because he didn’t understand it. And that bothered him. Not to the point where he would say ‘Don’t ever do this.’” Matt Kobus related a similar sentiment: “Well, my step-dad kind of gets angry if my mom is always speaking Hungarian to me, and he feels kind of like he’s left out of it. And sometimes my mom’s friends will tell my step-dad ‘You should learn Hungarian’ and that really pisses him off.” Susan distilled these sentiments into the crux: “that’s always a difficult part, leaving your spouse out of a conversation.”

All of the American spouses mentioned in the interviews were seen by the respondents as being supportive of Hungarian in the home, but Susan did

point to several frustrations of a mixed-language household experienced by her husband Dave:

So if I'm having a heated discussion with my kids, and we're disagreeing on something, then they're... if Dave's home, he'll be like, 'What are you telling them, because I don't understand.' He gets frustrated with that situation, where he wants to back me up in what I've just told them, whether that's to get ready for church and then I left to go get ready myself, he's like, 'What did you tell them? Because I can't reinforce what you just told them because I didn't understand that.' These breakdowns still occur, and then you have to kind of take a time-out and say, 'I just asked them to get ready for church. They know what they have to do and if you can reinforce that, that'd be great.'

In fact, Dave's sister-in-law Ann relates how supportive he is linguistically. "Dave would say things like, 'Hozd here the piros labda.' And he would. Whatever he could say in Hungarian, he would really make an effort." It is not easy being the American spouse of a Hungarian-American parent speaking Hungarian to their children, and these situations reflect the difficulties experienced in everyday situations.

### **American or Hungarian?**

Perhaps the most telling question was the last question of the interview, in which I asked each respondent whether they considered themselves American or Hungarian and why? Their answers were easily divided into age groups: below 25 years old and over 25. The younger respondents mostly said they were American, although proud of their Hungarian heritage. Because almost all of them and some of their parents were born in the United States, that is not surprising. Matt Kobus and Megan Ramsey were unequivocal in their answers. Says Matt, "I think I feel more American, like without a question. Like, you know, I feel proud to be Hungarian, there's just like a stronger pull towards the American patriotism." Megan continued in the same vein: "Um, I would have to say that I am more of an American, just because, just like Máté said, he's more patriotic towards America, and I'm more patriotic toward America. I was raised as a Hungarian, I guess, but only with food and the culture and the folk dancing and, you know, having Hungarian friends, so I do consider myself more Hungarian than any other type of nationality I have in my blood, but if I have to, uh, if anybody asks me, I'm an American. No matter what. Because this is my home, this is where I was born." Gabe Kovács alluded to his parents'

role in forming his identity: “I consider myself, I don't know, half and half? That's what my answer usually is when I get asked that question. Because I am an American citizen. I was born here, raised here, but really I was sort of raised like a Hungarian, I guess, because my parents tried to do that and I think they succeeded.”

Hanna, Samantha, and Jennifer were also unequivocal in their answers. Said Hanna Völgyi, “although I'm very proud of my Hungarian heritage, I still probably consider myself American, just for the sheer fact that I was born here and I did my schooling here and will most likely finish... be living here the rest of my life, so I would probably say I'm American.” Her cousin Samantha Dévai agreed, “I feel sort of the same way.” Jennifer Hegyi, who was born in Hungary but came to the United States as a toddler, continued: “I think that I'm a little of both, but if I had to pick one, I feel like I'm more American, just because of how I was raised here and it's not the same as if I was in Hungary.”

The three Patay siblings, being older, offered different views on the same question. Susan could not separate the two parts of her identity. She explains:

I can't say if I'm American-Hungarian or Hungarian-American. But it's both. And I... because I have such a reverence for the country that gave me and my parents freedom and that they really ingrained in us that, yes, our culture is 100% paired in real life and it's what we are, but the fact that this country gave us the freedom to, you know, have your own religion, and ... maintain your culture and do what you want that way. You can't... I can't separate the two. I can't say one or the other. You're not assimilated but you can keep the two separate, appreciating both, really. It's not one or the other.

Karl got emotional as he explained that whenever he visits Hungary, he says, “Megyek haza” [I go home], just like his parents did, even though he was not born in Hungary, it is not a home to him, yet such a strong tie still remains. He feels the emotional bond that his parents had with their native country, yet consciously disassociates himself from negative aspects of Hungarian culture, offering an urban vs. rural dichotomy, while at the same time acknowledging that his identity has changed through the years.

If you asked me when, up until I was 20-24 I would say I was more Hungarian. At 44, I'm more American because of my disassociation with that life, not intentionally, but because again, of life. And not only that, but I've been back enough times to see that there's a lot of what Hung — what I see in Hungary

today that I don't want to be associated with. It's, you know, not the villages, but the big cities have become very westernized. You walk into Budapest today and, I'll never forget, three years ago when I was there, I thought I was walking through the Bronx. Graffiti everywhere. I don't want to be associated at all with the Hungary, with the big cities of today. What I want to be associated with is the life that my parents lived there and the life that's still being lived in the villages where they're still keeping rabbits and chickens and pigs in their backyards.

Ann Graber, on the other hand, explained that her Hungarian identity is a particular type of Hungarian-American identity, localizing it to her experience growing up as a scout in Cleveland. "I will say... Hungarian-American, but the Hungarian-American... I mean, I'm here, this Hungarian, OK? The *cserkész* Hungarian, the *regös* Hungarian, the *magyar iskola* Hungarian, the Cleveland Hungarian, the *in exteris*, or whatever is outside of Hungary. That's Hungarian-American." Her ties to her Hungarian roots have become stronger through time, as she acknowledges the effort that maintaining a Hungarian identity for herself and for her children entails. She continues, "The older I become, the more it's still very important to me, even more so. I do get tired of what I'm doing, I have to admit, because I've been involved for so long, I do get tired of it but that necessity is so strong. And now it's like you see it in your kids and that's why it's still so strong."

## **Conclusions**

Mónika Fodor found that "qualitative interviews about culture inquire about shared understandings, taken-for-granted roles of behavior, standards of value and mutual expectations." Furthermore, she writes that "a fundamental goal is to find out what people have learned through experience and how they are able to pass it on to the next generation."<sup>10</sup> What are the main factors, then, that impact Hungarian language and culture maintenance among these nine Cleveland Hungarians, and by extension among Cleveland's Hungarian community in general in light of their responses?

Very important in developing their Hungarian identities was the role of consistent parenting. Parents who spoke Hungarian in the household, who took their children to Hungarian community events such as the Hungarian school, scouting, and the folk dance group, made a significant cultural impact on their children, as evidenced by their children's recollections even twenty

years later. The Hungarian scouting movement and folk dance group, by placing strict demands on its participants, effected a deep camaraderie and strong bonds of friendship among the children and especially the teenagers, who are prone to listen to their peers instead of their parents. When peer friendships in American high school are stronger than among Hungarian friends, language use suffers. When peer friendships among the Hungarian teens is strong, their Hungarian language use improves. Thus having a child actively involved in Cleveland's Hungarian community events leads to a higher fluency and a stronger sense of cultural identity, as does visiting Hungary.

When only 11% of Hungarians in Cleveland report speaking Hungarian regularly in the household odds are that 89% of those with Hungarian ancestry will eventually assimilate. These nine case studies, as examples of Cleveland Hungarians who maintain their language and culture, show how to beat those odds. Even late into the second and third generation, it is still very possible to maintain an ethnic language and culture and pass it on to the next generation. It all depends on strong parenting and peer friendships put into place and enabled by a tight-knit community.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Attila Szabo, "Hungarian Immigrants in Northeastern Ohio: Ethno-Cultural Contact and Assimilation," (master's thesis completed and accepted at Kent State University, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Katalin Pintz, "Hungarian Heritage Maintenance in the U.S.A.: New Brunswick, N.J. as a Magyar Ethnic Island," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 38, 1-2 (2011): 83-120.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

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<sup>7</sup> Mónika Fodor, “My Slice of Americana: Hungarian-Americans Construct Their Ethno-Cultural Identity in Narratives” (PhD dissertation, University of Pécs, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Réka Pigniczky, *Inkubátor* (Budapest: 56Films, 2009), DVD.

<sup>9</sup> Ákos Fóty, interviewed in *Inkubátor*.

<sup>10</sup> Fodor, “My Slice of Americana.”

**A Document**

**“Our Unfortunate Hungarians:”  
Early Hungarian Settlement in Montreal.  
A Speech by Mária Bagossy Fehér**

**Translated, introduced and edited by  
Nándor Dreisziger**

**Hungarians began** to settle in Canada already before the First World War, however the size of this early migration was a pale shadow of the movement of people from Hungary to the United States in the three-and-a-half decades before 1914. The arrival of Hungarians in Canada in any appreciable numbers began only in the mid-1920s, after the passing of the first so-called “quota laws” in the United States that greatly limited the admission of Eastern Europeans to the American Republic.

In interwar Hungary the circumstances that prompted people to consider emigration were numerous. Some of the factors were the same as those that drove hundreds of thousands to travel to the United States in the decades before the First World War. The most important of these was uneven economic development in the country. While Hungary’s economy grew by leaps and bounds during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>, large areas of the country and certain types of economic activity lagged behind. In fact in many parts of the country, especially in its north-eastern counties, there was overpopulation in the countryside accompanied by widespread poverty. Many of the problems these conditions had caused persisted after the First World War. Added to these were serious difficulties that had been caused by the war. Before 1918 Hungary was part of an economic unit that encompassed much of Central Europe, after the war, and in particular after the truncation of the country through the peace treaty of Trianon of June 1920, she became an isolated land deprived of its traditional markets as well as most of her

natural resources. The country also had a large refugee problem as the result of the influx of tens of thousands of government officials, technical experts and teachers who had left the Hungarian territories that had been assigned to Hungary's neighbours by the peace treaty. Many Hungarians, especially residents of Hungary's impoverished countryside, had nowhere to go, now that "Amerika" had closed its gates before them, but to Canada — and a few Latin American countries.<sup>1</sup>

The number of Hungarian immigrants who came to Canada in the six years after 1924 when that country re-opened its gates to them has been estimated to have been about 28,000. The vast majority of these newcomers were "agricultural types" but there was a sprinkling of middle-class elements among them, most often refugees from the lands that had been taken away from Hungary. The vast majority of these new arrivals were young males who came with the hope that, once they established themselves in Canada, they could send for their wives or girlfriends, or find picture-brides for themselves from Hungary. Canadian immigration authorities directed these newcomers to the Canadian West where they were expected to work on farms or in such fields as railway construction, mining or forestry. Some of the newcomers were settled on marginal lands that were modestly productive in the 1920s but became wastelands in the drought-stricken 1930s.

Sources describing the early Canadian lives of these immigrants are not plentiful. They consist of a handful of books and a few hitherto unpublished documents. Perhaps the most interesting and least known among these sources is the book of Sámuel Zágonyi, *Kanada egy európai bevándorló megvilágításában* [Canada through the eyes of a European immigrant] (published by the author in 1926). The book contains an appendix which gives, in fair amount of detail, the experiences of three recent Hungarian arrivals to Canada.<sup>2</sup> Another book that can be considered a mainly primary source on the subject of the lives of 1920s Hungarian immigrants is Ödön Paizs, *Magyarok Kanadában* [Hungarians in Canada] (Budapest, 1928). It contains much information that is useful to the historian of this subject. Still another such work is Jenő Ruzsa, *A Kanadai Magyarság Története* [History of Canada's Hungarians] (published by the author, 1940). This book is a storehouse of information on Canada's Hungarian communities for the historian who has enough patience to sort through a bulky and disorganized volume.<sup>3</sup>

Among unpublished documents relating to the subject the most interesting are the detailed, often insightful reports that István Schebeck Petényi, the Hungarian Vice-Consul in Winnipeg, sent to the Hungarian

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Budapest, about the conditions that faced Hungarian immigrants to the Canadian West in the late 1920s.<sup>4</sup> Another unpublished document that has much valuable information on the Hungarian communities of Northern Ontario and the Canadian West during the Second World War is the report that Béla Eisner prepared for the Canadian government during the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> In view of this scarcity of primary sources on the lives of the Hungarian immigrants who came to Canada in the 1902s the appearance of any new document related to the subject must be greeted with enthusiasm.<sup>6</sup>

### **Mária Bagossy Fehér's 1935 Speech**

The new document in question is the speech Mária Fehér gave in Hungary about conditions for recent Hungarian immigrants in Montreal during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Mária Fehér was the wife of Mihály Fehér, the pastor of Montreal's newly-established Hungarian Reformed congregation. She came to Canada in 1928 to join her husband in Montreal. In 1935 she returned to Hungary for a visit, and it was during her stay there that she gave an account of her experiences to an audience made up of her Hungarian acquaintances, former schoolmates and teachers. The speech does not cover the story of Montreal's Hungarians before Mária Fehér's stay in the city, and it probably doesn't cover accurately the story of the establishment of her husband's congregation, even though she claims to know the details of this story. Still, the speech provides some hitherto little-known information on many aspects of the subject. It should be used in conjunction with Mária's husband's account of the congregation's history.<sup>7</sup>

What Mária Fehér's speech doesn't say is that the first Hungarian settlers in this, at the time the largest, Canadian commercial and financial centre were Jews who immigrated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were apparently so many East European Jews in the city that the Presbyterian Church of Canada thought it worth while to establish a mission in the city the overt aim of which was to convert at least some of these people to Presbyterianism. The minister in charge of this effort was a certain Reverend J. McCarter who selected as his assistant the Hungarian-born Trebitsch Lincoln. Lincoln was a promising candidate for the job. He was young and energetic. He had been born into a Jewish family but as a teenager he converted first to Lutheranism and then to Presbyterianism. Besides his native Hungarian, he spoke German, Yiddish and English. He undertook his task with enthusiasm and began proselytising — visiting

Jews in their homes or talking to them wherever he could —not only in Montreal but in neighbouring small towns as well. “There is no evidence” says his biographer, “that in his work for the Presbyterian mission Trebitsch ever converted a single Jew.” In fact, the mission came to an end, mainly because it ran out of funds, and Lincoln returned to Europe to continue his extraordinary career — that was to include a stint as a member of the British Parliament, a spy in Germany, and in his old age, as a Buddhist monk in China.<sup>8</sup>

In her speech Mária Fehér made only one reference to the Hungarian Jews of Montreal mentioning briefly that in the early 1930 there was a club for Hungarian-speaking Jewish youths in the city. Apparently contacts between recent Hungarian immigrants to Canada and the by then second-generation Hungarian Jews were rare or non-existent.

Mária Fehér’s history of the Hungarian community of Montreal starts with 1926 and first tells the story of the founding of the first Reformed congregation of Hungarian Protestants in the city. This part of the document it may not be accurate in some of its details. This is perhaps not surprising as Mária arrived in Montreal only in 1928 and her recollection of what she had heard about events before then may not be accurate. According to her husband’s 1966 account the United Church of Canada had invited him to do his missionary work in the Toronto area and not in Ottawa. On arriving in Toronto, however, he found that such work had already been started there by the Presbyterian Church so he asked to be sent elsewhere. He was sent to Kingston in eastern Ontario but on finding no Hungarians there, he was allowed to proceed to Montreal.<sup>9</sup>

Another comment in Mária Fehér’s account that might not be accurate is her claim that between 1928 and 1935 Montreal’s Hungarian population increased tenfold, but she might not have been far off the mark. Further, in her speech she talked of still another reason why, according to her knowledge, some Hungarians left Hungary in the 1920s. In this connection she said that “There were also those who left because they feared that they would have to face justice because of their activities during the Commune; these people hoped that they could hide....” Since she never returned to this subject, I left this comment out from the translation of her speech. This could have been a statement that she might have felt was expected of her in the highly anti-communist political atmosphere of Hungary of the mid-1930s.

There is strange omission in Mária Fehér’s account of conditions for Hungarian immigrants in Montreal during the late 1930s and early 1930s. She makes not a single a reference to the French-speaking residents

of the city, even though they made up roughly about half of the total population. True, Mária and her husband and most of their Hungarian compatriots lived in a section of Montreal where English-speakers and immigrants lived, but the omission is still strange. Perhaps Mária lived in this “small world” and never ventured to other sections of her metropolis.<sup>10</sup>

As a final introductory comment let me explain that the words Mária Fehér uses for her compatriots in Montreal was “*szegény magyarok*.” These words could be translated into English as “poor” or “penniless” Hungarians, but a more accurate translation would be “unfortunate” in the sense of “pitiable Hungarians.” In fact Mária Fehér’s profound sympathies for her unlucky compatriots is evident throughout her speech, and illustrate accurately the essence of her life’s work — dedicated as it was to the service of these unfortunate people.

#### NOTES (to the introduction)

<sup>1</sup> On Hungarian settlement in Canada in the 1920s see N.F. Dreisziger *et al.*, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 98-102. Also, Nándor Dreisziger, “Hungarians in Brazil,” in *Hungarians: From Ancient Times to 1956*, ed. Nándor Dreisziger (New York, Ottawa and Toronto: Legas, 2007), 173-181, especially 174-176.

<sup>2</sup> On Zágonyi’s book see N.F. Dreisziger, ed. “Immigrant Fortunes and Mistortunes in Canada in the 1920s,” *Hungarian Studies Review*, 17, 1 (Spring, 1990): 29-59. The reliability of Zágonyi’s stories cannot be ascertained.

<sup>3</sup> Ruzsa’s book is indeed very disorganized. His daughter explained much later in a taped interview that his father used to type parts of the book, in her bedroom, during late evenings and at night, and took whatever he had written to the typesetters in the morning. As a result, he book’s first draft was its final draft. (Oral history interviews, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, now housed in the Public Archives of Ontario.)

<sup>4</sup> There reports are discussed in Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope*, p. 134, note 62.

<sup>5</sup> Béla Eisner, “Report of my Good-Will Visit to the Communities of Hungarian Origin...,” manuscript dated at Montreal, 1942. See also Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 173-176, and pp. 190f (note 13.) Béla Eisner was probably the “bank official” that Mihály Fehér met in 1926 soon after his arrival in Montreal.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent secondary source on the subject is John Kósa, *Land of Choice: Hungarians in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957). See also chapters 4 and 5 of Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope*.

<sup>7</sup> Mihály Fehér, *A Montreáli Magyar Reformatus Egyház Jubilumi Emlékönyve, 1926-1966* [The Jubilee Album of the Magyar Reformed Church of Montreal] (Montreal: the United Church of Canada, 1966). Some of the records of this congregation are available in the Canadian Archives Branch of the Library and Archives of Canada, in Ottawa-Hull. They consist of the minutes of meetings, reports and correspondence, some in the original and some on microfilm. The collection's call number is MG 8, G 76.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), see especially chapter 2, "The Montreal Mission." The quotation is on p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Fehér, *A Montreáli Magyar Reformatus Egyház*, p. 17. See also Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope*, p. 180. Was Fehér sent to Kingston or Ottawa? The latter makes more sense as it was Canada's capital and was a larger city than Kingston. We'll never know for sure.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Mary Fehér White, Mária's daughter, told the writer of these lines that Mária knew some French, but she had learned this in Europe and was never able to understand the dialect of French spoken by *les Québécois*. Still, the lack of any reference to them in a fairly long speech is strange; but perhaps it is not unusual. I have known several Hungarian residents of Montreal who over the decades had learned English but hardly ever learned more than a few words of French.

### The Text of the Document:

## Our Unfortunate Hungarians who Emigrated — and their Canadian Lives

Mária Bagossy Fehér

[In her introductory paragraphs Mária Bagossy Fehér reminisces about her former teachers and apologizes for not being able to speak as fluent Hungarian as she did when she had been still living in Hungary seven years earlier. She also defines the subject of her lecture as a report on "our unfortunate [szegény] Hungarians who emigrated — and their Canadian lives."]

Who emigrated [from Hungary]? Those who lost hope as a result of the World War, those who were driven out of their homes through the occupation [of parts of Hungary by foreign powers], the unemployed, [and] those who were not satisfied with what the truncated homeland could offer them. They emigrated to assure themselves and their families a better future.

As [Hungarian immigrants] arrive in the New World they feel lost. For days they don't dare to leave the building they're in for fear that they lose sight of the little Hungarian world — the boarding house where they're lodged. They fear that the great traffic of the city will sweep them away far from the Hungarian hand which they can clutch. They could hardly wait till they got far from the place [in Hungary] that for them did not produce a happy life and now that they arrived to the promised land, the earth began shaking under their feet and they desperately hand on to the Hungarian word, on a Hungarian island, and longing for their old homeland causes them pain and homesickness. The owner of their boarding house treats them with sympathy and understanding, wants to take them here and there and invites his friends so that the newcomers can chit-chat in their beloved native language — and gradually find solace. Soon they can even smile recounting stories of events in the past. In a few days they feel brave enough to venture on the streets to look around, get to know the city and then to look for work. In the company of a relative, or a fellow villager, they go from one factory to the next, till finally they succeed in getting work.

An immigrant man is able to bring out his family only after several years' of hard work. When the family arrives, his first task is to buy clothing for its members so that they don't look strangers. Women are given hats about which they complain as they don't feel comfortable in them.... In this way the newcomers look Canadian on the outside but inside their hearts still hurt and in their home, in the family circle they keep their Hungarian traditions. On the whole they find it difficult to adjust to the new circumstances. They are not reluctant to do all the housework and often it takes a lot of persuasion before they are willing to try labour-saving devices.

Hungarians in Canada are not long-time residents. True, in the Western parts of the country there have been Hungarians for the past 40-45 years, and there are places where they have established colonies whose names are also Hungarian, for example Békevár, Saskatchewan. But in the eastern part of the country they existed for no more than 10-15 years. Of course there are exceptions, in the easternmost part of the country, in Nova Scotia [in the mining town of Sydney] Hungarians have lived for 35-40

years. I should mention that when we visited these people on a mission in 1931 we found that they had not abandoned their Hungarian clothing... their women-folk were dressed in the clothing they had brought with them from their Transdanubian villages when they arrived, and these women don't know any more English than the names of a few food and clothing items. The men are working in the mines. The young people are completely English: the girls are graduates of secondary schools. They do housework as they had seen their mothers do such chores but they drive the family car just as any [Canadian] girl would — and in their clothing they are indistinguishable from the [Canadians].

And now I take my listeners to Montreal, where I spent seven years and where I lived with our poor Hungarian siblings whom I tried to console in their homesickness and lives full of struggles.

Aside from five or six families who had immigrated earlier, in Montreal Hungarians are recent arrivals. In 1926 when my husband was trying to organize a congregation he could hardly find a few hundred Hungarians here. The Hungarian Social Club, the gathering place of Hungarians, had already existed at the time. Perhaps those in my audience might be interested how our Reformed congregation was established, which has been the initiator and manager of all community undertakings ever since....

[In the mid-1920s] my husband was completing his studies in the USA at Princeton University and wanted to go home to Hungary. At that time he got an invitation from the United Church of Canada to organize a Hungarian congregation in Ottawa, with the financial support of the Church. On arriving in Ottawa he spent 10-14 days trying to find Hungarians but found not a single one, so he asked to be sent elsewhere. He was sent to Toronto where there were Hungarians but they had a congregation already — established with the help of the Presbyterian Church. So, he asked to be sent to Montreal. There he found lodging in the local YMCA where he met a young Hungarian man who was employed by a bank. [My husband] inquired about Hungarians and the young man sent him to a barber shop, one of the meeting places of Hungarians. He also gave [my husband] the address of the Social Club, where [my husband] managed to obtain the addresses of more Hungarians. Using these addresses [my husband] went from house to house inviting people to join a congregation. During Pentecost of 1926 a congregation was established with 40 members. Three months later he came home [to Hungary] and after a year's stay the two of us went back to Canada to continue the work he had started.

After we arrived we began working together. We disembarked in Montreal on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September [1928] and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> we visited ten people, left flyers at the Hungarian grocer, the butcher, the barber and at the Club. The next day being Sunday we held the first [church] service. Some 70 to 80 were present, all of them men, I was the only woman there. In those days there were still only a few Hungarian families in the city, but the number of Hungarians was between five and six hundred. Visiting people was not a problem... as Hungarians lived in the heart of the city, in the so-called slum district.... All immigrants start here since the European stores are all here and [the newly arrived] can do their shopping in their own language. These poor people know how disadvantageous it is to live in this seedy area, but since they don't know the language they go to live where people take them, and they prefer to live close to each other.... From this comes another problem, that they don't have a chance to learn the language [i.e. English].

Nowadays the paradise that [these immigrants] had hoped to find in Canada has turned sour. The comfortable life is gone, as is any family life... Canada has brought disappointment and unhappiness for many....

When we began our visitations we met only men who only later tried to get their families to join them, or brought out brides to marry. In the seven years I had been to Canada, [the city's Hungarian population] had grown from 5-600 to 5-6000. This is a very sudden increase, despite the fact that in 1929 entry into the country was made more difficult, restricting the coming of relatives to close family members, and in 1930 not even them. How did this population increase take place? ... At the end of 1928 there was a worsening of economic conditions and the number of Hungarians began growing in Montreal. In 1929 the harvests failed in Western Canada and as conditions and employment declined there a veritable migration started as [Hungarian] immigrants flocked to the cities of eastern [*sic*, central] Canada. Since in Montreal, which was a factory town and a port, there were more employment opportunities — and Hungarian immigrants came above all here.... When the factories closed [and] construction work ended, not only the newly arrived found themselves out of work but also those who had been here earlier and had jobs. You can imagine the disappointment! Of the Hungarians who came since 1930, ninety percent are without work, and try to survive on welfare.

The man who had been working till now sits at home all day — perhaps he helps his wife maintain the boarding house.... [Such a house] will contain eight rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. In the bigger rooms

there is a double-bed, four chairs, perhaps a small desk... People's working clothes hang in the bathroom on hooks.

In some cases three people sleep in one double bed, as this costs them less. The housewife keeps the place clean, does the wash and ironing for all the men — some houses have 30 boarders — and cooks supper. She gives the men breakfast and packs a lunch for those who go to work .... [and this is the problem], they don't all go to work, and this is how moral tragedies start. The simple woman, who up to now had never left her village, who knew everyone in her village and who was known by everyone, having gotten away from her familiar surroundings and having been liberated from the restraints imposed on her by her village social surroundings, loses her moral equilibrium — since the temptation is often there and the tempters are so numerous. [She becomes a fallen woman] and takes with her the peace of her family. This sad situation gets worse with increased unemployment, as sometimes [the woman] is dragged [into sin] by her poverty... and loses her sense of responsibility... Some of the men now don't even look for work but spend the day playing cards with their buddies.

In more fortunate cases the woman, the mother, looks for work so that she can supplement the little welfare payment the family gets [from the city], so that she can get clothing for her children. [If the wife gets work] the husband does the chores around the house — he cleans, often cooks, and even does the laundry. The kids play in the streets whenever they're not in school. They are among kids of other nationalities and forget their mother tongue — so their only tie to their parents diminishes. The "other" work of our congregation starts here: the maintenance of the Hungarian language, so that the only link between the children and their parents can survive. Three times a week we teach reading and writing, a little geography and history, since if in our Hungarian school we don't teach anything about our former homeland, in the English school the kids will not learn much about it. In their geography textbook there are only 10-15 lines about [Hungary] and a single picture. This picture depicts a country boy and girl as they stand on top of a huge pile of pumpkins... Many [Hungarian] kids, when they see this picture, would like to deny they're Hungarian, as this picture makes such a backward impression.... Teaching [these children] is difficult as the children are numerous and we — my husband and I — are the only teachers. Actually, my husband is the only one teaching as I am involved mainly in preparing special events — which actually also serve the maintenance of the Hungarian language.

Sunday school serves the same purpose — aside from the religious instruction. It also serves the aim of bridging and even ending the ever-increasing gap between children and parents in the realm of religious-moral standards.

Under the aegis of [our] Reformed congregation exists the Kata Bethlen Women's Association. Its function is the maintenance of Hungarian patriotism, Hungarian thinking and speech, and the introduction to Canadians of working Hungarian women, Hungarian culture, handicrafts and folk-art. We take every opportunity to make sure that on all exhibitions Hungarian [culture] be represented.... We also put on theatre productions as well as concerts. In the production of the latter we have the help of the many Hungarian artists who live in Montreal. We have singers, violinists, pianists, organ players, painters and sculptors. We organize bazaars and tea afternoons. We are involved in finding employment for people and sometimes we can give help to the needy. This is the program of our women's association.

Another of our clubs is the Petőfi Choir... it also serves Hungarian purposes. There is also a children's choir, as well as a recently established youth club. We have a library of two-three hundred books. My husband and I manage all these with very little help. The help we have comes from working people. The artists help by their performances.

In addition to the organizations listed above we have the following Hungarian associations:

The Hungarian [Social Club], the Roman Catholic Cultural Club, the [St.] Elizabeth Women's Association, the Altar Club, the Székely Cultural Club, and the Club of Hungarian Jewish Youth.

And we shouldn't forget the Hungarian Lutheran Congregation and the Roman Catholic Parish and the recently established Greek Catholic Parish.

These churches and clubs should be responsible to make sure that Hungarian immigrants don't forget about their homeland, and don't forget or deny their Hungarian culture but, instead, cultivate it and defend it against people who know little about Hungary. Often we get questions if in Hungary people use soap, or if there is running water and electricity? And some people even ask where Hungary is, what countries surround it? And when we give an answer they say "that's not Hungary, that's Austria". This is how we're known abroad. This is why we take every opportunity to publicise the Hungarian culture, art, history... so that we promote our poor, truncated country, without ever creating the impression

that we're engaged in propaganda, as if we are perceived as being engaged in [polemics] they withdraw from us.

Let me mention an institution that is not Hungarian but interests all of us even Hungarians, as we are in close contact with it. It is the Church of All Nations... This is an institution that, under the cover of religion, [wants to serve as a melting pot of all nations] and turn us into Englishmen [and English women]... the English are very frugal, but they are quite willing to serve this institution and support it with their money. They are devoted to this idea... The English [i.e. English Canadians] are very chauvinistic, they love their country dearly, and they want immigrants to love the country also — and they do anything to make them forget their native country and become English from one day to the next. This is why the English do not allow children to learn any other language [but English] in schools. Our Hungarian school is an enormous irritant in their eyes,... but as we say that the school is mainly for the teaching of religion they tolerate it.

My dear audience! I had to talk in generalities because if I had wanted to go into details I would have taken up a lot of your time; perhaps I did....

A Review Article:

## **Hungarians in the American Civil War, 1861-1865**

**Stephen Beszedits**

István Kornél Vida. *Hungarian Émigrés in the American Civil War*. Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Co. Publishers, 2012. III + 256 pages. Paper.

**The Civil War**, which lasted for four bloody years from 1861 to 1865, was the most pivotal event in the history of the United States. Consequently, the volume of writings on it is simply staggering. Now that we are in the midst of commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that monumental struggle, the already prodigious literature is certain to expand.

While every conceivable aspect of the war has received attention from historians and writers, one area that has been relatively neglected is the participation of the “ethnics”. It is often forgotten that many of the soldiers and sailors on both sides were foreign-born. Even though this non-native element was composed chiefly of Germans and the Irish, virtually every European nationality was represented in the ranks of the blue and the grey. One of the smaller groups involved in the conflict was the Hungarians.

Accepted estimates of the Hungarian population of the United States in the early 1860s peg the figure at no more than 3,000, with the overwhelming majority residing in the North. The number of Hungarians in the fight was thus small but proportionately high. Precise figures are impossible to state; some of the more exuberant writers claim numbers close to one thousand. However, between 200 and 300 is far more realistic. About 150 of these individuals can be thoroughly documented. Their Civil War service is fully described in official records as well as in a host of standard reference works about the conflict.

Because Hungarians were few in numbers and widely scattered over the country, there never was any unit, large or small, composed entirely or predominantly of Hungarians. What the Hungarians lacked in numbers they made up in achievements. From this small group emerged two full generals, four brigadier-generals by brevet, some twenty colonels, and around thirty

majors and captains. Of course some remained humble privates; one of them being none other than the incomparable Joseph Pulitzer. The dozen or so Hungarians who held commissions in the so-called colored regiments have had their names inscribed on the African-American Civil War Memorial.

The impressive and startling attainments of the Hungarians can be attributed to the fact that the majority of them had substantial military experience; many were veterans of the 1848-49 War of Liberation led by the charismatic Lajos Kossuth against the ruling Hapsburg dynasty and some also saw action in the Crimean War and the European wars of the 1850s.

These individuals constituted a rather unique and distinct group; by no means did they represent a typical cross-section of society. Forming the first significant wave of immigrants to the United States from Hungary, they were predominantly political refugees. They were the scions of reasonably well-to-do middle class families while some were members of the lesser nobility. They had the benefit of a good education and were fluent in several languages but seldom in English. Destitute, land-hungry peasants and poor manual laborers made superfluous by industrial progress were few among them. Immigrants belonging to these social strata wouldn't arrive in droves until the mid-1870s.

Incidentally, Hungarian contributions in the war were not confined to military service. Books and articles penned by participants constitute an important segment of the war literature and are prized as primary sources by writers to this very day. About a half dozen Hungarians served as physicians in the field or in hospitals. Early in the war, General John C. Frémont, rather than devising an elaborate code, employed Hungarian to communicate with the White House and subordinate field officers. The cavalry saddle was an adaptation of the Hungarian model as explained by General George B. McClellan in his *Own Story*. It is perhaps also worthwhile to mention that after the war a significant number of Hungarians were active in veterans' organizations, especially the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic), with several of them holding high and responsible positions.

Therefore it's perhaps not too surprising that the extent of information about Hungarians in the Civil War is very substantial to say the least. The "Bible" of the war, the massive 128-volume *War of the Rebellion*, alone contains well over one thousand citation of documents by, to, and about them.

Collecting information on any particular individual in recent years has been immeasurably helped by advances in online search technologies and strategies, greater access to archival materials and obscure, out-of-print publications, and the ready exchange of findings among amateur and professional researchers.

Despite the plethora of information on Hungarians, no single, comprehensive book has been written about them before Prof. Vida's excellent book. Previously, the only such work available on the subject has been *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes* by Edmund Vasvary, published in 1939. The slim volume by a dedicated researcher and collector of Hungarian-Americana can be most accurately described as a commendable pioneering effort. It must be borne in mind that Mr. Vasvary worked without the advantages of our modern research and communications tools and he did not have the assistance of other interested parties. By the way, Vasvary's modest monograph was incorporated almost entirely into those other much praised pioneering works concerning the participation of the non-native born in the Civil War, namely Ella Lonn's *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (1952) and *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (1965).

With the publication of Prof. Vida's book, no one can complain about the lack of a thorough and authoritative book on the role of Hungarians in the Civil War. This outstanding work, the culmination of a decade of research, covers the subject in an exemplary fashion and is an indispensable tool for anyone interested in any aspect of Hungarian involvement.

The text is essentially divided into two parts. One presents the historical background leading up to the Civil War. This review is absolutely essential to understand the lives of the individual Hungarians which constitutes the other principal section of the book. Prof. Vida, who has authored a wide range of publications on Hungarian-American history, deserves considerable credit for compressing the complex political events occurring in the United States and Europe during the 1840s and 1850s into succinct narrative without sacrificing accuracy. Keeping in accordance with the theme, the biographical sketches concentrate on military service during the Civil War.

The three best known and most chronicled Hungarians of the war are Alexander Asboth, Julius Stahel, and Charles Zagonyi. Therefore they garner the lion's share of the ink. Kossuth's faithful companion, Asboth was Frémont's chief-of-staff in the Western Department and concluded his military career as major-general by brevet. Stahel, a full major-general and winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, had a memorable cat-and mouse game with John Singleton Mosby, the elusive "Gray Ghost" of the Confederacy. Charles Zagonyi, commander of Frémont's Body Guard in Missouri, gained lasting glory with his daring cavalry charge against a superior enemy force at Springfield on October 24, 1861.

Zagonyi is unquestionably the most celebrated Hungarian of the Civil War. His fame rests entirely on that single event which immediately captured the public imagination. Newspapers extolled the reckless bravery of the

troopers and George Boker penned a poem, simply entitled *Zagonyi*. He is the overt hero of Jessie Benton Frémont's acclaimed *The Story of the Guard*. The passing of years hasn't diminished fascination with the daring deed and Zagonyi has been honored by monuments, plaques, statues, medallions and in sundry other ways. He has also been incorporated into the popular literature; he appears as the savior who rides to the rescue in the nick of time in a slew of Hungarian and American fictional tales.

Other notable figures in blue include the flamboyant and controversial Colonel Frederick George D'Utassy; Frederick Knefler, one of the brevet brigadier-generals and life-long friend of Lew Wallace; Colonel Geza Mihailotzy who had two forts named in his memory following his death from wounds sustained in action; distinguished colonels Eugene Kozlay, Nicholas Perczel and Philip Figyelmessy; the four Rombauer brothers, and the five nephews of the great Kossuth himself: the four Zulavsky brothers and Albert Ruttkay.

Bela Estvan, the only Hungarian to attain high rank in the Confederate army, was — as Vida points out — a truly enigmatic and mysterious figure. Better remembered for his book *War Pictures from the South* than for military valor, he has also been labeled as devious and deceitful. His book, praised by some for its vivid and realistic narrative and scorned by others as blatant plagiarism, was extremely popular when first published during the war. Its appeal has remained undiminished; various editions have been reprinted and selected chapters from it included in anthologies. As for Estvan himself, the discovery of additional personal facts would go a long way in allowing to draw a fuller and more accurate portrait of the man.

A frequently voiced complaint about similar books is the almost exclusive emphasis on the military service of the individuals considered and very little or no information about their lives before and after the war. This is certainly not the case in Prof. Vida's book. Drawing chiefly on the massive émigré literature of the 1850s, he provides extensive details about their pre-Civil War days. While a handful of the veterans returned to Hungary in wake of the Compromise of 1867 which set up the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the bulk remained in America. The majority enjoyed long, fruitful lives; others died not long afterwards at a relatively young age. In several instances wounds sustained and deprivations endured were definite contributors to poor health and early death.

The most successful post-war career definitely belonged to Joseph Pulitzer whose meteoric rise in journalism and influence in American politics is known by educated people throughout the world along with his bequests to

fund Columbia University's School of Journalism and the prestigious prizes which bear his name. In 1947, the year which marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, the U.S. Post Office issued a stamp in his honor. More than twenty acclaimed books have addressed the story of his life and resounding success. While none of the others reached the lofty accomplishments of Pulitzer, they enjoyed rewarding careers and made positive contributions to their communities in a multitude of ways.

Throughout the book Dr. Vida alerts the reader to major and minor factual errors, both in American and Hungarian sources, primary as well as secondary. Regrettably, mistakes are plentiful and may arise from a number of reasons. Unfortunately errors are bound to occur in any publication, no matter how carefully edited and reviewed.

Recurring errors, errors that are repeated time after time because they have become firmly imbedded in the general literature, are particularly annoying. Among the most prevalent of these concerning Hungarians are that Frémont's Body Guard was composed mostly of Hungarians, that Zagonyi returned to Hungary after the war and opened a cigar shop, that the Hungarian element was dominant among the men and officers of the 39<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Regiment (Garibaldi Guard), and that Leonidas Haskell on Frémont's staff was a Hungarian who Anglicized his name. Hence, Haskell is routinely footnoted as a Hungarian in American writings and this spurious claim is accepted at face value even by a few Hungarian authors.

Given all the misconceptions and errors, it would have been advantageous to devote a chapter listing and discussing them, and then correcting them with compelling proof. Perhaps such measure would dispel these types of mistakes from serious historical writings once and for all.

The book contains a judicious selection of quality black & white illustrations, mainly photographs, which add to the appearance of the book and enhance the value of the text. However, the virtual absence of maps is puzzling. Maps, depicting strategic locations and places of special significance, would undoubtedly be appreciated even by the geographically astute reader. The war covered such a broad terrain and involved so many sites that even dedicated Civil War buffs have to resort to maps on a regular basis.

Hungarian family names invariably pose a formidable challenge to Americans not only in pronunciation but also in spelling. Consequently, names in print often appear in a bewildering array of forms; there are newspaper articles in which the same name is spelled several ways without any rhyme or reason. To cope with this difficulty, Dr. Vida lists commonly encountered variations of names. Being aware of these versions is very helpful, particularly when conducting online searches. On the other hand, it seems that the spelling

of Hungarian names is bound only by the imagination of the writer and startling forms are likely to mushroom with unrestrained vigor. For example, some scholarly publications mentioning Joseph Vandor, colonel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry, have him “Dutchified” to Van Dor!

The book cites a large array of Hungarian sources. Generally speaking, books having the text in one language but including references in another language seldom bother with translation. This can be frustrating for readers able to handle only the principal language. Perhaps it’s time to start a new trend. Since this monograph will likely be utilized chiefly by Americans not conversant with Hungarian, having at least the title of the citation accompanied by the equivalent text in English would have been a definite plus. An added bonus would have been to summarize the contents with a couple of short sentences.

There is much more about Hungarians than can be squeezed into a book, even a very voluminous one. Besides the huge quantity of readily available and well-arranged primary and secondary sources, there are collections — bristling with details about Hungarians — which have yet to be examined or even organized properly. Among these virtually untapped resources are D’Utassy papers at the New York Historical Society; the writings of Eugene Kozlay, presented not long ago to the Petőfi Museum in Hungary by Janet and Doug Kozlay; and the sundry documents donated to the Missouri Historical Society over the years by descendants of the Rombauer family.

Descendants of the veterans deserve more than a passing mention. For example, Haldemann Figyelmessy, son of Philip Figyelmessy, was a daredevil pilot who frequently gave exhibitions of his flying skills before suffering fatal injuries in a crash. Paul E. Vandor, son of Joseph Vandor, was a prominent newspaperman in the Far West and author of *History of Fresno County, California*. King Vidor, one of America’s most intellectual and beloved film directors, was the grandson of Charles Vidor, long-time resident of Galveston, Texas. Amazingly enough, there are at least a dozen families today in America and in Europe who are keenly aware of the participation of their ancestors in the Civil War and who have rendered invaluable service to researchers by providing access to family documents.

All the information currently available on the Hungarians of the Civil War would easily furnish material to fill several volumes. Hopefully, Professor Vida will continue to devote his attention to this topic and will write additional books of the same high caliber.

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A Review Article:

## **J. Peters: “A Loyal Party Functionary”**

Lee Congdon

Thomas Sakmyster. *Red Conspirator: J. Peters and the American Communist Underground*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. 251 pages. \$50.00.

**In 1949**, Noel Field, American communist and Soviet agent, found himself at the center of the Show (or “Conceptual”) Trial of László Rajk and his “accomplices.” It had not occurred to him, when he defected to Prague, that Czechoslovak authorities would turn him over to the Hungarians, who, knowing of his U.S. government service, could claim they had “unmasked” him as an intelligence agent and recruiter of Hungarian “traitors.” The role that Field was forced to play in the first major Show Trial in Eastern Europe was, as Thomas Sakmyster has pointed out in these pages, not the only connection between Hungarian and U.S. communism.<sup>1</sup> In this superb study of a highly significant link, he tells the fascinating story of a Hungarian-born communist who became a leading actor in the historical drama of the CPUSA (Communist Party of the United States of America).

Sándor Goldberger was born in 1894 in Csap, Hungary (now Ukraine). His parents were Jews, very likely assimilated. “Very likely” is the most one can say about many events and circumstances in the life of this notorious “man of mystery.” Sakmyster has set a high standard for investigative researchers—having examined papers in the National Archives, the Hungarian National Archives, and the Budapest Institute of Political Science, Comintern records, FBI files, INS files, and many other sources — but even after exhaustive research, he has often had to resort to (disciplined) speculation. On page 73, for example, he found it necessary to qualify statements with words such as “doubtless,” “apparently,” “perhaps,” and “likely.”

We can say with confidence that Goldberger graduated — probably in 1912 — from *Gymnasium*, but “almost nothing is known” of his life during the eight years of his attendance (p. 3). In 1913, he enrolled in the Law College in Kolozsvár and completed three semesters before being called to arms in June 1914. About his years in uniform (1914-1918) we know only that he survived as an officer on the Italian front. Shortly after returning to civilian life, he joined the newly-formed Hungarian Communist Party. Why, we do not know for certain, but we do know that he never looked back, never wavered in his faith in communism or loyalty to the Party.

Nor do we know why, in 1924, Goldberger, along with his mother and older brother, emigrated to the United States. Sakmyster suggests, reasonably enough, that he was looking for a larger stage on which to act on the Party’s behalf and that he was alarmed by the growth of anti-Semitism in postwar Hungary — although Csap (Cop) was then under Czechoslovak rule. Having arrived in the States, Goldberger enrolled in night school to learn English and introduced himself to the Hungarian Federation of the Workers Party of America (the name used by the CPUSA from late 1921 to 1929). From then until 1949, when he returned to Hungary, he served the CPUSA and its Soviet masters in a number of capacities.

Having decided to adopt an alias, Goldberger began to call himself József Péter, and later Joe Peter, J. Peter, and eventually J. Peters. From the beginning, Peters’ strong suit was organization; in 1935 he wrote *The Communist Party: A Manual on Organization*. Not exactly a stirring piece of writing, the manual did serve to remind comrades that “one form of organization is suitable for legal existence of the Party, and another for the conditions of underground, illegal existence.”<sup>2</sup> Peters involved himself in both open and covert activities, but it was in the latter that he demonstrated the greatest effectiveness.

That the CPUSA operated underground and engaged in illegal activities, including espionage, has been demonstrated conclusively only recently, thanks in no small measure to the work of Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes.<sup>3</sup> As late as the 1980s and 1990s, as Sakmyster points out, “most historians of the American Communist Party evinced little interest in alleged underground or espionage activities of American Communists” (p. xvi). For reasons of their own, these revisionist historians insisted upon characterizing the Party as a legal organization, admittedly radical in nature, fighting for workers and minorities.<sup>4</sup> It followed, of course, that Whittaker Chambers, who had worked closely with Peters, had lied and that Alger Hiss was innocent, fictions that diehards continue to treat as facts.

As Sakmyster notes, it was the renewal of interest in the Chambers-Hiss controversy (following the 1978 publication of Allen Weinstein’s *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case*) that sparked fresh interest in Peters’ career. It had been Chambers, though he liked Peters personally, who first alerted American authorities to the Hungarian’s importance; in *Witness* (1952), his moving autobiography/memoir, he described Peters as the “head of the entire underground section of the American Communist Party. As such, he was one of the two or three most powerful men in the party.”<sup>5</sup>

Although Peters vehemently denied Chambers’s charges, Sakmyster discovered a memoir that Peters wrote in the 1980s and deposited in the archives of what was then the Budapest Institute of the [Hungarian] Communist Party. In it he admitted that he had been “deeply involved in clandestine or underground operations” (p. xix). Based upon this memoir and other valuable sources, Sakmyster provides many details concerning Peters’ multifarious activities, including his fraudulent passport operation, cadre building, and work as liaison between the CPUSA and Soviet intelligence agencies — OMS (the Comintern’s International Liaison Section), GRU (Soviet military intelligence), and NKVD (Soviet political police).

Just as important was his supervising of communists and fellow travelers who had infiltrated government agencies. Among them was Hiss, close friend of Noel Field and member of Peters’ Washington DC “Apparatus B” (“Apparatus A” was the so-called “[Harold] Ware Group”). That Peters “could place agents in ‘old-line agencies’” such as the State Department was, Sakmyster rightly observes, no small achievement.

Always preferring to remain in the shadows, Peters was nonetheless ubiquitous during the 1930s. Only when Chambers broke with the Party in 1938 did he think it advisable to withdraw from illegal work, go underground, and assume yet another alias: Alexander Stevens. That at least was the name he used during the years when he was engaged in a cat and mouse game with a government determined to produce evidence of law breaking. When he cautiously returned to Party work during World War II, he called himself “Steve Miller,” though publicly he kept the name “Stevens.” In 1947, the FBI discovered, quite by accident, that Stevens had used the name “Isadore Boorstein” on a passport under which he had traveled to and from the Soviet Union in 1931-32 — a clear violation of the 1924 Immigration Act.

While at a deportation hearing in 1948, Stevens was served with a subpoena to appear before HUAC (House Committee on Un-American Activities). At *that* hearing Chambers identified him as J. Peters. Naturally, Peters pled the Fifth to most of the Committee’s questions. He did the same before the grand jury looking into allegations of perjury on the part of Alger

Hiss. Nevertheless, the CPUSA did not welcome the publicity and ordered Peters to leave the United States voluntarily, and as soon as possible. Ever obedient, he signaled to the authorities his desire to return to Hungary, the country of his birth.

Late in May 1949, József Péter, as he would be known for the remainder of his life, arrived in Budapest. Within days, he learned that László Rajk had been arrested, and no doubt feared that, as someone who had lived in the U. S. for years, he too would be caught up in the terror. For some reason, however, he managed to avoid arrest and settled into a new life as an editor and expert on America; unlike so many of the Party faithful, he died of natural causes at age 96. “Nothing,” Sakmyster concludes, “is known of the last few years of József Péter’s life or of his reaction... to the collapse of the Communist regimes in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1989” (p. 180). A “man of mystery” he remained, but one thing is certain: He was, in his own words, “a loyal Party functionary” to the end.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Sakmyster, “Mátyás Rákosi, the Rajk Trial, and the American Communist Party,” *Hungarian Studies Review* 38, 1-2 (2011): 45-68.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Communist Party: A Manual on Organization*, <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/cpusa/1935/07/organisers-manual/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> In this regard, see also Lee Congdon, “Anti-Anti-Communism,” *Academic Questions* 1, 3 (1988), 42-54.

<sup>5</sup> Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 309.

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Born and raised in the Cleveland area, ENDRE SZENTKIRÁLYI studied English and American literature at Cleveland State University, later earning an MA in English at the University of Akron. He compiled and edited *Clevelandban még élnek magyarok? Visszaemlékezések gyűjteménye*.

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