

# A PEACEFUL INTERLUDE IN THE COLD WAR

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HUNGARIAN STUDIES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY. A PERSONAL MEMOIR

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The memoir is the history of the Hungarian Chair at Indiana University from 1979 when the Hungarian Academy of Sciences endowed the Chair by the transfer of USD 250,000.

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The seemingly innocuous establishment of Hungarian Studies as an academic discipline at Indiana University is quite extraordinary when set against the background of the Cold War and the cultural policies of the Kádár Regime and does deserve a brief description. Since there can be no doubt that I was instrumental in this academic venture, some parts of this essay have an autobiographical character.

It should not be irrelevant to this purpose to note that, though born in Hungary, I never emigrated from that country, had no personal axe to grind against any of the successive regimes, and strictly adhered to the principle of non-participation in any émigré politics. In the 1950s and 1960s towards those who cared for such things my anti-fascist credentials were established by my voluntary service in the French army of De Gaulle and by the fortuitous fact that when in Budapest I stayed with a prominent member of the party, a childhood friend who had the courage to lodge me.

On the academic side my field was, and has been ever since my student years, the study of Central Eurasia, with emphasis on comparative Altaic linguistics and medieval history. My interest in Hungarian studies was secondary though during my years when I was on the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge University (1948–62) I introduced the teaching of Hungarian and established a Hungarian Tripos. From 1955 to 1956 I reorganized for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the abominably inaccurate entries dealing with Hungarian literature, a task which took me to Hungary in search of Hungarian collaborators. The 1956 revolution

did not affect my relations with the country, and the publication in 1958 of my *History of Hungary* (George Allen and Unwin in Britain, Praeger in the USA) received a cautious but well-meaning reception in Hungary. Hungarian scholarly circles, unavoidably linked with politics, sensed that I was politically neutral, and that I understood the delicacy of their situation.

The focus of this writing must now switch from the autobiographical to the general and from the United Kingdom to the United States. In 1956 almost simultaneously Uralic and Altaic Studies were introduced in the shape of a Department at Columbia University and in the form of an Interdepartmental Program at Indiana University. The movers behind these developments were two Hungarian scholars, John Lotz at Columbia, Thomas A. Sebeok at Indiana University. Although the initiative came mostly from Lotz, the two men worked closely together and shared as their common Hungarian scholarly heritage the a priori conviction of the existence of a Uralic and Altaic (or Uralo-Altaic) linguistic family. In the fall of 1958 the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was enacted by Congress and Lotz took advantage of favorable political winds to convince the Ford Foundation to subsidize under the aegis of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) a Uralic and Altaic Program, an NDEA research project which ran from June 1959 to September 1962 and was subsequently extended to June 1963. Between June 1959 and September 1974 close to \$700,000 – at that time a very substantial sum – was spent on 116 projects carried out by seventy-four principal investigators representing forty-two institutions. Lotz and Sebeok were linguists and through their mother-tongue had a natural link with the Uralic linguistic family. Actually, in his earlier years Lotz did make some fine contributions to Hungarian linguistics. However, neither of them had any connections with Altaic (Turkic, Mongol, Tunguz) studies and there were no available experts to be found in the United States. Yet it was clear that from the American point of view Altaic peoples presented a much greater interest than those speaking a Uralic tongue. Of the fifteen republics constituting the Soviet Union, five were Turkic. There was need for an Altaist.

In letters and during visits in England, Sebeok tried to convince me of the advantages of an academic life in America but I saw no reason to exchange my post in arguably the best university in the world for that in a lesser university located in a land just recovering from McCarthyism. However, I had a sabbatical coming up and accepted a one-semester visiting professorship at Indiana University. Within a few months I realized that a stay in that university would give me more personal satisfaction than I could ever expect in Cambridge and decided to stay.

It should be emphasized that I intended and was expected to develop the Altaic side of the Uralic and Altaic Program, of which I became the chairman in the fall of 1963, and which I transformed into a fully-fledged university department in 1966. But my side-interest in things Hungarian remained and received unex-

pected encouragement in the very dynamic atmosphere then prevailing at Indiana University. I was surprised to note that my *History of Hungary* has been known to a number of people and Robert F. Byrnes, Professor of History and then Chairman of the Russian and East European Institute suggested that I offer, for the Department of History, a course on Hungarian history. This I did in the spring semester of 1963, i.e., barely a year after my arrival at Indiana University. It was a 400-level course called Hungarian History and Civilization until 1526. In the spring of 1964 it was followed by Hungarian History and Civilization since 1526, and the following spring came Hungary in the 20th century. Interrupted only by my sabbatical or other absences, this three-year circle continued until the welcome arrival of György Ránki. Enrollments were constantly in the upper-teens.

It was quite interesting to observe the various reactions with which the inhabitants of the academic frog-pond reacted to this innovation. The College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of History rather welcomed this extension of their offering, all the more because they did not have to pay for it. I did not ask and did not receive any compensation for this additional teaching-load. The two persons with whom I had most to do (should I say: I had to contend with?) were Byrnes and Sebeok. The first was almost pathologically anti-communist but his feelings were translated into an activity to widen American knowledge of any aspect of the communist world. He welcomed any attempt to increase contacts with the Soviet Union and its satellites and was, to the best of my knowledge, instrumental in the creation of the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX). He was an empire builder and his dynamism in later years led to some confrontations between us. Byrnes liked the idea of being able to list these courses among those offered by the Russian and East European Institute. As for Sebeok, his hostility towards my attempt to move Hungarian studies beyond the teaching of the language was vigorous and to me quite surprising. To speculate on his motives would be an idle exercise.

Simultaneously with these area courses, the teaching of Hungarian – the roots of which went back at Indiana University to WW II – continued. The teachers were Hungarian émigrés of much good will but uncertain competence. In September 1963, to my great surprise, Professor László Országh of Debrecen University came to visit me at Indiana University. I had known him since my school days and during the difficult years of the 1950s and beyond we kept in touch in so far that I called on him whenever I was in Budapest. During the darkest years of the Rákosi era, when the teaching of English was suspended at the Hungarian universities, he worked at the Institute of Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy but now he could again teach his subject in Debrecen. He suggested sending one of his students to Bloomington to teach Hungarian and, what from his point of view was more important, to improve his English and get acquainted with the United States and the American way of life. He was interested in grooming his successors. Of course I

enthusiastically embraced the idea. By that time my credentials in Hungary were fairly well established, to the extent that the competent authorities would allow a young man to come to an American university – as long as it was Indiana University. There were difficulties both in Hungary and at my university; the first induced by the general reluctance of overcautious bureaucrats, the second by internal power struggles within my university. Yet they were overcome, and the first Hungarian teaching associate Tamás Doszkocs arrived in the fall of 1964. He was followed, again on Ország's recommendation, by Zsolt Virágos. Since then and until now, year after year, with no interruption, young men or women, attached to a Hungarian university, have come to teach Hungarian and to learn about America. In the "bad years" when temptation was still great to become a dissident, not one defected and several made good use of this experience in order to further a nice career.

A good library is the prerequisite of serious research and ever since my arrival at Indiana University I have tried to build up the material relevant to the department. *Hungarica* published outside of Hungary could be obtained through regular commercial channels; the procurement of books published in Hungary, however, posed quite a challenge. The situation changed dramatically with a letter dated March 7, 1974 in which Dr. József Vekerdi, Head of the Department of International Exchange Service of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, offered a very generous exchange system, which in fact was a rather one-sided affair. He made it clear that he expected no *quid pro quo* arrangement and his aim was to help the "valuable activities" of our Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies. Vekerdi asked only for books or leaflets of direct Hungarian interest published or circulated in the United States, and over the years he sent to Indiana University hundreds of volumes. The mechanism of our cooperation was quite simple. Every month I received the periodical *Magyar Könyvvilág* with its supplement *A hónap könyvei*, a complete list of the books published in Hungary during the course of the previous month. My task was simple: ticking off – with some self-restraint – all the books I thought we should have. They would be sent in due course. The first batch of thirty-eight books came on December 18, 1974 followed by a steady stream over more than twenty years. On May 1, 1995 Vekerdi informed me that as a result of "political cleansing" (*politikai tisztogatások*) he had been relieved of his post and sent into retirement. Fortunately by that time steady cooperation had been established between the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár and Indiana University's main library.

Over the years I regularly organized at Indiana University symposia around Hungarian topics, meetings attended also by scholars coming from Hungary. But the effects of such gatherings were by definition ephemeral, and I decided to attempt to make Hungarian studies a permanent feature of the curriculum. I also had in mind the lessons learned in Cambridge where, following my departure, Hun-

garian studies disappeared. In the 1970s I survived several heart-attacks and felt a pressing need to act decisively. My idea was to create an endowed chair for Hungarian studies, the only administrative solution to ensure relevant teaching even following my death. It would be protected from the snap-decisions made by ever-changing departmental chairmen or ephemeral deans. I brought up the subject at several of my visits to Hungary, mainly at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and with the leadership of the Magyarok Világszövetsége (World Federation of Hungarians) a para-governmental organization with which I had excellent relations.

On Easter Sunday of 1977 I had the pleasure of having as my guests Béla Köpeczi then Secretary-General of the Academy, and his wife. I had high esteem for Köpeczi's non-doctrinaire realism, and his skills in the "art of the possible." We talked about the desirability of launching a periodical *Hungarian Studies* – as the alert reader may notice: a project on which we followed up successfully – and also of the possibility of creating at Indiana University an Endowed Chair in Hungarian Studies, to function within my Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies. While welcoming the idea, Köpeczi thought it improbable that in the then prevailing political climate permission could be obtained to launch such a project.

Time passed and on June 11, 1978 I attended a reception given by John Ryan, President of Indiana University in honor of some deans of several Yugoslav universities. Perhaps it was not the most tactful thing to do but I asked him why does he bother with Yugoslav affairs instead of doing something big for Hungarian Studies at Indiana University, more specifically creating an endowed Chair for Hungarian Studies. Ryan, uncommonly endowed with the great American quality of making quick decisions, immediately replied that if I can secure Hungarian funding for such a project, he was ready to match whatever the Hungarians would give. Over the years I learned that Ryan was a man of his word, so I was very much encouraged by this unexpected promise and found myself reminded of the biblical injunction, "Ask, and ye shall be given."

It so happened that a few days later, at a reception given at the Hungarian Embassy in Washington D.C., I brought up the matter with Ambassador Esztergályos, who did not seem to comprehend what it was all about. I had a different reception in Budapest where – coming from Taiwan – I arrived on September 18 to participate in a number of meetings with the leadership of the aforementioned Magyarok Világszövetsége and the academy, which had just elected me to an honorary membership. I pushed hard on the matter of the Hungarian Chair, met with much sympathy, but never expected what was to happen. On September 27 I had lunch with Ferenc Márta, then Secretary General of the Academy, who informed me that at 3 p.m. of that same day György Aczél was to receive me in his office in the Parliament building. This was exciting news.

At that time Aczél was the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers but more importantly a member of the Politburo and even more importantly, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the recognized arbiter, the supreme authority over all aspects of Hungary's cultural life. A very talkative man, he received me most graciously, was well informed about my own and Indiana University's Hungarian-related activities and expressed the hope that I was fully satisfied by the effective and sympathetic help we had received from Hungary. He was aware of the presence at Indiana University of Hungarian Teaching Associates and the important shipment of books we were receiving. What else could I want? Having expressed my gratitude for all the help received, I quite bluntly stated that what we needed was an endowed chair, and told him about Ryan's commitment. I thought I had made a good case for the project but Aczél showed no reaction to my proposal. Nevertheless, within days it appeared that he had given the green light to the project. Later I thought that this conversation was the decisive factor in convincing Aczél. But in the summer of 2004 my old friend, the distinguished journalist Miklós Szántó, very well informed on Communist Party matters, revealed to me that by the time I talked to Aczél the subject of the Hungarian Chair at Indiana University had already cleared the Politburo and my invitation to meet with him was considered but the last step before final approval was given to the academy to proceed with the project.

A couple of months later, to be precise on November 21, 1978, under the auspices of the State Department, a small Hungarian delegation arrived in Bloomington. It included András Knopp, then Deputy Minister of Public Instruction, accompanied by the Cultural Attache of the Hungarian Embassy and, since Knopp's English was fluent, by a totally superfluous interpreter. I had never met Knopp and, as I was to discover later, he had the reputation of a rather rigid, doctrinaire *apparatchik* of very few words, a very close collaborator of Aczél in the Party. The date of his arrival was inauspicious, since the 23<sup>rd</sup> was Thanksgiving Day and the campus was emptied of faculty, administrators, and students. The conversation at a hastily arranged lunch given by the Dean for International Affairs turned around such mundane topics as the weather, Knopp's length of stay in the US, compliments on the fluency of his English, and the date of his departure which, we learned, was set for the 25<sup>th</sup>. So it was clear, he was to stay in Bloomington over Thanksgiving, and there was but one possible solution: invite him and his companions to my home for dinner. Just before we sat down at the table, quite by chance, it came to light that Knopp had come to Bloomington on Aczél's instructions to finalize (!) the modalities connected with the Hungarian Chair. It was then, for the first time, that I had any positive indication of Aczél's consent. Knopp had expected me to bring up the matter and interpreted my silence as a sign that Indiana University had lost interest in the project. He was ready to return home empty-handed. This was a narrow escape! After some hesitation I de-

cided to go beyond the limits of proper behavior and in the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day I called Ryan at his home. Luckily, I was able to reach him; and with great graciousness he offered a meeting for the next afternoon. At 1 p.m. on the day following Thanksgiving, Knopp and I called on Ryan in his home. Inept as his initial approach may have been, when faced with Ryan Knopp proved to be a most efficient, courteous negotiator. It took less than two hours to iron out the difficulties that existed, and Ryan asked me to prepare a memorandum summarizing the results of their negotiations. It was planned that we should sign the agreement sometime in the following summer.

And so it came to pass that Ryan traveled to Budapest and on the 15th of June 1979, in the building of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he, representing Indiana University, and Köpeczi representing the academy signed an agreement whereby the academy would endow a Chair of Hungarian Studies at Indiana University by the transfer of \$250,000. I cannot speak about the feelings of the signatories or of those others who witnessed the act. I can speak for myself. I felt a deep sense of satisfaction and was greatly amused that I succeeded in this undertaking, that I pulled it off; indeed, for a very noble cause. Because here we were, in the middle of the Cold War, with the Berlin Wall still standing, and I could cajole a Communist Government (with modest reserves in hard currency) to authorize its academy to send this – at that time substantial sum – to an American university, with no strings attached, and that the President of Indiana University had the political wisdom and courage to accept such an endowment. Of course on a world-scale the act barely moved an atom, but now, with all the communist states gone, this agreement will remain *sui generis*.

I would like to call particular attention to following points in the agreement: 1. the Chair of Hungarian Studies will function within the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies (i.e., not in the Russian and East European Institute); 2. the appointment will follow the procedure normal at Indiana University in the case of senior faculty members (i.e., he or she will not be chosen by the Academy); 3. the search committee will have five members, two of whom will be appointed by Indiana University, two by the Hungarian Academy, the chairman of the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies being *ex officio* member of the Committee; 4. every five years Indiana University will review the activity of the Chair, and if there is mutual agreement that the chair should cease, then Indiana University Foundation will refund the endowment to the Academy. For the hard-currency strapped Hungary one quarter of a million of dollars was a big sum and on the Hungarian side one could sense some anxiety at the thought of transferring this money to Indiana University for a project that may peter out within a few years. Showing his confidence in the project, Ryan cut the Gordian knot by suggesting that “if there is mutual agreement on the point that the Chair should cease” the Indiana University Foundation (in charge of handling the Endowment) will refund the money.

The post of the Professor of Hungarian Studies was duly advertised in the appropriate media and generated a surprising number of enquiries bordering on the ridiculous. Most applicants thought that their Hungarian birth alone would qualify. To me it was clear from the outset that only a first-rate Hungarian scholar would be qualified for this professorship and, a realist, I also knew that the academy would not consent to the appointment of a scholar not residing in the country. The applications generated by the advertisement solved the problem. No serious American scholar answered the advertisement. As for the choice of a Hungarian scholar, I set my aim high, I thought of György Ránki, then Deputy-Director of the Institute of History of the academy, an economic historian of world-wide repute. I talked to him about my idea, which he welcomed with some enthusiasm though he felt that it would be difficult to obtain the consent of the powers that be. In 1979 travel from Hungary abroad needed special permissions, and of course Ránki occupied an important position, which he could not simply leave for possibly three years. I first mentioned my idea to Márta who thought it was a good one but difficult to realize because of Ránki's position. Knopp was categorical: "I would not let him go," he said and added, "But this is none of my business." Finally I broached the subject also with the supreme arbiter Aczél, who dismissed it out of hand. Ránki was far too important. "We [possibly the Party] have other plans for him. He must stay at his post."

Several colleagues suggested the historian Péter Hanák, a respected scholar. I visited him in his home and – compared with Ránki's boundless enthusiasm – found him lukewarm to the idea of leaving for Indiana University. His appointment, so I thought, would be a *pis aller*. On October 10, 1979 Ránki wrote me a short letter to the effect that Köpeczi quite bluntly opposed his candidacy for the Hungarian Chair and proposed Hanák. Ránki added that he cannot and would not fight this decision, all the more because he respected Hanák who was also a good friend. Well, I thought, that was it – and it could have been worse. What happened in the arcane political world of Hungarian academe I cannot tell, but in a letter written on December 6 Ránki informed me that because of an "unlucky developments" [*nem szerencsés események folytán*] the powers [*a Főnökség*] no longer wished to send Hanák and wanted him, Ránki, to come. With touching modesty he added that he hoped that I would not view this decision as a bad one. Bad? I could have jumped with joy. I thought that was the end of the story and we would have smooth sailing. I was wrong.

At the department faculty meeting of February 1, 1980 I could announce the good news, apparently well received by my colleagues, including Tom Sebeok, who, so he said, welcomed this development, all the more since he was acquainted with Ránki. This did not prevent him signing and gathering three more signatures to a letter sent to John Ryan protesting such "communist" presence on campus.

Ryan was furious but ignored the protest. I also had a visit from a good friend from the F.B.I., a mere formality, since he had talked to Ryan before seeing me.

On February 14 Ránki came to Indiana University to discuss the details, saw Ryan, and began planning his tenure. As for myself, on April 24, with a sigh of relief, I gave the last lecture of my life on Hungarian history. I had an enrollment of thirty-four. Beginning with the fall semester of 1980 the task of teaching Hungarian history was shouldered by Ránki.

This is not the place to praise Ránki as a historian, his reputation has been firmly established and remains untarnished to this day. What surprised even me – who knew him well – was his charm. He was modest, soft-spoken, crystal-clear in his statements and with much goodwill toward all. A survivor of Auschwitz, whereto he was deported as a child, he bore no grudge against the Germans or, I might say, against anyone. He was a gracious host, greatly helped by his wife Erzsi. They entertained with cheerful elegance in a lovely, furnished apartment located at the top-floor of a dormitory and put at the disposal of the Hungarian Chair by a most forthcoming administration.

On April 10, 1981 on the occasion of a visit in Bloomington by Béla Köpeczi a memorandum was signed by him and by John Ryan amending Item 6 of the original 1979 agreement to the effect that, even if I am no longer Chairman of the Uralic and Altaic Department, I should remain ex-officio chairman of the search committee [of the Hungarian Chair] and manager of the special account of the Chair. It will be noted that no date was given for my relinquishing this function. The aim was to ensure my continuing influence even when no longer chairman of the department, a function I was due to relinquish a few months later.

According to paragraph 11 of the 1979 agreement, the activity of the chair was to be reviewed every five years. For reasons no longer clear, the review took place belatedly, in the spring of 1986. A memorandum signed on May 16, 1986 by John Ryan and Kálmán Kulcsár, then Deputy Secretary General of the Academy, concluded that, “It is therefore the wish of both signatory parties that the present activities of the Chair be allowed to continue essentially on the lines hitherto followed...”

It was clear from the outset that a scholar of Ránki's stature, firmly linked to his many activities in Hungary, could not spend successive academic years away from his permanent position. Until his unexpected and much lamented death in Budapest on February 19, 1988, Ránki was present on campus for at least one semester each academic year and he was instrumental in finding someone who, in his absence from Indiana University could ensure the teaching of *Hungarica*. In the Spring of 1986 Kálmán Kulcsár, who 1988–90 was to become Minister of Justice and played a key-role in the judicial foundation of the new regime, taught at Indiana University; and in the spring of 1987 Mihály Szegedy-Maszák filled in for

Ránki. That same Spring my wife Jean and I had the pleasure to have as our houseguest Aczél, who wanted to see his “baby,” namely the Hungarian Chair.

John Ryan resigned from the presidency of Indiana University in the summer of 1987. This act created severe problems for the Hungarian Chair. They are reflected in a *Memorandum* dated March 20, 1991 signed by Vice President Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis on behalf of Indiana University and Béla G. Németh, then Chairman of the First Section for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This document, a product of the second Quinquennial review of the Chair, noted:

The death of Professor Ránki was not the only blow the Chair was to receive. From the outset of the Chair's operation it was clear that the moneys provided by the original endowment and the matching funds the University was bound to provide would not suffice for the support of all the activities deemed desirable. The resignation in the summer of 1987 of President Ryan, instrumental in the creation of the Chair, created serious financial problems since it was his wont to use discretionary funds to complement the sums received under the terms of the original agreement. In the present academic year, in great part thanks to the efforts of Professor Alex Rabinovitch, Dean of International Programs ... the College of Arts and Sciences made a substantial contribution to the funding of the Chair activities.

“Ideally,” so the *Memorandum* continues, “Professor Szegedy-Maszák should have received a permanent appointment in the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies.” I could not agree more, but the days of my chairmanship had long past, and my successor lacked the know-how to obtain the appointment. Luckily, the Department of Comparative Literature came to the rescue and offered Szegedy-Maszák a permanent appointment, which, to cite again the *Memorandum*, “assures the permanency so much needed for the flourishing of Hungarian Studies.” This arrangement still obtains and Szegedy-Maszák usually spends one semester at Indiana University whereas in the other semester another Hungarian scholar carries the burden of teaching matters Hungarian either alone or, when Szegedy-Maszák is present for the whole academic year, jointly with him. Since Ránki's death, in an informal arrangement, the heavy burden to find a suitable academic to fill the Hungarian Chair year after year has been shouldered with great expertise and tact by Professor Szegedy-Maszák. Without his knowledge of the Hungarian scholarly scene and his devotion to this thankless task the Chair could not have functioned.

Over the years the stipulation of the memorandum of April 10, 1981 that I remain – *sine die* and *ex officio* – the manager of the special account of the Chair was conveniently forgotten, and I took care not to take up the matter with the administration, which to this day treats me with elegance and generosity. Another silent and welcome change was the linking of Ránki's name to the Chair. It happened

gradually in connection with the yearly conferences, which – I cannot now recall when for the first time – were announced as organized by “The György Ránki Hungarian Chair.”

The tremendous political changes that in the late 1980s and early 1990s occurred in Hungary had no noticeable effect on the activities of the Hungarian Chair. There was no witch-hunt in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which weathered the changes with skill and dignity. Cooperation between the Academy and Indiana University remained harmonious, and I can recall but one, passing, unpleasantness.

In December 1993 Pál Tar, then Hungarian Ambassador in Washington, paid a visit to Indiana University. He was the first such official of the new regime to come to Bloomington and I was pleased with the prospect. The previous spring the two of us had met in Sarasota, Florida at a symposium on some Hungarian topic and, at his request, on April 6 I provided him with a “Short Conspectus” on the past of Hungarian Studies at Indiana University. During his visit to Indiana University Tar turned out to be an obnoxious, tactless person, a political and diplomatic nouveau riche, who quite mistakenly thought that the Hungarian Ambassador had a say in matters pertaining to the Hungarian Chair. One of his pet ideas was my removal from anything connected with the Chair. Patrick O’Meara, Dean of International Affairs – into whose competent and sympathetic hands in the meanwhile the task of watching over the Hungarian Chair shifted – had some difficulty in clarifying the situation. In view of such attempted interference I thought it advisable to fly to Budapest to take up matters at the Academy. I did so in January 1994 and talked about Tar to Domokos Kosáry, then president of the Academy and fellow historian. Kosáry was not a man to mince his words, and I wonder whether he dared to use the same expressions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as he did with me in protesting against any interference into the affairs that he rightly thought, concerned only the Academy and Indiana University. Be that as it may, no further attempt was made by successive ambassadors to follow in Tar’s misplaced footsteps, and relations between the embassy in Washington and the Hungarian Chair have remained, to this day, excellent.

With the Tar episode my interventions in the destinies of, let me call it, “The György Ránki Hungarian Chair” have ended. The Cold War has become a distant memory but the good work continues. Indiana University remains the only American university, and outside Hungary one of the very few in the world, with serious and continuous undergraduate and graduate programs in Hungarian Studies. It is not the aim of this essay to sketch the activities of the Hungarian Chair in the years that followed the change in Hungary’s political regime.