

**THE HUNGARIANS IN NEW YORK;  
A STUDY IN IMMIGRANT CULTURAL INFLUENCES.**

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Rare indeed have been the contributions of men and women of Hungarian blood to our national life"<sup>1</sup> said President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a letter to the editor-in-chief of the Amerikai Magyar Nepszava on the fortieth anniversary of the greatest Hungarian-American daily newspaper. My research has convinced me that in proportion to their numbers, Hungarians have exerted a considerable influence on American life especially in the latter part of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. However, the Hungarians themselves are to blame for misconceptions because they have been singularly remiss in keeping records of their activities and they have lacked historians to discover and organize the facts.

Much ground-work still remains to be done in accumulating primary sources and many parish records, shipping lists, old newspapers, and other materials are now unavailable because they were carelessly mislaid or destroyed. The Hungarian Reference Library is very much interested in preserving and gathering information on the subject and is doing very well considering that the library is only two years old. However, even in this library, which contains the best collection of Hungarian American materials, there are great gaps. Some of these gaps will probably be filled in by later work and some will probably remain unknown. In view of these limitations I can only regard my work as a pioneer effort to synthesize the available knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Amerikai-Magyar Nepszava, 40th Jubilee Edition, Section 2, June 18, 1939, p. 1.

I have made an honest attempt to exhaust the books, pamphlets, and newspapers on the subject in the library and in the course of my work also discovered some outstanding examples of the repetition of errors in the writings of others on Hungarian-American life. This is no doubt due to the fact that romantic incidents always have popular appeal whereas unembroidered truth may prove dull. Furthermore, the writers on Hungarian subjects have been story tellers rather than historians. I have tried to avoid the pitfalls, but I do not claim to be infallible.

Since I am more interested in the cultural aspect of history than in the political or economic, I am stressing the influence of Hungarian music, art, foods and dress on American life. I am also tracing the career of the hyphenated Americans who became productive citizens of this country at the same time that they kept up their old contacts with the Hungarians. Finally, I have long been eager to compare and contrast life in foreign nationality colonies with the institutions of American life. I am particularly interested in the Magyar section of New York, because it is the hub of Hungarian-American life which the other "Little Hungaries" of America imitate, and it is at least the temporary stopping-place of most Hungarian immigrants.

## CHAPTER II

## THE HUNGARIANS

Who are the Hungarians? The question seems simple but the answer is complex. In the minds of many people Hungarians are grouped with the Slavs and Hungary is regarded as a Balkan nation. However, the Hungarian people are the exception in Eastern Europe. They are in no way related to the Slavs and generally despise them. Steiner truly states: "The Magyar's closest relation is the Finns on the North and the Turks in the East of Europe, and he is classed anthropologically as an Ugro-Finn. In his development he has leaned closely to the West, having a Germanic culture while retaining a somewhat untamed Asiatic nature, which manifests itself in nothing worse than a love of fast horses, fiery wine, and the wild music with which the gypsy bewitches him, and draws the loose change out of the pockets of his tight-fitting trousers."<sup>2</sup> Although Hungarians are of a different nationality their contact with the Slavs is close because many Slavic people were under Hungarian rule up to peace treaties ending the World War in 1918. Writing in 1914 Professor Ross made their position very clear when he stated, "A thousand years ago the Magyars invading from Asia conquered the Slavs in Hungary and settled down as a dominant race. Although a minority in the land, they have remained masters and rulers."<sup>3</sup> Naturally the subject Slavs did not care to be known as Hungarians even though they came from territory legally belonging to Hungary, and consequently

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<sup>2</sup> Steiner, Edward C., On the Trail of the Immigrant, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Ross, Edward Alsworth, The Old World in the New; The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People, p. 173.

in determining the nationality of immigrants from pre-war Hungary this limitation has to be kept constantly in mind. Furthermore, real Hungarians were often considered Austrians by mistake because Austria-Hungary was a dual monarchy. Since the World War, on the other hand, many people of Hungarian nationality are living as minorities in lands ceded to Rumania and Yugoslavia, and if these should come to America they would be classed as Rumanians or Yugoslavs even though their whole cultural background is Hungarian. As if this were not complicated enough, more difficulties appear when a Hungarian of mixed ancestry is being considered, and marriages between Hungarians and Slavs or Germans were numerous, since pre-war Austria-Hungary was such a hodge-podge of nationalities. Indeed, in deciding who is truly Hungarian for purposes of this essay I used as my major criterion the individual's own statement about his nationality wherever he voiced any preferences, and generally omitted doubtful cases of persons who might conceivably be classed as Hungarian, but who failed to lay claim to that national background and ignored Hungarian contacts completely.

The real Hungarian is proud of his nationality; in fact many people think that he is excessively proud. This race pride has its advantages as Professor Ross points out: "The Magyar immigrant however poverty-pinched, feels the constant prick of the spur of race pride. His sense of honor is high. He will not seek charity unless he really needs it. In a Magyar quarter squalor and degeneration are not to be seen. The grass and flowers about the cottages, the clean yard and the clean children proclaim the presence of a race that cannot bear to be looked

down on."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Hungarian is generous in his attitude toward the Jew and the Gypsy.<sup>5</sup> However, when the Hungarian is insulted he can hate deeply and his pride and high spirits can get him into trouble. Ross speaks in an exaggerated fashion when he states, "No alien is more dreaded by the police than a vengeful or drink-maddened Magyar,"<sup>6</sup> but Hungarians can be hot-headed and sometimes they seem excessively touchy about things which a better-developed sense of humor could render benign. Another author touches the heart of the matter when he says, "Hungarians are predominantly an emotional people."<sup>7</sup> "To overcome the handicap of surplus emotions is the main difficulty of the Hungarian immigrant's adjustment to American life."<sup>8</sup> The best summary of the Hungarian mental, emotional, and ethical make-up which I found was that of Mr. Steiner: "He (the Hungarian) is, as a rule, honest, easily imposed upon, somewhat quarrelsome, addicted to drink, not so industrious as the Slav, but much more intelligent, comprehending more easily, and assimilating more quickly."<sup>9</sup>

Another Hungarian characteristic is a certain ceremoniousness of manner. To the less formal American the Hungarian style may seem over-

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4 Ross, Edward Alsworth, The Old World in the New, p. 173.

5 Steiner, Edward A., On the Trail of the Immigrant, p. 244.

6 Ross, Edward A., The Old World in the New, p. 175.

7 Fairchild, Henry Pratt, Immigrant Backgrounds, p. 71.

8 Ibid., p. 73.

9 Steiner, Edward A., On the Trail of the Immigrant, p. 250.

done and even apologetic. Like other continental Europeans, Hungarian men of the better classes kiss a lady's hand. Hungarians also resemble the Chinese in their rather liberal use of proverbs.

In appearance there is no uniformity among Hungarians just as there is no pure race with certain set characteristics, Hitler's opinion notwithstanding. However, certain traits appear more frequently than others. Hungarians generally have dark brown or black hair, prominent cheek-bones and small shiny Mongolian eyes.<sup>10</sup>

The Hungarian's Mongolian appearance is the result of his Asiatic background. In 896 A. D. Hungarian tribes entered Europe from the region of the Ural Mountains and settled down in their present habitat after they were defeated by Otto I, the Holy Roman Emperor. Their leader, Arpad, established a strong monarchy. St. Stephen, the most powerful leader of this house brought the country into the Roman Catholic fold. August 20, St. Stephen's Day, is still celebrated as a national holiday. The royal crown was granted to King Stephen by Pope Sylvester in 1000.<sup>11</sup>

The Sacred Crown of Hungary, as it is frequently called is a treasured symbol of the Hungarian nation and actually consists of two crowns, St. Stephen's and that received in 1072 by Duke Geisa from the Greek Emperor which he later joined with the older crown when he was made King of Hungary.<sup>12</sup> The Sacred Crown by its structure illustrates the close relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Hungarian monarchy since it contains the pictures of the twelve apostles, of the Savior, of the Archangels, of two Greek Emperors and of King Geysa.<sup>13</sup>

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10 Steiner, Edward A., On the Trail of the Immigrant, p. 245.

11 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 19.

12 Horowitz, Jean, "The Sacred Crown of Hungary," in The English Illustrated Magazine, August, 1896, pp. 405-407. Pictures of the Crown, the orb and the sceptre are contained in it.

13 Clark, Francis E., Old Homes of New Americans; The Country and the People of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Their Contributions to The New World p. 122



One of the major developments of the later Middle Ages and of early Modern European History is the rise of the national states of today, and the people of Hungary paralleled the inhabitants of other countries in this process. Hungary's constitutional beginnings were very similar to the situation in England since in 1222 the nobles forced the king, Andrew II, to sign a guarantee of their rights called the Golden Bull, which like England's Magna Charta is the source of the country's liberties.<sup>14</sup>

In other ways, Hungary's growth was different. Her rulers were recruited from diverse sources: - The French Anjous ruled for a time; King Matthias was a popular choice, - since he was the son of John Hunyadi, Great Warrior who fought against the Turks, then invading Hungary, - and Matthias was successful in war, in reforming the country, in promoting culture, and in politics; after him there was chaos as rival claimants to the throne appeared and the Turks took advantage of the situation by conquering the country and exacting tribute from it for one hundred fifty years; finally the Hapsburgs gained a foothold because the Hungarians preferred them to the Turks and the Austrians merely decided to keep Hungary as a conquered province after the Turks were driven out of the country by 1699 by the united armies of Europe. Thus in early modern times Hungary appears merely as a subordinate of Austria.<sup>15</sup>

This early background is well-known and detailed accounts of it may be found in histories of Hungary. My major purpose in summarizing it

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14 Josika-Herceg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 21.

15 Josika-Herczeg, Ibid., pp. 22-47.

here is to reveal its influence on the modern Magyar's attitude and character. Hungarians today point with pride to their fight against the Turks regarding themselves as the bulwark of the West against the East, of Christianity versus Mohammedanism. Hungary's late development of a national economic life and culture is also attributable to the crippling Oriental influence of the Turkish Wars. Furthermore, Hungarians came to resent Austrian rule even though some progress was made under Hapsburg monarchs since they felt that the Austrians had taken advantage of their trouble with the Turks. This resentment led to the Revolution of 1848 under Louis Kossuth and the failure of that revolt brought many political exiles to American shores. Even after the Dual Monarchy was set up in 1867 whereby Hungary was allowed to have her own internal government, the two partners continued to have a common ruler, a common foreign policy, a common military establishment, and a financial agreement which was re-adjusted every ten years.<sup>16</sup> This arrangement was also not very popular but lasted till 1918 when Austria and Hungary were finally separated.

These developments made the Hungarian a warrior because the Magyars always had to fight for their existence. The heroic deeds of Hungarian leaders are related in song and story. A melancholy strain also runs through the people and is especially noticable in their music. Close contact with so many nationalities has lead to intermixture among Hungarians, Slavs, Germans, and Turks. Although he is very proud of his Hungarian heritage, the Magyar has become a cosmopolite.

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16 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After a Thousand Years, pp. 83-90.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE REASONS FOR HUNGARIAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

No general cause can be assigned for Hungarian emigration to America, but there was a predominant cause in each period of emigration. Although Hungarians only came in very large numbers after 1890 that were not "new immigrants" in the true sense.

In the colonial period of American history only isolated and adventurous Hungarians came to America. For the other colonies there are fragmentary accounts of individual early Hungarian settlers, but no Hungarian was important enough to leave any recorded imprint upon the life of New York City. Indeed, it was only in the 1830's that Hungarians at home were able to read about life in America from certain celebrated descriptions of travels in the United States. Alexander Farkas de Boloni's book appeared in 1835 and praised American democracy very highly. Another laudatory work by a Frenchman was translated into Hungarian around the same time; this was Tocqueville's De la Democratie En Amerique. Augustus Haraszthy's American observations was the last important book of this group to appear and it also marked a new development since it was written from the business man's point of view and stressed commercial factors. Haraszthy was important in other connections besides being an author; he was a business man of Wisconsin, a sheriff in California, worked for the United States mint and above all introduced various European vintages including the famous Hungarian Tokay into California.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections from Pre-Columbian Times to the End of the American Civil War, pp. 31-38.

However, even these sympathetic accounts of American life did not attract many Hungarians to New York. The exact number of Hungarians in this city in the early years is unknown since the Magyars were not listed separately in the census until 1870. Government statistics are available on the total number of persons of Austro-Hungarian birth in New York City from 1850 to 1900 but in quoting them one must remember that many of these people were not really Hungarian: In 1850 - 168, in 1860 - 2,438, in 1870 - 6,708, in 1880 - 19,718, in 1890 - 57,872 and in 1900 - 132,006.<sup>2</sup> From these figures it becomes immediately apparent that the Hungarian population of New York was almost negligible before 1850 and one is, therefore, not surprised to find that no organized community activity or newspaper were carried on.

The great increase in numbers from 1850 to 1860 is largely due to the spurt which followed the failure of Hungary's Revolution of 1848 against Austria. This revolution was part of the general European liberal movement for nationalism and democracy against Metternich's system of repression. Among the Hungarians the leaders were of the educated upper classes who were the only ones then interested in politics. In imitation of the French Revolution of 1848, the Magyar patriots struck a blow for freedom in that year and were at first successful. Their leader was Louis Kossuth, a fiery orator, who began life in poverty but by hard work and determination he became a lawyer and a member of the Hungarian Diet. When Kossuth became the leader of the revolution he had already been imprisoned for his cause and had built up a party

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<sup>2</sup> Senate Document No. 748 - 61 Congress 3rd Session. Reports of the Immigration Commission; Emigration Conditions in Europe, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1911, p. 355.

following in the Hungarian Diet favoring immediate reform for the masses by revolution in contrast to Count Szechenyi's conservative party of landowners who wanted gradual reform in Hungary by peaceful means.<sup>3</sup> At first the rebels were successful because simultaneous rebellions in Bohemia and Lombardy - Venetia weakened the Austrian control. Furthermore, the Austrians merely acquiesced in the new order on the surface but secretly worked to arouse the nationalities of the Austrian Empire against each other. The decisive factor was Russian aid for the Austrians because the Czar feared the spread of the liberal movement to his own domains. Before the final collapse of the Hungarian movement Kossuth fled to Turkey and left General Gorgey behind him as a military dictator. Gorgey and his men saw that resistance was hopeless and surrendered to the Russians at Vilagos in 1849. The laws which had granted the Hungarians autonomy and democratic rights were immediately repealed and participants in the rebellion were severely punished, executed or exiled.<sup>4</sup> Naturally this gave a great impetus to emigration and the United States became the new home of many of the political exiles. These refugees were of the upper and military classes; therefore, they had a hard time adjusting themselves to American conditions as common laborers. Many returned home after a general amnesty was granted following the Ausgleich of 1867. Others wandered about the United States trying different occupations and most of those who still survived and were living here participated in the American Civil War.

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3 Anonymous, "Kossuth," The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Vol XVIII No. IV, Dec. 1849, pp. 493-501.

4 Anonymous, Kossuth and the Hungarian War, 288 pages passim - An account published in 1851 based on the memoirs of participants in the rebellion.

The Hungarian immigrant most familiar to Americans is the peasant who belongs to the group which began to come in the 1880's. From the time of the Kossuth emigration to the 1880's Hungarian emigration to America died down, especially after 1867 when many of the exiles returned. From the figures which I have quoted one can see that Hungarian immigration did increase, but not in such large proportions as before that or afterwards.

The "new immigration" after 1880 is attributable to economic conditions rather than to political or individual motives as theretofore. It was the Hungarian peasant class who built up a Hungarian community in New York ranking second in size in the world - exceeded only by Budapest, the capitol of Hungary. In 1930 the Hungarian-born of New York City were 70,631; the children of Hungarian parents were 67,466 - making the total of Hungarian origin 138,097. However, we may conceivably add to this those of Hungarian native tongue born in foreign lands, another 55,103.<sup>5</sup> Other estimates vary considerably. The figures that I gave before were from the best Hungarian source. According to the census of 1930 which is the best American source there were 115,098 of Hungarian origin in New York - 38,140 in the Bronx, 24,893 in Brooklyn, 34,677 in Manhattan, 15,849 in Queens and 1,539 in Richmond.<sup>6</sup> Of these, however, only 59,883 were born in Hungary as it now stands in size since the last World War - 19,871 in the Bronx, 11,198 in Brooklyn, 19,651 in Manhattan, 8,484 in Queens and 679 in Richmond.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Magyar Statisztikai Szemle, June 6, 1932, edited by Dobrovits Sandor, p. 467.

6 U. S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census; Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the U. S. 1930, pp. 148-149.

7 U. S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census; Fifteenth Census of the U. S.; Population, p. 249.

Of the total only 3,209 came since 1925; 10,691 from 1920-1924; 1,183 from 1915-1919 when the World War interfered, 8,292 from 1911-1914; 20,927 from 1901-1910, 13,745 before 1900 and 1,836 unknown.<sup>8</sup> The number of Hungarian immigrants has declined since the quota restrictions were introduced but those who come here are more eager to become citizens as the figures prove. In 1930, 64.4 per cent of the total of 59,883 immigrants were naturalized as against 1920 when only 41.0 per cent of New York's Hungarians were citizens.<sup>9</sup> The greatest number of Hungarians came around the turn of the century when a yearly average of 21,348 arrived during the three years ending June 30, 1903. Of these 36 per cent were booked to Pennsylvania; 19 per cent to New York, 16 per cent to New Jersey, and 15 per cent to Ohio.<sup>10</sup>

In 1907, the largest number of immigrants came from Hungary.<sup>11</sup> In fact there was too much emigration and Hungary suffered. In 1881 the Hungarian government made an effort to regulate emigration by forbidding emigration agencies to operate without a license, but the law was not rigidly enforced. In 1903 a new law was enacted which put all transportation agencies under government regulation. Agents were forbidden to solicit from door to door, were forced to keep open records and had to post bond for good behavior. Certain classes were forbidden to

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<sup>8</sup> 15th Census of the U. S., Year of Immigration of the Foreign Born, p. 548.

<sup>9</sup> 15th Census of the U. S., Citizenship of Foreign-Born Whites, p. 752.

<sup>10</sup> Pink, Louis H., "The Magyar in New York," Charities, Vol. 13, No. 10, Dec. 3, 1904, p. 262.

<sup>11</sup> Adalbert Perenyi, Manuscript of Speech "How to Direct the Immigration in the Future and How Can We Direct the Hungarian Farmers to the Proper Paths," p. 1. Copy at Hungarian Reference Library.

emigrate - men liable for army duty, criminals, children - and emigrants could not go as contract labor or leave dependant children behind uncared for.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, so important did emigration become in Hungary that the country was interested in the shipping of these people to America as a business matter. In 1904 the government made a contract with the Cunard Steamship Company for the maintenance of steamship service between Fiume and New York. Since the Hungarian government sought to divert immigration from the German ports to Fiume it agreed to furnish 30,000 passengers annually. As a matter of fact only a small part of Hungarian emigration was diverted to Fiume. In 1907 the company continued the exclusive right to transport emigrants, but the provision relating to the number supplied annually was dropped.<sup>13</sup> This shipping policy of the Hungarian government led to a minor quarrel with the United States government when Marcus Braun, the American immigrant inspector on duty in Hungary and of Hungarian birth himself, reported to the United States about the Hungarian Government's contract with the Cunard line to furnish 30,000 emigrants annually for ten years. Upon the insistence of the United States government the contract was changed to omit the clause stating the number to be supplied.<sup>14</sup>

Why did so many Hungarians leave the homeland around the turn of the century? Braun who is a very prejudiced source, because he is bitter against the Hungarian Government for censuring his report to the American

12 Senate Document No. 748, Reports of the Immigration Commission; Emigration Conditions in Europe, p. 358.

13 Senate Document No. 748, Ibid., p. 359.

14 Broun, Marcus, Immigration Abuses; Glimpses of Hungary and Hungarians, pp. 81-101.



Government says that Hungary refused to improve social, economic and political conditions at home but let Hungarians come to make American dollars and then tried to entice them back.<sup>15</sup> He mentioned the following devices used by the Hungarian government to make the stay of Hungarians in America seem temporary: - subsidized Hungarian and Slovak newspapers, churches and schools provided with ministers from home, free Hungarian books preaching Hungarian patriotism, and sending over of national flags.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand the members of the Immigration Commission gave as their opinion the statement that the large emigration was distasteful to the Hungarian Government which was therefore fostering industrial development,<sup>17</sup> to keep them home.

Present-day Hungary is only one-third as large as pre-World War Hungary but at both times she is known mainly as an agricultural country. Just before the World War some attempts were made at industrialization but the loss of the country's natural resources put a stop to these for a time. Hungary is noted for her wheat and corn. Horses in Hungary originated from an Asiatic breed but state stud farms have since developed the highest types which are also raised for export.<sup>18</sup> The Hungarian cowboy - the Csikos - roams the plain. Budapest advertizes herself as a gay Paris-of-the-Danube, but the basis of her prosperity

15 Broun, Marcus, Immigration Abuses; Glimpses of Hungary and Hungarians, p. 77.

16 Ibid., p. 101.

17 Senate Document 748, Reports of the Immigration Commission; Emigration Conditions in Europe, p. 360.

18 Dr. Telkes, Director of the Hungarian Reference Library gave an interesting lecture on horses in Hungary and illustrated it with motion pictures on the evening of April 3, 1940.

is the flour-milling industry in which she excels.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Hungary's most important industries are those which are based on agriculture, such as flour milling, sugar refining, distilling and the brewing of beer. On the other hand textiles, and machine industries are still far behind because the country has only limited resources of iron and coal.<sup>20</sup> Since Hungary has always been an agricultural country, we have to consider a large peasant class and it was this group which came to America from the 1880's to the World War. One reason may have been the lack of industrial development at home.

However, most Hungarian peasants desired to be farmers and own a piece of land rather than work in factories. In America they worked mainly in mills, mines and factories because they thought that they could make money faster that way, but when they had the money they wanted to return to Hungary and buy a farm. As Perenyi pointed out, this led to a rise in the price of Hungarian farm land, since only about one-third of the land was on the market in the hands of small owners, while two-thirds was the property of the nobles who would not sell. This in turn led to worse conditions in Hungary.<sup>21</sup> Ross points out the evils of the system very well: "Most Magyars came to America with the expectation of returning eventually to Hungary to live. For this reason few have acquired citizenship and scarcely any immigrants from southeastern Europe show less interest in the ballot. After a trip or

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19 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 184.

20 Kiss, Emil, "The Industrial Conditions and Commercial Relations in Hungary," Report of Emil Kiss, President, American-Hungarian Chamber of Commerce to the Department of Commerce, Washington, p. 12-15.

21 Perenyi, Adalbert, How to Direct the Immigration in the Future and How Can We Direct the Hungarian Farmers to the Proper Paths, Manuscript of a Speech in the Hungarian Reference Library.

two home or a vain effort to settle down to life in the old country, many return to America reconciled to the prospect of ending their days here."<sup>22</sup> D. A. Sonders points out that for the fourteen years ending June 30, 1921, 67 per cent of the Magyars who came here returned to Hungary.<sup>23</sup>

The lack of interest of the Hungarian immigrant in citizenship was due not only to his eventual desire to return to Hungary, but to his lack of training for active citizenship in Hungary where political affairs were run by the magnates - the wealthy land owners. Furthermore, most of the Hungarians were very poorly educated. "The bulk of the American Hungarians is devoid of higher education because of the background of their social and economic status. Hungary for a long time had a splendid standard of higher education but compulsory education is a relatively new feature of Hungarian life. Therefore, there is a considerable number of illiterates among the Hungarian peasants."<sup>24</sup> In 1860, 58 per cent of the population was illiterate. In 1910 the figure was still as high as 33.3 per cent and in 1920 it was 15.2 per cent.<sup>25</sup> Religious denominations maintained schools and the percentage of literacy varied widely among the sects. By 1913, the Jews had the highest degree of literacy - 83 per cent; Catholics and Protestants came next with 71 per cent, while Russian and Greek Orthodox

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22 Ross, Edward Alsworth, The Old World in the New; The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People, p. 175.

23 Sonders, David Aaron, The Magyars in America, p. 57.

24 Fairchild, Henry Pratt, Immigrant Backgrounds, p. 81.

25 Josika-Herczeg, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 160.

adherents in Eastern Hungary fell far below with only 22 per cent able to read and write.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that Hungarians came to America mainly to make money and return to Hungary rather than to settle down here permanently to enjoy our democratic system led to other evil results. Families were broken up because men left their wives and children at home and when they lived in the United States they lacked the stabilizing family influence. "In the Magyar stream the men are nearly three times as numerous as the women and two out of five of the men have left wives in the old country. This means boarding-house life, shocking congestion and a rich harvest for saloon and bawdy house."<sup>27</sup>

It is obvious that the life of the Hungarian immigrant in New York City or any other industrial center was not very pleasant around the turn of the century. He worked hard for low wages and spent his leisure time in loneliness and carousing. Yet the stream of Magyar immigration reached its maximum in this period. The key to this situation lies in the conditions of Hungarian economic and social life. Even today many people call Hungary the "last surviving feudal state in Europe." This is not true literally, but in practice most of Hungary's land is still in the hands of the large landowners (magnates) and the Church. Since the World War the government has created smaller holdings and is aiding the peasant farmer through agricultural schools and community houses to instruct farmers in newer methods and to raise cultural standards.<sup>28</sup> There is still much room for improvement and further

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26 Clarke, F. E., Old Homes of New Americans, p. 181.

27 Ross, Edward Alsworth, The Old World in the New, p. 174.

28 Josika-Herczeg, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 189.

measures are pending. In the period we are speaking of no reforms had been introduced and the blight of landlordism was augmented by tax inequalities. Furthermore, in practice only the magnates had a say in the government, because they were the only ones with education and property.

John R. Commons, an authority on immigrant races, compares Hungarian conditions with the life of other countries and brings out the awful conditions which crushed the poor in Hungary: "The number of births is large in proportion to inhabitants. There are 43 births a year for every 1,000 persons, a number exceeded by but one other country of Europe, Russia. Yet with this large number of births, because the economic conditions are so onerous and the consequent deaths so frequent, the net increase is less than that of any other country except France."<sup>29</sup> Another quotation from Commons explains very well why the poor of Hungary emigrated: "It is not so much the over-population of Austria-Hungary that excites emigration as it is the poverty, ignorance, inequality and helplessness that produce a seeming over-population."<sup>30</sup>

In the thirty-year period from 1880 to 1910 the Hungarian peasant made his way to America where he carried his peasant culture. Americans in this period did not become familiar with the great Hungarian authors, but they did learn to eat goulash (gulyas) which is a stew originally prepared by the Hungarian shepherds and therefore a dish of the common people. Hungarian intellectuals in New York are the first to admit that the Magyar immigrant of the pre-World War period lacked a higher culture and subordinated his standard of living to the desire to make

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29 Commons, John R., Races and Immigrants in America, p. 86.

30 Ibid., p. 87.

money and return to Hungary; as one of the Hungarian authorities on the subject points out, for the fourteen years ending June 30, 1921 just 67 per cent of the Magyars who came here returned.<sup>31</sup>

Since the World War both the type of immigrant and the conditions governing his emigration have changed completely. Now it is the Hungarian intellectual who seeks a permanent home in America, but the United States' policy of immigration restriction based upon definite quotas limits the entry of these; consequently, there are long waiting lists. The new immigrants desire security in America in political and economic affairs which they cannot find in Hungary. Political refugees came in great numbers around 1920 when a Hungarian experiment in Communism under Bela Kun was overthrown by the conservatives who restored the monarchy which had been overthrown when King Charles fled during the World War. Since then Hungary has enjoyed the unique distinction of being a monarchy without a king, under a Regent-Admiral Horthy.<sup>32</sup> A monarch is lacking but Prince Otto of Hapsburg is frequently mentioned as a possibility, although the Hungarians abolished the rights of the Hapsburgs forever to allay foreign suspicions after the last abortive effort by Charles IV to regain the throne in 1921.<sup>33</sup> The purge of Communists which followed the overthrow of Kun is called the "White Terror" and is closely related to anti-semitism, because the intellectuals of Hungary were mostly Jews, and the professional class engineered the Communist experiment.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Sonders, David Aaron, The Magyars in America, p. 57.

32 Josika-Herczeg, Hungary After A Thousand Years, pp. 143-155.

33 Ibid., pp. 136-139.

34 Bagger, Eugene S., "The Hungarian White Terror," The Nation, Vol. 109, No. 2838, Nov. 22, 1919, pp. 667-669.

Previously the Jew was well-treated in Hungary in contrast to other South European countries. Indeed, in Hungary we find many religions existing peacefully side by side. Up to the White Terror, religion was not a motive for emigration. "In matters of religion about two-thirds of the Hungarians are Roman Catholics, a small number are Greek Catholics, a very large percentage Calvinists and the rest are Lutherans, Unitarians, Jews, and a small per cent of them Baptists."<sup>35</sup> However, religion did have a political significance. Many Hungarians became Calvinists in opposition to the Catholic Hapsburgs, and the Protestants are more democratic on social questions than the Catholics.<sup>36</sup>

After 1920 the Jewish persecution quieted down but at the present time Jews in Hungary can hardly feel safe because the spread of Nazi Anti-semitism is a constant threat. Indeed, politically the situation is not very calm because Germany may seize Hungary any day.

As a matter of fact, since the World War Hungarians have never quite felt safe even after Hungary's entrance into the League of Nations in 1923.<sup>37</sup> Immediately after the armistice Czech and Rumanian armies invaded Hungary in violation of the agreement, and tried to seize whatever they could; the Rumanians especially appropriated whatever they saw before the allies persuaded them to leave.<sup>38</sup> Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia profitted by the Peace of Trianon at

35 Fairchild, Henry Pratt, Immigrant Backgrounds, p. 74.

36 Ibid., p. 74.

37 Josika-Herczeg, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 201.

38 Anonymous, "The Rumanian Invasion of Hungary," The Nation, Vol. 109, No. 2828, Sept. 13, 1919, p. 362.

Hungary's expense, whereby Hungary lost two-thirds of her territory and her best natural resources.<sup>39</sup> Treaty revision was consistently advocated by Hungarians. In England Lord Rothermere became interested in the Hungarian cause through his newspaper, The Daily Mail,<sup>40</sup> and in the United States the famous Hungarian statesman Count Apponyi advocated peaceful re-adjustment of claims in various lectures during his visits to American universities and business meetings in 1923.<sup>41</sup>

Naturally, these political quarrels did not help to promote good relations and the Balkan neighbors even formed defensive alliances against Hungary. The political disagreement had economic repercussions as Hungary and her neighbors set up tariff barriers against each other. Rumania in the course of her land reforms has been charged with discriminating against Hungarian minorities within her borders.<sup>42</sup>

When we remember that in addition large countries like Italy, Germany and Russia all have a stake in the Balkans, and all desire Hungary's fertile plain, it is easy to understand that the political life of post-war Hungary has been too precarious for many of her subjects to endure. However, in economic affairs the situation has been equally bad. By the peace treaty the country lost most of her resources. Her finances were in great disorder and she had to be helped to her feet by a loan from the League of Nations<sup>43</sup> and by following the advice

39 Josika-Herczeg, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 122.

40 Ibid., p. 204 and pp. 230-246.

41 Ibid., pp. 251-289.

42 Ibid., pp. 201-221.

43 Lengyel, Emil, "Saving Hungary," The Nation, Vol. CXVIII, No. 3059, Feb. 20, 1924, pp. 214-215.



of an American financial expert, Jeremiah Smith, appointed by the League of Nations.<sup>44</sup> As in Germany, the middle class was destroyed by the financial and economic collapse, and professionals and intellectuals were unable to make their living.

While these conditions explain the increase in professionals who emigrate to America we must also account for the decline in peasant emigration. One reason is the improvement in the lot of the Hungarian farmer due to the government's new agricultural policy which I have already discussed. American conditions explain the rest. Since the depression it is no longer possible for the immigrant to "get rich quick here." We do not even give the immigrant the chance to enter freely as before. Quota limitations on the number who shall enter from each European country are based on the number of people of that national origin who came here in the past. Since Hungarians did not come en masse before 1890 their quota percentage allows for fewer new entries. Although all the old European causes for emigration continue to exist including war, the numbers of new immigrants are likely to decline rather than increase in the future because the United States has become a mature nation rather than a melting pot.

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44 Anonymous, "Jeremiah Smith and Hungary's Finances," Current History Magazine, Vol. XX, No. 4, July, 1924, p. 686.

## CHAPTER IV

### EVERYDAY LIFE AMONG THE HUNGARIANS OF NEW YORK

Hungarians may be found all over New York City but their community life centers in Manhattan's Little Hungary. Bercovici tells us where we may find New York's Hungarians today: It (the Magyar district) runs parallel with the German Quarter from 10th Street north, takes a bit of Second Avenue as its main street from 9th Street to 18th and 19th Streets and then extending eastward it sinks below the lower avenues, A and B and with few interruptions runs along in the same way to Sixtieth Street. There the Magyar district takes a jump of about ten or twelve blocks where the Czecho-Slovaks live. Skirting their territory, the Hungarian quarter continues from it to 86th Street always running parallel with the German district."<sup>1</sup>

Although this description was published in the 1920's it still holds true today since immigration has about balanced emigration and the old community just about maintains itself while the older generation survives. If immigration restriction continues in the future we may gradually expect to see the demise of all of New York's foreign quarters as the American born generations break away from the old isolation.

Little Hungary is a recent development which began to emerge around 1890. In 1904 the Hungarian colony in New York was comparatively small since 80 per cent of the incoming Magyars moved on to American mines, farms, and other cities. Indeed, during the three years ending June 30, 1903, only 19 per cent of the total were booked to New York as compared with 36 per cent to Pennsylvania, 16 per cent to New Jersey

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<sup>1</sup> Bercovici, Konrad, Around the World in New York, p. 346.

and 15 per cent to Ohio.<sup>2</sup> New York's Hungarian quarter was imperfectly formed at that time and really consisted of three quarters on the East Side - one around 117th and 118th Streets, one between 75th and 85th Streets and the colony proper between Stanton and Seventh Streets, and 1st Avenue and the East River.<sup>3</sup> Since then the intermediate area has been filled in. The most important streets of this area are well-described by Pink, "East Houston Street is the Broadway of the Hungarian Colony; Second Avenue is its Riverside Drive; Avenues A, B, and C are important centers of social and business activity."<sup>4</sup>

In 1904 this area contained about 50,000 - 60,000 Magyars and Hungarian Jews.<sup>5</sup> At the present time there are around 50,000 Hungarians in New York's Magyar colony according to the estimates of most Hungarians if we include Hungarians whose home territory now belongs to other lands. Then and now a large proportion of the residents can be classed as Jews. In 1903, Marcus Broun, the immigrant inspector, estimated that 75 per cent of the inhabitants of the Hungarian colony on the lower East side were Jewish.<sup>6</sup> At the present time this still holds true, but further up town Christians predominate.

One can locate Little Hungary by the signs in the store windows and the perusal of names. Shop-keepers are numerous among the Hungarians

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2 Pink, Louis H., "The Magyar in New York," Charities, Vol. 13, No. 10, Dec. 3, 1904, p. 262.

3 Ibid., p. 262.

4 Ibid., p. 262.

5 Ibid., p. 262.

6 Ibid., p. 262.

and most of them will be found in pastry, tailoring and fur businesses. Hungarian restaurants are well known and probably over four hundred exist in New York. Women frequently keep embroidery shops. However, a large proportion of the Magyars are simple laborers and find employment in cigar, shoe, and wire factories, and gas works. Among the newer immigrants and the American born "second generation" quite a few are professionals.<sup>7</sup>

The cultural life of New York's Magyars hinges around certain well known institutions - the newspaper, the church, the charitable organization, and such educational institutions as the Hungarian Reference Library or Literary societies. I shall devote a chapter to the history of each of these in New York. Formerly the cafe was very important as a social center patterned on the coffee houses of Budapest. Each cafe had its own clientele depending on the occupation of its guests - artists, musicians, shop-keepers, professionals, etc. These cafes served the same purpose as our clubs but they were less expensive to attend.<sup>8</sup> One of the most famous in pre-World War days was the Cafe Boulevard.<sup>9</sup> After prohibition was introduced the cafes declined and they have not reappeared with repeal.

Our chief amusement nowadays is the motion picture. In the Modern Playhouse at 3rd Avenue and 81st Street, Magyar movies are shown every day. Lately Magyar films have come to the notice of Americans and have even been reviewed in the large American newspapers of New York City like the Times and the Daily News.

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7 Pink, Louis H., "The Magyars in New York," Charities, p. 263.

8 Ibid., p. 263.

9 Goodman, Vilma M., Boulevard Reminiscences, passim.

The strongest Hungarian influence may be detected in the home. You shall know a Hungarian housewife by her kitchen; somewhere on display you will see copper pots and kettles. However, what goes into those pots is even more important.

Hungarian food is tasty and somewhat more spicy than American dishes, but more subtle than the "hot" Spanish concoctions. Paprika is an extremely popular seasoning for meat and fish, but the real Hungarian product is sweet. Hungarian goulash is the best-known dish in which paprika is used. This is a dark red stew which according to tradition is the dish of Hungarian shepherds. Indispensable components are paprika, tomatoes, onions, diced potatoes and diced beef.

Other meats are also combined with paprika in popular dishes and a great favorite is paprika chicken. Along with the meat, noodles are frequently served. Hungarians are as fond of noodles as Italians are of spaghetti, and all kinds of delicacies are invented. Noodles mixed with pot cheese, with nuts, or with ham are favorites. Sometimes, however, in place of noodles liver balls are substituted, especially in beef broth. Hungarians are very fond of beef broth and boiled beef.

Frequently tomato sauce is served with boiled beef. However, this is only one of the uses for which Hungarian housewives preserve tomatoes in glass jars for the winter. Tomato soup is popular among Hungarians and tomato sauce goes well with stuffed green peppers.

Another preserve which the Hungarians favor is dill pickles which are served with practically every meat dish. Squash is greatly used as a vegetable. In the winter time dried split peas and lentils appear often on the table.

Cabbage is used in unusual ways aside from its function as a vegetable. Finely chopped pieces of cabbage are mixed with cooked dough squares, and individual cabbage leaves are used as wrappings for pork stuffing - stuffed cabbage.

Hungarians favor rye bread with their food, but no meal is complete without real Hungarian pastry for desert. Jam, pot cheese and nuts are close rivals as fillings for Hungarian pastries. Pot cheese is often rolled into thin Hungarian pancakes called palacsinta and cheese is used almost as extensively as apples to fill strudels rolled from paper-thin dough. Of course, Hungarians also consume all varieties of layer cake.

As popular as the frankfurter among Americans is the kolbas among the Magyars. Like most Hungarian foods it is well-seasoned with paprika and comes in sausages longer and thicker than American frankfurters. Warm cooked kolbas with sauerkraut, dill pickles or horseradish is an excellent dinner for a winter night. Other vegetables may also be served, but in Hungarian homes vegetables rarely appear in their natural state with the mere addition of butter, pepper, and salt according to the American custom; Hungarians generally use some kind of sauce varying with the vegetable, but generally of a thinner consistency than the American white sauce.

Among beverages wine is the favorite and Hungarians have varied tastes according to their pocketbooks and preferences. The most expensive of Hungarian wines is the Tokay, but this is not consumed by the average man. Another welcome accompaniment to a Hungarian dinner aside from wine is song, and plaintive Hungarian music is played in

## Hungarian restaurants.<sup>10</sup>

The best way to sample the Hungarian Cuisine is in a Hungarian household, but there are also many good restaurants. At the New York World's Fair Hungarian dishes were sold last year and they will be featured again at the Hungarian exhibit.

If one is invited to a Hungarian household for dinner, he will probably find himself in a modern tenement. If the lady of the house is old-fashioned enough Hungarian embroideries will decorate the home. One or more Hungarian dolls in Magyar peasant costume with broad red skirts and tight bodices may enliven the place. Otherwise the house is likely to look like a typical American home.

The peasant dress of the doll may be the only concession to Hungarian national tradition. On festive occasions some young Hungarian-Americans appear in the Hungarian red, white, and green, but this is about the only opportunity for an outsider to see real Hungarian dress. Even in Hungary itself the country people have become citified in clothing selection. The boot - formerly the proper footgear for magnate and peasant - is slowly passing into oblivion. The romanticist will find very little that is bizarre in "Little Hungary."

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10 My description of Hungarian food habits is based on accounts given by my mother and father who are both professionals in that field.

## CHAPTER V

## KOSSUTH'S VISIT TO NEW YORK CITY

"Louis Kossuth's place in history is already fixed and cannot be changed. Among orators, patriots, statesmen, exiles, he has, living or dead, no superior. His throne is in the heart, and he can only be dethroned by tearing that heart from the breast of humanity,"<sup>1</sup> was Horace Greeley's laudatory estimate of Kossuth. In his famous newspaper, The New York Tribune, Greeley championed the Hungarian cause as he did the other liberal movements of the day. Examination of the collected copies of this newspaper for the year of Kossuth's visit showed a description of Kossuth's activities in practically every issue and numerous editorials on his behalf. Indeed, Greeley even favored a loan for Hungary by Americans.

Most of the other newspapers and magazines were equally enthusiastic about Kossuth and the Hungarian rebellion. The nation's outstanding literary men like Emerson, Whittier and Lowell wrote poems in his praise. Lowell's is typical:

"A race of nobles may die out,  
 A royal line may leave no heir;  
 Wise Nature sets no guards about  
 Her pewter plate and wooden ware.  
 But they fail not, the kinglier breed  
 Who starry diadems attain;  
 To dungeon, axe, and stake succeed  
 Heirs of the old heroic strain.

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<sup>1</sup> Feleky, Antoinette, Charles Feleky and his Unpublished Manuscript  
 p. 20.



The zeal of nature never cools,  
 Nor is she thwarted of her ends;  
 When gapped and dulled her cheaper tools,  
 Then she a saint and prophet spends.

Land of the Magyars! though it be  
 The tyrant may relink his chain,  
 Already thine the victory,  
 As the just Future measures gain.

Though hast succeeded; thou hast won  
 The deathly travail's amplest worth;  
 A nation's duty thou hast done,  
 Giving a hero to our earth.

And he, let come what will of woe,  
 Has saved the land he strove to save;  
 No Cossack hordes, no traitor's blow,  
 Can quench the voice shall haunt his grave.

I Kossuth am; O Future thou  
 That clear'st the just and blott'st the vile,  
 O'er this small dust in reverence bow,  
 Remembering what I was erewhile.

I was the chosen trump where through  
 Our God sent forth awakening breath;  
 Came chains? Came death? The strain He blew  
 Sounds on, outliving chains and death."<sup>2</sup>

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2 Feleky, Antoinette, Charles Feleky and his Unpublished Manuscript, pp. 15-16.

Kossuth's visit gave a great intellectual stimulus to American advocates of democracy in a period when we were very self-conscious about our democracy as opposed to Metternich's system of absolutism which then prevailed in Europe. We welcomed political refugees whether they fled from Hungary, Germany, or Italy. Furthermore, Kossuth was a very handsome man, a romantic figure and a great orator. It is small wonder that he aroused so much popular enthusiasm.

As time passed and emotionalism declined some were inclined to look back upon the whole incident with critical eyes and questioned Kossuth's sincerity. Samuel Clagett Busey who published a book in 1856 pointing out the evils of immigration regarded the enthusiasm with which Kossuth was received as "Kossuth Mania." He charged that Kossuth, notwithstanding his declaration that he would conscientiously respect our laws, came to seek our financial and political aid. Furthermore, he points out that Kossuth did not come to America to live here but acted like a conqueror. When he reviewed the militia of New York City he spoke before them trying to stir them in his cause and he wore Hungarian uniform. On June 23, 1852 he addressed a group of Germans at the Tabernacle in New York and got them to adopt resolutions to force the Democratic and Whig parties to acknowledge his movement.<sup>3</sup>

It looks as if Busey really had some cause for alarm. Furthermore, even such an eminent authority as John Bassett Moore in looking back upon the situation in 1895 thought that Kossuth was too high-

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3 Busey, Samuel Clagett, Immigration, Its Evils and Consequences, pp. 47-61.

handed, especially in his incendiary speech at Castle Garden<sup>4</sup> and that he out-stayed his welcome since there was rising coolness in Congress' attitude toward him after his visit to Washington.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Theodore Roosevelt, then Governor of New York State voiced admiration for Kossuth in a speech at the dinner of the Hungarian Republican Club in 1899. Of course, we must discount for political expediency when we remember that he said; "If you bring into American life the spirit of the heroes of Hungary, you have done your share. There is nothing this country needs more than that there shall be put before its men and its future men - its boys; and its girls, too - the story of such lives as that of Kossuth...."<sup>6</sup>

In order to arrive at a fair estimate of Kossuth's character and purpose in visiting this country it is well to review the events. In briefly describing the Hungarian rebellion I pointed out that Kossuth fled before the final surrender of the Hungarians at Vilagos to the Russians who were aiding Austria in suppressing the uprising. The Hungarian patriot sought refuge in Turkey. As a result of Austrian threats the Turkish Government was ready to deliver up Kossuth and his staff to the Austrian government when the British fleet put pressure on the Turks to withhold action until the United States frigate "Mississippi" arrived and started the Hungarian revolutionary on his way

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4 Moore, John Bassett, "Kossuth the Revolutionist," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 2, June 1895, p. 280.

5 Ibid., pp. 285-286.

6 Feleky, Antoinette, Charles Feleky and His Unpublished Manuscript, p. 21.

to America.<sup>7</sup>

The official interest of the United States government in Kossuth and the rebellion dates to December, 1848 when the clash between Hungarian and Austrian troops seemed inevitable. Kossuth asked William H. Stiles, the American Charge d'Affaires in Vienna to intercede with Austria and prevent bloodshed. Stiles sought to negotiate with Prince Schwarzenberg and Prince Windisch-Graetz, but they refused. The United States became further involved in June, 1849 when Kossuth sent an envoy extraordinary to the American government who only arrived in New York after Gorgey's surrender at Vilagos. Simultaneously, President Zachary Taylor sent a confidential agent to Hungary - Ambrose Dudley Mann of Virginia - who was to find out if the United States should recognize the independence of Hungary. Mann reached Vienna and thence sent reports to the United States some of which were made public. Hulsemann, the Austrian charge d'Affaires at Washington, expressed his disapproval of our policy by sending a threatening note of protest to the American government. Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State answered in the same spirit, repudiating Austria's charges. Although no open conflict with Austria followed this diplomatic clash it served to unite American opinion in Kossuth's favor.<sup>8</sup>

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7 My account of the events of Kossuth's flight is based on the following:

1. De Puy, Henry W., History of Hungary and the Late Hungarian War; Kossuth and His Generals, passim.
2. Ujhazy, Lazslo, A Brief Explanatory Report as to the Termination of the Hungarian Struggle; The Capitulation of the Fortress of Comorn, and the Objects, Probable Extent, and Other Circumstances of the Hungarian Emigration, passim.

8 Moore, John Bassett, "Kossuth: A Sketch of A Revolutionist," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 2, June 1895, pp. 262-267. The incident is made more vivid by dipping into the sources - the presidential messages to Congress of the subject - which are available in the Hungarian Reference Library in a collection called Executive Documents of the U. S. Congress; Hungarian Affairs 1849-1911.

While the United States was having diplomatic troubles with Austria and Kossuth was languishing in Turkey one of his fellow exiles, Laszlo Ujhazy, was not idle. Ujhazy was the Governor of Komaron in Hungary before the rebellion of 1848. After that he became an exile with his family and friends, finding refuge first in Hamburg and then in London. From London he wrote to President Taylor to obtain permission to settle in America. This was granted and he arrived in New York on December 16, 1849, two years before Kossuth came. Ujhazy and his entourage were enthusiastically welcomed by the Magyars in New York. Since Ujhazy really came to settle in America he took out his first papers toward citizenship immediately. Due to efforts of Hamilton Fish, Governor of New York and Senators Louis Cass and William Seward<sup>9</sup> Congress gave Ujhazy and his followers land in Iowa where they started a Hungarian community called New Buda. From this point Ujhazy passes from the New York horizon since he stopped first at Washington, D. C. to be entertained by President Taylor and then moved to New Buda. Later his restless nature took him to Texas.<sup>10</sup> His importance lies in the fact that he was Kossuth's representative in New York before the leader's arrival and prepared the way for him. I have already cited his report on the Hungarian struggle which was published in New York in 1850. Furthermore, it was he who sent a letter on

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9 Seward, William Henry, Incidental Remarks of William H. Seward Relative to Land Grants to Hungarian Exiles Delivered in the Senate of the U. S., January 30, 1850, passim.

10 Wilson, Lillian May, "Some Hungarian Patriots in Iowa," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, Vol. 11, No. 4, Oct. 1913, pp. 480-489.

January 15, 1850 to President Taylor asking admission for Kossuth and his companions, and the invitation was duly tendered on February 5, 1850.<sup>11</sup>

I think that it is only fair to say that Kossuth's attitude and motives in accepting the invitation were different from Ujhazy's. This was brought out on the very trip to America. The United States Government sent the Mississippi to fetch him, but it returned home minus Kossuth. It seems that immediately upon embarking the Hungarian patriot felt free to express his thoughts and that this embarrassed the captain who feared that the United States would become involved in international complications because Kossuth freely made speeches and engaged in demonstrations wherever the ship touched. Finally, Kossuth wanted to go to England first to meet his Italian contemporary Mazzini and to try to engineer another revolution in Hungary. The Mississippi left him in England.<sup>12</sup>

While he was there Kossuth was presented with a flag sent by the Hungarians of New York. It was a beautiful red, white, and green banner with sundry Hungarian inscriptions. When the flag was despatched it seemed possible that the Hungarian insurrection might succeed, but it arrived too late for any such hope. The Mayor of Southampton secured the flag by purchase from the custom house authorities and presented it to Kossuth. The Hungarian patriot upon receiving the banner said in the flowery oratorical style of the day, "I receive gentlemen this flag as the most valuable trust intrusted to the people of Hungary, and

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11 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, vol. I, p. 71.

12 Moore, John Bassett, "Kossuth: A Sketch of A Revolutionist," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 2, June 1895, pp. 267-272.

I swear to you whatever be our fate, cowardice and ambition shall never tarnish this flag."<sup>13</sup>

When Kossuth saw that the times were unfavorable to any immediate uprising in Hungary he decided to undertake the journey to the United States. His purpose was twofold - to obtain money for future revolutionary movements in Hungary and to try to influence the United States actively to support Hungary against Austria.

Some of this work had already been begun in New York before he arrived here. A Central Hungarian Society was formed in September, 1849 under the presidency of Gabor Naphegyi to obtain good will for Hungary in her struggle, and the Kossuth Fund was inaugurated by the Central Hungarian Committee.<sup>14</sup>

Immediately upon his arrival in New York on the Humboldt on December 4, 1851, Kossuth became the municipality's honored guest. During the seventeen days he spent here upon his arrival, and again while he was waiting to sail for England eight months later, receptions were given in his honor by various American organizations. Daily delegations arrived from other cities and states and he had various interviews with American statesmen, all in English, since Kossuth was an accomplished linguist. On all of these occasions no Hungarian of New York was present, although Germans, Poles, Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards and Prussians all participated.

On December 6 New York City gave him a public reception which reads like a Roman triumph. The Common Council of New York had appointed a

<sup>13</sup> New York Observer, Vol. XXIX, No. 44, Oct. 30, 1851, p. 2 and No. 46, Nov. 13, 1851, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, p. 62.

special committee in advance to arrange the affair. All of the public buildings in New York and the vessels in the harbor were decorated with flags for the gala occasion. A military escort 5,000 strong participated. Kossuth was staying at Quarantine on Staten Island and the steamer Vanderbildt with the reception committee and other invited guests aboard picked him up there. A triumphal sail up the East River followed in the course of which cannons were fired from the Battery, from New Jersey, and from Brooklyn. Military music by Shelton's Brass Band added to the enjoyment of the 500 persons on board. At one o'clock in the afternoon the party landed at Castle Garden (at the Battery) after experiencing some difficulty due to the low tide. The crowd of about 10,000 people was evidently in high spirits because when Kossuth tried to address the group after Mayor Kingsland introduced him, there was so much noise that the Hungarian exile could not give his speech, but merely addressed a few words to the Mayor. Later on the speech was dictated to the reporters in full; it shows Kossuth trying to allay suspicion of his motives among Americans. He avowed that he was a republican, that he did not intend to meddle in American politics and that he would use every legal means to get support for his country. The rest of the day was spent in ceremonious fashion as Kossuth reviewed troops on the Battery, took part in a parade on Broadway attended by about 300,000 people, and was received at City Hall by the municipal authorities. Colorful and romantic proceedings filled the evening when Kossuth was serenaded by the neighboring Germans, and a torchlight procession was held in



his honor.<sup>15</sup>

Kossuth's tour of the interior does not properly come within the scope of this essay; suffice it to say that he stopped at Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Annapolis, Harrisburg, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Columbus, St. Louis, New Orleans, Charleston, Jersey City, Boston, Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Utica and New York again. While at Washington, D. C., Kossuth was accorded the signal honor of addressing the two houses of Congress.<sup>16</sup> He was also received by President Fillmore, who, however, refused outright any aid to Hungary.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, Kossuth's mission turned out to be a failure. He raised only about \$90,000 for his revolutionary coffers<sup>18</sup> and the United States refused to intervene actively in behalf of Hungary. During his last few days in New York before sailing for England he only gave two speeches, and on July 14, 1852 he and his wife left quietly on the English ship "Africa" under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Many of the other refugees and voluntary exiles stayed in America but some leaders like Cont Bethlen, Lieutenant Colonel Ihasz, and Francis Pulszky accompanied Kossuth.<sup>19</sup>

The influence of Kossuth's visit on American life was expressed mostly in fads. One lasting influence was the use of his name for a street in Manhattan and for Kossuth Place in Brooklyn. Less permanent was his effect on styles. During Kossuth's visit the Hungarian colors -

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15 New York Observer, Vol. XXIX, No. 50, Dec. 11, 1851, p. 1, 4 columns.

16 Moore, John Bassett, "Kossuth: A Sketch of A Revolutionist," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 2, June, 1895, p. 282.

17 Ibid., p. 281.

18 Ibid., p. 289.

19 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 110-114.

red, white and green - became fashionable<sup>20</sup> and Kossuth's costume invited imitation. His characteristic attire was a plain black velvet cloak with a collar of curly woolen material. Underneath was a dark suit, and at his side hung a sword. The part of the outfit which captured the public fancy was his hat; it was made of felt with "a rolling brim, encircled with a broad silk band" and decorated with a black pendant feather on one side.<sup>21</sup> These hats were so much in demand that a special hat company was established to manufacture them<sup>22</sup> and magazines carried articles about them.<sup>23</sup> John Bassett Moore also claims that Kossuth's hirsute adornment encouraged the wearing of beards.<sup>24</sup>

A proof of the high esteem in which the New York Magyars hold Kossuth is their erection of a statute to commemorate him on Riverside Drive. The bronze memorial was unveiled on March 15, 1928 in the presence of a delegation from the Hungarian parliament.<sup>25</sup> The man who was largely responsible for the successful consummation of the task was Geza D. Berko, editor of the Amerikai Magyar Nepszava (the largest Hungarian American newspaper in America), because he began the drive for funds after the idea had been dormant for years. The Magyars of

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20 Kende, Geza, Magyarak Amerikaban, Vol. I, p. 72.

21 New York Observer, Vol. 29, No. 50, Dec. 11, 1851, p. 1.

22 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, p. 84.

23 The Carpet Bag, Vol. I, Feb. 14, 1851, p. 1.

24 Moore, John Bassett, "Kossuth: A Sketch of a Revolutionist," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 2, June, 1895, p. 289.

25 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After a Thousand Years, p. 290.

America provided \$42,000 toward the cost of the statue.<sup>26</sup> The original idea for such a statue in New York goes back to 1893 when the New York Magyar Lodge and Theatrical Society jointly proposed it. A Kossuth Statue Association was established and a committee was organized to conduct a Kossuth Fair the following winter to raise funds. The newspaper backing this movement was the Amerikai Nemzetor, but its rival in New York, the Magyar Hirado caused quarrels among the Hungarians by a counter-suggestion that instead of setting up a statue, money should be raised to publish Kossuth's writings in English and sell them in order to give the proceeds to Kossuth who was in financial difficulties in Turin, Italy. This hampered the growth of the statue fund until Kossuth's death in March, 1894. At that time the Szabadsag, a large Hungarian daily newspaper of Cleveland, urged that all the Hungarians in America should become interested in the movement and a national meeting should decide the location and type of statue. The New Yorkers wanted to limit the movement to their city, but internal quarrels developed among the members of the committee. The sum of four hundred dollars which was collected in New York was later contributed toward the statue of Kossuth erected in Cleveland in March, 1902.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, Cleveland, which is the second largest Hungarian community in America, possessing about 39,545 Hungarians in 1930 to New York's 115,098<sup>28</sup> anticipated New York's action by 26 years. Indeed, these two cities frequently vied with each other in leadership in Hungarian-

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26 Nagy, Ivan, Az Amerikai Magyararsag, p. 11.

27 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, pp. 97-102.

28 Nagy, Ivan, Az Amerikai Magyararsag, p. 8.

American affairs. The other American cities containing smaller Hungarian populations are: Chicago 30,427, Detroit 22,311, Philadelphia 14,321, Bridgeport 7,777, Akron 7,360, and Los Angeles 5,845.<sup>29</sup> At any rate it does not harm to have two Kossuth statues in America to remind us of this colorful episode in our history. I believe that Kossuth was a true believer in democracy. His ardent Hungarian nationalist spirit sometimes induced him into trying to involve the United States in Hungary's quarrels, but democracy and nationalism were after all the two cardinal principles of the liberals of his day. The poet Whittier expressed his admiration for Kossuth's nationalistic spirit in an ode:

"Type of two mighty continents! - Combining

The strength of Europe with the warmth and glow

Of Asian song and prophecy - the shining

Of Orient splendors over Northern snow!

Who shall receive him? Who unblushing speak

Welcome to him, he who strove to break

The foreign yoke from Magyar necks, smote off

At the same blow the fetters of the serf, -

Rearing the Altar of the Fatherland."<sup>30</sup>

29 Nagy, Ivan, Az Amerikai Magyarsag, p. 8.

30 Opinion of American and English Men on Hungary and Contributions of Hungary to American Civilization: Manuscript excerpt from Kun, Andrew; A Country Men Forget, p. 2.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXILES OF 1848 IN NEW YORK CITY.

Although Kossuth returned to Europe and spent the remainder of his days trying to organize other rebellions, many of his fellow-exiles elected to remain in America at least until 1867 when a general amnesty after the Ausgleich between Austria and Hungary brought some of the survivors home. However, since most of them were of the upper classes and unaccustomed to the hard work which was required of them in the United States, they became a restless group who tried their luck in all parts of the United States and engaged in all adventures that beckoned.

One expedition in which fourteen Hungarians from New York participated was that of Lopez to Cuba. Some Americans desired to take Cuba from Spain at this time in order to expand our slave territory. In the last of the unsuccessful attempts to seize this island, General Lopez's chief of staff was the Hungarian Pragay and other Hungarian leaders - Colonel Blumenthal and Major Louis Schlesinger - accompanied him. Schlesinger was the one who came to New York City to round up the fourteen Hungarians in the expedition of 450 adventures. Since the Hungarians had fought in the rebellion of 1848 they were men of military experience and many had army experience even before that. The men departed from New Orleans and reached Cuba in August, 1851. The failure of the Cuban natives to join in the uprising doomed the venture from the start. Pragay was wounded in the skirmish between the invaders and the Spanish defenders and cut his own veins to avoid capture. Some of the other

Hungarian participants were executed and others worked in the Spanish mines at Centara as prisoners until liberated by death or escape.<sup>1</sup>

Pragay was one of the first Hungarian exiles to arrive in New York, since he reached this city even before Ujhazy in 1849. He also wrote the first book-length account of the Hungarian Rebellion published in America in the English language.<sup>2</sup>

The American Civil War, or War Between the States, offered another opportunity for the Hungarian exiles to participate in military engagements. Formerly, Eugene Pivany was the authority on this subject. In 1913, he published a book entirely on this topic<sup>3</sup> and in his treatise on Hungarian-American Connections in 1926 before the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, later published in book form, he devoted a section of his discourse to Hungarians in the American Civil War.<sup>4</sup> Recently, however, the subject has come up for reexamination by Edmund Vasvary.<sup>5</sup> Pivany very proudly pointed to the Civil War record of the Hungarians, claiming a very high degree of participation by the exiles. Vasvary in the light of his later research claims that these statements are exaggerations. Whereas Pivany estimates that half of the 39th New York Infantry, some-

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1 Caldwell, Robert Granville, The Lopez Expedition to Cuba 1848-1851, 138 pages passim.

2 Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections from Pre-Columbian Times to the End of the American Civil War, p. 50. Published February 28, 1850 by the G. P. Putnam Company in New York.

3 Pivany, Eugene, Hungarians in the American Civil War, passim.

4 Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections from Pre-Columbian Times to the End of the American Civil War, pp. 57-64.

5 Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes; The Participation of Hungarians in the Civil War, passim.

times called the Garibaldi Guard, was Hungarian and half Italian,<sup>6</sup> Vasvary was able to find only seven Hungarians in the outfit.<sup>7</sup> At any rate this was the most important one of the New York regiments which contained Hungarians and the outfit served through all the Eastern campaigns.

There is more agreement between the authorities about prominent individuals who served in the Civil War. A Hungarian closely associated with New York who had an outstanding military career was Szamvald H. Julius Stahel. He was born in Szeged, Hungary in 1825 and attended school in that city and in Budapest. After serving in the Austrian army he became a partner in a book-selling concern. Then he participated in the Hungarian rebellion and had to flee to London, Berlin, and finally New York where he engaged in journalism up to the Civil War. Upon the outbreak of the war he helped to organize the 8th Volunteer Regiment and became its Lieutenant Colonel. His regiment protected the rear of the Union Army after the defeat at Bull Run and Stahel won the Congressional Medal of Honor. Later he fought under McClellan and Fremont.<sup>8</sup> However, he also showed his ability in peaceful pursuits, first as consul in Japan and China and then in New York after 1885 as a director of the Equitable Life Insurance Company. He visited Hungary when she was celebrating her Thousandth Anniversary but settled in New York again in a bachelor apartment where he passed away in 1912. His remains were taken to Arlington National Cemetery for burial. In his last years he was prominent in American circles and in the Republican Party but broke

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6 Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections, p. 59.

7 Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, p. 38.

8 Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, pp. 81-83, and Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections, p. 61.

contacts with the Magyars of New York.<sup>9</sup>

I have given Stahel first place because he was consistently a Magyar of New York City and had a distinguished military career in addition to that, but numerous other Hungarians did prominent military service even if they were not New Yorkers. Furthermore, many other Hungarians of New York fought for the Union even though they did not achieve Stahel's military renown. A Brooklynite who was also a Hungarian refugee of 1848 named James Kozlay was the commander of the 54th New York Foot Soldiers and afterwards practiced law in Brooklyn. Kozlay occasionally attended the meetings of the Hungarian Society founded in 1865.<sup>10</sup> A President of the Hungarian Society, Joseph Csermelyi was also a Civil War veteran. His previous military experience was in the Hungarian Army as a lieutenant and he occupied the same position in the 45th New York Infantry during the War Between the States. Until his death in 1878 in New York City, he participated in Hungarian-American affairs.<sup>11</sup>

Other Hungarians of New York who participated in the Civil War and in the Hungarian Society were Michael Percel,<sup>12</sup> and Elek Ludwigh who ran a successful lace business in New York. The latter's son John Elek Ludwigh outdid his father in prominence in Hungarian and American

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9 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 332-335.

10 Ibid., p. 339.

11 Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, p. 49.

12 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, p. 364.



affairs; he was a New York State Civil Service Commissioner, Treasurer of Adolf Zukor's Famous Players Movie Company, and Honorary President of the Kossuth Statue Committee in 1926.<sup>13</sup>

Other illustrations could be given of Hungarian exiles who lived in New York and fought in the War Between the States, such as Joseph Kemenffy, later a maker of gold medals in New York, and John Menyhardi, a captain in the war and a Brooklyn photographer after the peace.<sup>14</sup> Suffice it to say that there were enough Hungarian exiles and Magyar Civil War veterans to form a New York association called the "Hungarian and American Veterans of 1848 and 1861" which continued through the 1890's but left no records.<sup>15</sup>

Two of the Hungarian refugees of 1848 who made the greatest contributions to American life of all this group remained only briefly in New York City; they were John Xantus and Alexander Asboth. Xantus was a highly educated man who originally studied to be a lawyer, but also became interested in geology and was quite a linguist-speaking, French, English and Spanish in addition to Hungarian. After joining the Hungarian rebellion in 1848 he became a refugee. In 1851, he landed in New York with only seven dollars in his pocket and became a day laborer. He tried a variety of occupations - book-seller, pharmacist newspaper distributor, sailor, piano teacher, and language teacher - before he found his true calling and became an explorer. He was a

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13 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 265-266.

14 Ibid., pp. 267-268.

15 Ibid., pp. 266-267.

member of the United States Survey Expeditions through Texas, Wyoming, Kansas, Arkansas, Oregon, and Southern California and enriched both the Smithsonian Institute at Washington and the Budapest National Museum with specimens of plants and animals. In 1862, Xantus became Vice Consul to Mexico. However, his interest in Hungarian affairs continued since he visited the Hungarian settlements in America and wrote about them to his mother and sister in Hungary. Ultimately he died in his fatherland after going on an expedition to China for the Hungarian National Museum.<sup>16</sup>

Xantus was only briefly connected with New York City after his arrival here; his contribution was to the history of the West, to botany and zoology and to the diplomatic service. Alexander Asboth also served the Union in the West as a soldier during the Civil War. Like Xantus he was also a diplomat since he passed away in Argentina in 1868 where he was the U. S. Ambassador. For his services to the nation he was honored by internment in Arlington National Cemetery. However, Asboth has a greater claim than Xantus on the attention of New Yorkers. Before the Hungarian Rebellion had forced him into exile, Asboth received his training as an engineer in Hungary. Therefore, he was well-trained for his work as one of the men employed to plan the layout of Central Park and Washington Heights.<sup>17</sup>

Another veteran of the Hungarian Rebellion and of the American Civil War who was only briefly associated with New York City was Philip Figyelmessy. His career parallels that of his contemporaries closely.

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16 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 207-226 and Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections, pp. 53, 54.

17 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 335-338 and Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, pp. 44-47.

He was born in Budapest of a well-to-do family and received a military training as an officer in a Hussar Regiment. After participating in the Hungarian Rebellion he joined Kossuth in Turkey. Then he returned to Hungary and conspired with Joseph Makh and Matthew Rozsaly to spread a new revolutionary movement. However, the rebellion died in the making due to the discovery of the plot by the Austrian secret police. The three leaders hurried to London to report to Kossuth. Subsequently Figyelmessy had a very exciting life. He participated in the fighting leading to the unification of Italy. In 1861 he came to America and served in the Civil War. Like Asboth and Xantus he was also a diplomat, serving as American consul in British Guiana for more than twenty years. He was present at Kossuth's funeral and then returned to the United States to live in Philadelphia.<sup>18</sup>

His contact with New York City came in 1902 when Figyelmessy was eighty-two years old. In that year the Hungarian National Society sent an elaborate banner to the Magyars in America on one side of which was the Hungarian emblem of the Crown with angels on it and the motto, "Always be true to your fatherland, oh Magyars"; and on the other was the figure of Hungaria and the statement: "To the American Magyars - the Hungarian National Society, 1902." An American flag was made in exchange. The sending of the flag was a gesture of gratitude on the part of the Hungarians because the Hungarian-Americans had sent a gift of money for the erection of a statue to the Hungarian writer Michael Vorosmarthy in Budapest. The money for the statue had been raised through appeals in the Hungarian daily of Cleveland, the

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<sup>18</sup> Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, pp. 52, 53.

Szabadsag, and the Hungarians in turn raised money for the flag by appeals in their newspapers. A committee was organized in America to take charge of the flag.<sup>19</sup> New York's delegate was the famous Hungarian-American surgeon, Dr. Arpad Gerster, and Philadelphia sent Figyelmessy to the great reception which was held in New York to celebrate its arrival. Figyelmessy made two speeches on the occasion, and only survived five years after this event, but the rest of his life was not connected with New York.<sup>20</sup>

We do not know very much about the appearance of the Hungarian exiles, but if the photographs taken by Cornelius Beniczky had been preserved we would have a portrait gallery of them, because Beniczky, who was an exile himself, kept a studio at Chambers Street where it was customary for all Hungarian new-comers to have their pictures taken in their first American clothes. Beniczky employed other Hungarian exiles as his assistants.<sup>21</sup>

All of the Hungarian exiles of 1848 were not military men. Both Michael Heilprin and Maurus Eisler were newspaper men who had to leave the homeland because they sympathized with the Hungarian liberal movement of 1848 in their writings. The lesser man was Eisler, a journalist of Budapest who reached New York in 1853 after sojourning first in Paris and then in London. He was active in New York's Magyar Society but did not distinguish himself in American affairs.<sup>22</sup>

19 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, pp. 168-188.

20 Vasvary, Edmund, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes, p. 53.

21 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, p. 265.

22 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 287.

Heilprin distinguished himself in American literary circles at the same time that he kept in close touch with Hungarian affairs. In reality he was an adopted son of Hungary as well as of the United States. When he was twenty years old he sought refuge in Hungary with his wife and parents due to Russian oppression, since he was a Polish Jew. He became patriotically attached to the liberal movement in Hungary and established contacts through his bookstore in Miskolcz. For writing articles favoring Hungarian liberty he had to flee to Paris, then to London, and finally he came to America. After establishing himself in Brooklyn, he often visited the Manning family with whom Kossuth's one sister, Mrs. Zulavsky lived. The Manning home was a gathering place for Hungarian emigrants and among many others Heilprin met Kossuth's other sister Louise Ruttkay and General Asboth there. Heilprin also kept up his Hungarian connections through active membership in the New York Magyar Society. Another method Heilprin used to elevate the Hungarians was through his articles for the American public. Beginning his work for the Appleton Company in 1858, he helped to compile an American Encyclopedia. He wrote a number of the articles himself on such topics as Hungary, Kossuth and Petofi, and revised the contributions of others on geography, history and biography. He was also in charge of the second edition of the encyclopedia from 1871-1876. For over twenty years, from 1861 onwards he wrote articles for "The Nation" on European politics in which he supported Hungary whenever the opportunity arose. After his death in 1888 his sons continued the tradition of combining interest in Hungarian circles with prominence in American affairs. Angelo Heilprin was a famous geologist and professor until his death in

1907;<sup>23</sup> he served as President of the American Earth Study Society and the American Geographical Society and participated in Peary's expedition to Greenland. The other son, Louis Heilprin, also edited an encyclopedia and directed the Evening Post's literary criticism.<sup>24</sup>

Another non-military exile of the Hungarian Rebellion was the Reverend Gideon Acs, ex-chaplain of Kossuth who preached the first sermon in the Hungarian language in America in New York City in 1852.<sup>25</sup> Acs arrived on the Mississippi in November, 1851. He stayed in New York while Kossuth traveled about and earned his living by conducting Sunday services in a German Protestant Church in this city for which he was paid by a group of American young ladies. When interest in the Hungarians declined after Kossuth left America the contributions stopped. Acs went to Boston but returned to New York in 1855 where he was a photographer's assistant until he was able to return to Hungary in 1860 after an amnesty.<sup>26</sup>

The women of Hungary as well as the men suffered for the Rebellion of 1848. Many whose husbands became exiles were separated from them forever because they remained behind, and others followed their men to strange lands. Kossuth's wife remained with him wherever he went. However, even his sisters and his mother were endangered by his revolutionary activities. When the rebellion failed his mother and three

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23 Bulletin of the American Geographical Society, Nov., 1907, pp. 666-668, Obituary of Angelo Heilprin.

24 Pollak, Gustav, Michael Heilprin and His Sons, *passim*.  
Beard, Annie, E. S., Our Foreign-Born Citizens, pp. 132-137.

25 Pivany, Eugene, Hungarian-American Historical Connections, p. 54.

26 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 74-76.

sisters fled to Brussels where they remained until Kossuth raised enough money by lecturing in America to pay for their transportation here. In July, 1852, Kossuth left this country and at the end of that year two of his sisters, Susanne and Emilie arrived. Louise stayed in Brussels with her mother who was too weak to travel. Susanne was the youngest sister who was well-educated by private tutors. During the rebellion she took care of the wounded and was punished for this by imprisonment twice afterwards. Therefore, she was weakened and had known suffering by the time that she arrived here. She opened a lace business in Boston but died soon in 1854 and was buried in a small cemetery in New York City.<sup>27</sup> Emilie is buried in Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery; up to her death in 1860<sup>28</sup> her life was also tragic since her husband left her and her sons were not energetic enough to make a success of their farm in New York state. Consequently, she had to move with the Manning family in Brooklyn. Her youngest son fought in the War Between the States and died in 1863 of sickness contracted in the war. The third sister came to America with her three sons after her mother's death in 1853. After that she wandered quite a bit since she lived for a while in Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, then in Brooklyn, then in Turin, then in America again, but she finally returned to Turin in 1881 where she remained with Kossuth until his death in 1894.<sup>29</sup>

The presence of so many exiles in New York City of the educated class led to a flowering of community life. Indeed, the whole present-

27 Anonymous, Memorial of Madame Susanne Kossuth Meszlenyi, passim.

28 "Death of Emilie Zirlavsky Kossuth," The Century, July 5, 1860, p. 433.

29 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 305-308.

day set-up was foreshadowed since the first Hungarian-American newspaper, the first benefit society, and the first theatrical society made their appearance. This would be interesting material for the historian, but unfortunately the benefit society left no records; the copies of the newspaper are extinct, although one or two private copies may be put away in some forgotten place, and the theatrical society did not survive long enough to be well-launched. Geza Kende who was a journalist, not a professional historian, gives an account of these organizations. Although he does not cite his sources, I understand that he had personal contact with some of the survivors concerned, who have since passed away.

The newspaper was very appropriately called the Hungarian Exiles' Paper and was edited by Carol Kornis, one of the exiles of the Hungarian Rebellion, who had been a teacher of law in the University of Budapest. It was a four page affair and had cultural and propaganda purposes. Literary pieces, poetry, and articles on Hungarian-American life covered the cultural aspects. Appeals to the Hungarians in America to fight on the Turkish side against the Russians in the Crimean War as a form of revenge, because Russia had aided the Austrians to suppress the Hungarian Rebellion of 1848 fulfilled the propaganda motive. Indeed, the Hungarians in New York went so far as to plan the organization of an expedition of volunteers. Some wanted to have Kossuth at the head of the Hungarian troops, but others, alienated by his failure to keep up contacts with the Hungarian-Americans, wanted to choose their own leaders. Kornis belonged to the Kossuth faction, but he did not achieve any results and gave up the newspaper after the sixth issue was printed since subscriptions were few. In this newspaper was the first mention



of the New York Magyar Benefit Association.<sup>30</sup>

In 1852 the benefit society was established with Philip Freund as first president and Carol Kornis, the newspaper editor, as business manager. The purpose of the organization was to aid Hungarian immigrants in need and sickness. Before the society was on its feet, it failed for lack of support and money.<sup>31</sup>

The first Magyar Theatrical Society in America led by Louis Dencs appeared in 1851. Although its members were amateurs, this was no leisure time diversion for them, but a grim attempt to make a living in a genteel way. The upper class Hungarian refugees who organized it worked out a routine of Hungarian folk songs and utilized full military display in their costumes, but their talent was slight. After two unsuccessful appearances in American theatres they broke up the troupe and became manual laborers.<sup>32</sup>

30 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. I, pp. 122-133.

31 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 135-136.

32 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 118-121.

## CHAPTER VII

### HUNGARIAN ART AND ARTISTS IN NEW YORK CITY.

Restricting the word art to its narrow meaning covering painting, sculpture and architecture, we must restrict it even more in considering the Hungarian artists associated with New York City, because none of them did outstanding work in architecture. Indeed, Hungarians are much better known in the theatre and in music. However, one of the great painters of all times - a Hungarian - visited New York City in 1886 and left some of his great works here.

Last fall the John Wanamaker Department Store exhibited a precious painting which it owns in its New York City branch; this was Michael Munkacsy's Christ Before Pilate, beautifully set off against a background of blue draperies. On the ground floor a sign described Munkacsy's background and his visit to America. John Wanamaker out-bade all the others in purchasing this painting which was generally kept in the Philadelphia store.<sup>1</sup> A companion piece to this painting is Christ on Calvary which is well-described in a pamphlet issued when the painting was on display at the 23rd Street Tabernacle.<sup>2</sup> Munkacsy's beginnings were very humble; he was the son of poor parents and began his working experience as a joiner. His first artistic efforts were paintings of dramatic scenes from Hungarian life. However, he only rose to higher things after he went to Paris where he was influenced by the great works

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1 This is based upon personal observation.

2 Christ on Calvary by M. de Munkacsy Companion to the Painting Christ Before Pilate Exhibited at 23rd Street Tabernacle, N. Y., 4th edition, pp. 5-18.

of art. Indeed, thereafter he spent most of his life in Paris.<sup>3</sup> One of the earlier examples of his rise to loftier themes was the painting depicting the Blind Milton Dictating Paradise Lost which may be viewed by all New Yorkers since it is in the hall of the New York Public Library at 42nd Street.<sup>4</sup> These are only some of the numerous paintings which Munkacsy left here in museums, libraries and private collections. During his visit in 1886 Munkacsy was feted by Hungarians and Americans in New York and met Vanderbilts, Astors, Belmonts, Pulitzer, Carl Schurz and many other notables.

Although no other Hungarian artist in America even approaches Munkacsy's prominence there are men who have done meritorious work. "Willy" (William Andrew) Pogany is probably the best known. At present he resides in Hollywood, California where he is connected with art in the motion pictures. However, enough of his work remains in New York City to make him a fit subject for this study. Pogany was born in Szeged, Hungary in 1882. His education was acquired in Budapest, Munich, and Paris. The works which make him a household name are his illustrations for about one hundred fifty books, of which Gulliver's Travels is one of the most outstanding. Yet he is very versatile and has been successful as a stage decorator, costume designer, mural painter and art director of motion pictures. Indeed, although architecture is not generally his field, he received a silver medal from the New York Society of Architects and the Park Central Hotel, in New York is a sample of his

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3 Christ on Calvary by M. de Munkacsy Companion to the Painting Christ Before Pilate Exhibited at 23rd Street Tabernacle, N.Y., 4th edition, pp. 5-18.

4 Personal observation.

architectural ability. The murals of the Park Central are his work, and the ceiling painting for the Ritz Towers and the swimming pool in Brooklyn's Hotel St. George are other examples of his art.<sup>5</sup> Probably his outstanding murals are the fourteen decorative panels covering the entire sides of the orchestra and balcony in the Children's Theatre of the Heckscher Foundation for children. Here Grimm's and Andersen's fairy tales are painted on canvas, and the whole work was completed in five months. His work as a stage decorator is illustrated by his scenic settings for some Metropolitan Opera productions, like the *Coq d'Or*.<sup>6</sup>

Another versatile Hungarian artist is Alexander Finta of New York - a sculptor, painter and author. He was born a year earlier than Pogany, in 1881, at Turkeve, Hungary. After attending the Real Gymnasium he studied at various European art schools. In 1923 he came to the United States and was a Columbia student in 1928. Since 1930 he is a citizen of the United States and has contributed significantly to American art, especially as a resident of New York City. Some of his works are in the Brooklyn Museum; others are in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including his famous marble bust of Cardinal Hayes. In the Mimesmatic Museum of New York is his collection of medals and the memorials of such famous New York characters as Washington Irving, Walt Whitman, and Robert Fulton. In addition he even found time to write articles for magazines and such books as Best Short Stories for Children, and Big Game Hunter, a serial.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Who's Who in American Art, Vol. I, 1936-1937, edited by Alice Coe McGlaufflin, p. 335. Who's Who in America, Vol. 20, 1938-1939, p. 2002.

6 McCabe, Lida Rose "Making All the Fairy Tales Come True," Arts and Decorations, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, Dec. 1922, pp. 14, 15, 98.

7 Who's Who in America, Vol. 20, 1938-1939, p. 895. Who's Who in American Art, Vol. I, 1936-1937, p. 146.

Two other famous Hungarian characters in the art world are Isidore Konti and Julio Kilenyi - both sculptors. Konti was born in 1862 in Vienna and received his education in the Imperial Academy there, but his family background was Hungarian. Since coming to the United States in 1890 he has spread his works throughout the country. In New York City he has two statues in the Metropolitan Museum of Art - "The Genius of Immortality" and "Mother and Child." The churches contain examples of his work - "Reverend Morgan Dix" in Trinity Church and "Memorial to Bishop Horatio Potter in St. John's Cathedral."<sup>8</sup> He also designed two groups on Admiral Dewey's Memorial in Madison Square Garden, and "The Three Graces" of the Hotel Astor.<sup>9</sup>

Julio Kilenyi specializes in medallions and plaques. He was born in Arad, Hungary in 1885 and was educated there in the Royal School of Arts and Crafts in Budapest, later increasing his training in Germany and France. In 1916 he came to the United States and was naturalized in 1924. He is represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the Museum of the New York Historical Society and in the Numismatic Museum of New York. Some outstanding examples of his designs are the 200th anniversary medal of Benjamin Franklin for the Saturday Evening Post, the Commander Byrd North Pole medal, the Thomas A. Edison bas-relief,<sup>10</sup> the General Pershing Medallion for the American Legion, the George Washington Bridge dedication medal, the Post and Gatty around the world flight plaque, and the Mark Twain Centennial Medal, 1935.<sup>11</sup>

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8 Who's Who in American Art, Vol. I, 1936-1937, p. 243.

9 Young Magyar-American, July, 1937, p. 5.

10 A picture of it appears in The Outlook, March 4, 1925, p. 2.

11 Who's Who in American Art, Vol. I, 1936-1937, p. 236.

New York's sophisticates are also familiar with the work of Ilonka Karasz who designs the covers for the New Yorker magazine. She was born in Budapest in 1896 and received her training at the Royal School of Arts and Crafts.<sup>12</sup>

There are also a number of lesser lights in New York City, but I feel that these have not contributed enough to be important yet. In addition there are Hungarian artists in other cities whose work has sometimes been exhibited in New York. Hugo Gellert is an example. In 1923 his paintings and drawings were exhibited at Kevorkian's and attracted attention because they caught the life of New York's laborers so well.<sup>13</sup> In the newer artistic photography Hungarians in New York possess skill as well as is amply demonstrated by the current photographic exhibit at the Hungarian Reference Library

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12 Who's Who in American Art, Vol. I, 1936-1937, p. 236.

13 Catalogue of 46 Paintings and Drawings; Hugo Gelbert Exhibition, May 1-31, 1923, 8 pages.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HUNGARIAN INFLUENCES ON THE THEATRE IN NEW YORK.

Hungarian theatrical efforts in New York have been of two types; Hungarian plays have achieved success on the American stage, and Hungarian plays in the Hungarian language have been produced for Hungarian-American audiences in New York. Furthermore, if we apply the word theatre in its broadest sense we can include the early motion picture productions in New York City which were largely under the direction of Hungarians, like Adolph Zukor.

The Hungarian dramatic companies with their repertoires came first in point of time. I have already mentioned the Magyar Society, established in 1865, whose members presented the first Hungarian play in America, "The Escaped Soldier" in 1869 at Dramatic Hall on East Houston Street. After this there was a long hiatus and only after the founding of the New York Magyar Theatrical Society in 1887 were Hungarian plays presented in America with any professional touch or regularity. The producer and guiding spirit of this organization was at first Henrik Miskolezy who arrived in New York in 1886 and began his career as an actor in smaller provincial companies in Hungary. The opening performance was on March 15, 1887 with the presentation of "A Yellow Horse." The orchestra conductor was Charles Feleky who later became the General Manager of the Martin Beck Theatre and the celebrated compiler of the back-bone of the Hungarian Reference Library. The New York Magyar Theatrical Society was not free from competitors very long. Hungarian lodges and benefit societies began to give occasional pieces - for example on October 15, 1887 the New York First Magyar Conversational

and Sickness Aid Society presented "The Czarina's Prisoner." For a while the Feleky Dramatic Society constituted a rival as well. Charles Feleky became the leader of the New York Magyar Theatrical Society which joined the Magyar Society in 1888 and remained with it until their common demise in 1908.<sup>1</sup> At the present time most of the church organizations, benefit societies and Hungarian youth circles present occasional Hungarian plays.

Although these Hungarian plays provide a cultural outlet for the Magyars of New York (and of other cities as well, since the companies sometimes go on tour) they are not in any way connected with the main current of American life. On the other hand the presentation of the work of modern Hungarian playwrights on the Broadway stage entertains Americans in New York and visitors from other cities.

At the present time there is only one play by a Hungarian writer on Broadway and that is a revival of Ferenc Molnar's most popular production "Liliom" which first appeared in 1921, and ran continuously for two years. Revived by Eva Le Galhennic in 1932 it is now revived again by Vinton Freedley at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre. Brooks Atkinson, of the Times, draws a good comparison between the present and earlier versions: "In the title part that Joseph Schildkraut created Burgess Meredith gives a performance that begins tamely but concludes with several scenes of heartbreaking beauty. Mr. Schildkraut's brassy braggadocio gave the first half of the play a tartness and edge that Mr. Meredith cannot achieve. But when the play moves into the sphere of

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1 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, pp. 122-127.



character evocation in the second half Mr. Meredith's deeply felt honest emotion is ruefully exalting. In the part that Eva Le Gallienne played with memorable reticence in the other performances, Ingrid Bergman acts with incomparable loveliness. Miss Bergman, who is making her first appearance on the English-speaking stage, is personally beautiful and endows Julie with an awakened, pulsing grace of spirit. There is something wonderfully enkindling about the way she illuminates Julie's character."<sup>2</sup>

This play has a unique charm because it is a psychological study of a bully who remains defiant even before the heavenly court when he comes up for final judgment and condemns himself thus to eternal punishment. Furthermore, the whole basis for Liliom's transgressions is his love for his wife Julie - the modest servant girl - and his little daughter. The scene in God's police court is unusual and shows imaginative power.

Atkinson praises Molnar's gift of characterization: "The charm of Liliom is the genius of Molnar. Looking at Liliom fondly and humorously, Molnar has given him his head and described him with extraordinary artistic logic. Liliom's little world on the frowzy fringes of society becomes wonderfully fascinating with this inspired treatment. ...It is greatly to Molnar's credit that he could imagine such a dynamic character and carry him through such revealing though homely and trifling crises. It is greatly to the credit of Molnar's integrity as an artist that he could keep Liliom's character inviolable to the end."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Atkinson, Brooks, "Molnar's Liliom," The New York Times, Sunday, March 31, 1940, Section 9, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

Although Liliom is Molnar's outstanding achievement, he had other Broadway successes such as "The Devil, The Guardsman, The Phantom Rival, and The Swan with Eva Le Gallienne.<sup>4</sup> I have read his collected plays and find them mostly of the drawing room variety - light, witty and cosmopolitan. The Phantom Rival is typical and has as its theme the idea that no matter how happy a woman may be the image of her first lover returns.<sup>5</sup>

Menyhalt Lengyel and Lajos Biro also belong to this school which according to Charles Recht is a by-product of Vienna and Schnitzler.<sup>6</sup> In fact these two men frequently collaborated in such plays as The Czarina, and The Dancer which were produced in New York. Biro's career is typical of this group which was most successful in the years immediately preceding and succeeding the last World War. Lajos Biro was born in Vienna in 1880 and brought up in a little Hungarian village. He studied for the bar in Budapest, then was in the banking business, and finally turned to journalism and literature. While editor of a radical publication he also wrote short stories. His experience was further varied by service in the army and by study at the Sorbonne and residence in the Latin Quarter of Paris. His first play was produced in Berlin where he was the correspondent of a newspaper of Budapest, and in the World War he was a war correspondent of the Pester Lloyd.<sup>7</sup> Such a background was

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4 Josika Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, pp. 301,302.

5 Eaton, W. P., "Molnar's Phantom Rival," Colliers, January 2, 1915, p. 9.

6 Recht, Charles, "Lajos Biro," The Drama, No. 30, May, 1918, p. 151.

7 Ibid., pp. 151-153.

admirably calculated to make him a cosmopolitan and a satirist. His later Broadway successes were 'The Highwayman and Moonflower. Lengyel, his contemporary, also achieved success in 1925 with Sancho Panza and Antonia.<sup>8</sup>

A later arrival on the Broadway scene was Ernest Vajda whose Fata Morgana ran for two years. This is a psychological play about adolescence since it revolves around the affair of an eighteen year old youth with a mondaine from Budapest. The background is distinctly Hungarian since the setting is the Puszta (the Hungarian plain).<sup>9</sup>

A number of lesser lights also scored some degree of success. Francis Herczeg's Silver Fox, Seven Sisters, and Dagmar won praise on Broadway. Eugene Heltai's Mrs. Boltay's Daughters appeared in 1915. Other Hungarian productions on the New York stage were Gabor Dregely's Tailormade Man in 1917 and Little Miss Blue Beard in 1923; Imre Foldes, Hello and Over the Telephone; Laszlo Fodor's, The Stork; Andor Gabor's Dollar Daddy; Andor Garvay's Deep in the Woods; Laszlo Lakatos' Sapphire Ring and Head Or Tail; and Emil Nyitrai's Lady Friends.<sup>10</sup> Thus the decade of 1920's brought several Hungarians into prominence in the New York theatre, but especially Ferenc Molnar; however, this promising output was not maintained in the 1930's when I find no Hungarians to mention on Broadway.

Most of the Hungarian theatrical talent was drafted into the motion picture industry as this new medium made rapid progress in the late 1920's.

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8 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 302.

9 Lewisohn, Ludwig, "Review of Ernst Vajda's Play 'Fata Morgana'," The Nation, Vol. 118, No. 3063, March 16, 1924, pp. 321-322.

10 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 302.

Such famous motion picture names as Alexander Korda, Adolph Zukor, William Fox and Marcus Loew are either of Hungarian birth or parentage.<sup>11</sup> However, their locale of operations, Hollywood, puts them outside of the scope of this essay. It is a well-known fact that the motion picture industry started in New York and Adolph Zukor, who was of Hungarian birth, pioneered in its inception. He was born in Ricse, Hungary in 1873 and received his education there and in the Evening Schools of New York City. After his arrival in the United States in 1888, he enjoyed a varied career in the hardware, upholstery and fur businesses of New York and Chicago. In 1904 he became associated with Mitchell Mark, owner of the Strand Theatre of New York, and Marcus Loew in presenting vaudeville and motion pictures. He was president and director of the Famous Players - Lasky Corporation.<sup>12</sup>

The motion picture actors of Hungarian birth or origin are all associated with Hollywood, but since we see them in New York as well whenever one of their pictures is playing here, they deserve to be mentioned. In silent film days Vilma Banky and Lya Putti scored top honors. At present Ilona Massey, Steffie Duna, Zita Johann, Bela Lugosi and Paul Lucas are some of the better-known Hungarians.

If New Yorkers wish to see real Hungarian films, with Hungarian performers, produced in Hungary, they may attend the Modern Playhouse on 3rd Avenue and 81st Street, where there is a Magyar picture every day. On the radio the Magyar theatre of the air offers Hungarian songs and general entertainment. A Hungarian program appears on Friday evening

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11 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 306.

12 Who's Who in New York, 1924, p. 1415.

on WQXR from 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. On Sunday afternoon there is one from 1:30 to 3:00 and another from 2:00 to 4:00 on 1400 and 1500 kilocycles respectively; the former is the newer program and in my estimation the more enjoyable, too.

Furthermore, Hungarians were responsible for establishing certain theatres in New York City. Samuel Rothafel founded the Roxy Theatre.<sup>13</sup> Martin Beck is a Hungarian who employed Charles Feleky as his General Manager and allowed him time for the book-collecting which was his hobby and turned out to be so useful for the Hungarian Reference Library.<sup>14</sup>

Thus in every aspect of the theatre - the legitimate stage, the motion pictures, and on the air, Hungarians of New York are represented. Furthermore, Hungarians entertain not only a small circle of Magyars, but their works have won acclaim among Americans.

13 Brown, Francis J. and Roucek, Joseph Slabey, Our Racial and National Minorities, p. 318.

14 Feleky, Antoinette, Charles Feleky and His Unpublished Manuscript, p. 8.

## CHAPTER IX

### HUNGARIAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN NEW YORK.

Music lovers are familiar with Hungarian folk music and with the gypsy variations of it. Some of the famous Hungarian musicians built on this foundation, but others have won acclaim in America by playing or conducting non-Hungarian classical works and some young Hungarians who migrated to America achieved recognition for composing operettas and musical comedies in the popular vein.

Contrary to popular conception Hungarian folk music was late in being discovered and much that passes for it is really based on Gypsy music.<sup>1</sup> This is true even of Liszt's famous Hungarian Rhapsodies and Brahms' Hungarian Dances. Brahms was a German but he was introduced to what purported to be Magyar peasant tunes by his Hungarian accompanist Edward Remenyi. Remenyi was also connected with Kossuth's rebellion of 1848 and fled to England. In the course of a concert tour in 1865 he sojourned in New York as well as other American cities before he passed away in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> Real Hungarian folk music has recently been unearthed by the researches of Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly. Toth explains the difference between this and gypsy music very capably, "The Old Hungarian Asiatic songs have classic unity and concentrated expression in contrast to the sentimentally diffuse and exhibitionist Hungarian gypsy music."<sup>3</sup> This opinion is upheld by Edward Kilenyi, an

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1 Toth, Aladar, "Hungarian Folk Music," International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 571.

2 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July, 1936 - Sept. 1936, p. 6.

3 Toth, Aladar, "Hungarian Folk Music," International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 573.

outstanding Hungarian-American orchestra conductor, in an article.<sup>4</sup> Kilenyi was born in Hungary and educated there and in Rome and Cologne. His specialty is the violin for which he has composed pieces in addition to operatic works and overtures.<sup>5</sup>

We are fortunate at the present time in having Bela Bartok in our midst participating in the Coolidge Festival of Music presented in Washington by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. Afterwards he will concertize at Carnegie Hall and at Columbia's McMillin Theatre in collaboration with the Hungarian Reference Library. Bartok is a composer, an excellent concert pianist, and a compiler of Hungarian and Slavic folk songs. Bartok is not new to this country since he was here on a concert tour more than a decade ago in 1928 but his reputation has grown tremendously and his work has increased in power. Unlike some other outstanding artists and musicians of Hungarian birth, Bartok has not become an expatriate. Indeed, he is typically Hungarian in background and training. In 1881 he was born at Nagyszentmiklos and received the benefit of his father's skill in music up to the age of eight when his parent, who was the director of the School of Agriculture, passed away. By this time the young Bela was well-versed in music and began to compose and perform as a child prodigy. His earliest formal musical training was obtained in Nagyvarad and Pozsony and he was polished off at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. Many influences have been brought to bear on him, such as the compositions of Dohnanyi, Brahms, Wagner, Liszt and Richard Strauss. During his second period he turned to folk

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5 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept, 1936, p. 2.

4 Kilenyi, Edward, "The Theory of Hungarian Music," The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan. 1919, pp. 20-39.

music collaborating with Kodaly in research. At the present time he is strongly under the influence of Debussy. His compositions include chamber music, symphonic and piano works, and collections of folk music. On his present tour the celebrated Hungarian violinist, Joseph Szigeti, is accompanying him.<sup>6</sup>

Bartok's collaborator in rediscovering old Magyar folk music is Zoltan Kodaly, a famous composer in his own right. His choral composition Psalmus Hungaricus was presented from New York to San Francisco.<sup>7</sup>

Another famous Hungarian pianist who influenced Bartok and also concertized in America is Erno Dohnanyi. He was born in Pozsony, Hungary in 1877 and like Bartok he was the son of an educated father who was a professor of mathematics and physics and played a number of instruments. After receiving his early training from his father and from an organist in the Pozsony Cathedral, Dohnanyi at the age of seventeen went to the Royal Academy of Music at Budapest. Here he won the Franz Liszt scholarship. In 1897 he went to Berlin and gave his first important foreign recital. Then he returned to Hungary and gave concerts in Vienna and London with the Budapest Philharmonic. From 1900 to 1901 he concertized in America, including New York City. Since then he has concertized in all of the European capitols and has held several important positions as Professor of Music at the Berlin Hochschule, as director of the Budapest Conservatory, and as director of the Hungarian radio since 1931 and of the Hochschule since 1934.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Bucskai-Payerle, Bela and Schulhof, Andor, Bela Bartok His Life and Music, pp. 1-7.

7 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 3.

8 Otvos, Adorjan, "A Philosopher-Musician," Arts and Decoration, July, 1, 1923, pp. 1-3. International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 462.



These prominent contemporaries are by no means the only Hungarian musicians to tour America, including New York City. Back in 1886-1888 Ludwig Karpath, a Hungarian singer, music critic, and author, who studied at the Budapest Conservatory made appearances as a singer with the National Opera Company in New York.<sup>9</sup> Catherine Klafsky, an operatic soprano, appeared here in 1895.<sup>10</sup> During the season of 1906-1907, Ferenc Hegedus, a celebrated Hungarian violinist, who was born in Pecs in 1881 and studied at the conservatory there, toured America.<sup>11</sup> Yolanda Mero, a pianist was here in 1923.<sup>12</sup> When she was only fifteen years old, Erna Rubinstein, the Hungarian violin soloist, astounded New York audiences at Carnegie Hall by her calmness and power in execution. She appeared here in 1922, 1923 and 1924. Here again was a child prodigy who began her musical studies at the age of seven and completed her course in Budapest under Hubey.<sup>13</sup> Piroska Anday of the Vienna State Opera toured the United States and Canada in 1933.<sup>14</sup> More recently, in 1935, Enid Szantho, a Hungarian contralto of the Vienna opera was here.<sup>15</sup> She is now appearing again with Szigetti and Bartok.

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9 International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 922.

10 "Musical Who's Who," Young-Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 2.

11 Ibid., p. 2.

12 Musical Courier, Feb. 22, 1923, p. 9.

13 Ibid., March 1, 1923, p. 31 and November 9, 1922, p. 55.

14 "Musical Who's Who," Young-Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 2.

15 Ibid., p. 12.

During her earlier tour Miss Szantho was invited to sing at the White House. The same honor was accorded to the Budapest University Chorus during its American visit of 1937. Just as its name indicates the chorus is composed of the faculty members, research graduates, alumni and students of the university of Budapest, totaling forty members. Its repertoire on this occasion included both classical and contemporary Hungarian compositions. Victor Vaszy is the conductor of this orchestra and is a professor at the Academy of Music in Budapest and leader of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. This chorus is well-known throughout Europe. The American tour was sponsored by the Intercollegiate Musical Council and Dr. Laszeo Telkes, director of the Hungarian Reference Library and Tibor De Cholnoky, the prominent Hungarian surgeon of New York, were on the Hungarian Concert Committee. The proceeds of the tour went to charity - American-Magyar Orphan Homes, hospitals, and the Red Cross. The Carnegie Hall concert took place on January 16, 1937 and the program on this occasion was typical:

Franz Liszt, "Before the Clash"  
"Spring"

Bela Bartok, "Old Magyar Folksongs"

Zoltan Kodaly, "Hurszt"

Victor Lanyi, "Organ"

Viktor Vaszy "Croaks the Raven Now"

Zoltan Kodaly, "Songs from Karad"

Francis Farkas, "Recruit's Lot"

Nicholus Laurisin, "Heigh-Ho!"

Dezso Demeny, "A Serenade"

Francis Erkel, "Drinking Song"

John Gall, "I Button My Vest"<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, American Tour of Budapest University Chorus, Jan 6 - Feb. 3, 1937 - A pamphlet in the Hungarian Reference Library

The individuals that I have mentioned are only some of the Hungarians who have given concerts in America. Other violinists who appeared here were Yelley d' Arany, Clara Dullien, Geza Kresz, Emil Telmanyi and Ferenc Vecsey. Among the pianists less prominent than Bartok and Dohnanyi who played in New York were Lajos Keilner, Charlotte Recsey, Richard Singer, Imre Stefaniai and Zdenka Techarich. Vocalists whom I have not mentioned are Rosette Anday, Maria Ivogun, Joseph Lengyel, Catherine Reiner of the Royal Hungarian Opera, Maria Samson, Alexander Sved, and Desider Zador.<sup>17</sup>

A number of Hungarian-born musicians came to the United States as immigrants and many were associated at one time or another with New York. Hungarian gypsy music reached New Yorkers first of all as it was interpreted by Lajos Munczi and his orchestra at New York's Eden Musee which was popular between the period of Kossuth's visit and the World War. This institution on 23rd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues housed wax representations of historical events, like the execution of Maximilian of Mexico and the death of Cleopatra. Another popular feature was the Hungarian gypsy band dressed in red and led in turn by such prominent gypsies as Kalman Balazs, Naci Erdelyi and Lajos Muncy who was famous for his diamond vest buttons. The repertoire of the band included Hungarian and American pieces and the core of the orchestra was the first violin and the cymbals. The cymbal or czimbalom, is Hungary's national instrument and has a long history.<sup>18</sup> Munczi who was the

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17 "Musical Who's Who," Young-Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, pp. 2, 6, 12.

18 Hartmann, Arthur, "The Czimbalom, Hungary's National Instrument," The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 4, Oct. 1916, pp. 590-600.

orchestra's first violin was born in Oldenburg, Hungary. Unlike other gypsies who play by ear he was well-trained in music at the Vienna Imperial Conservatory. Before he came to America he was under the patronage of Prince Paul Esterhazy, one of the powerful landed magnates of Hungary.<sup>19</sup>

A less spectacular Hungarian-American musician who had real ability was Rafael Joseffy; he exerted a powerful influence from 1879 when he came to America to his death in 1915. He was born in 1852 in the Carpathian section of Hungary and studied music under the best Hungarian teachers of his day, including the immortal Liszt. As a concert pianist he also performed in Berlin. In New York he became associated with Walter Damrosch through whose influence he became a professor at the National Conservatory in New York. He trained many American pianists through private lessons.<sup>20</sup>

Although Ottakar Eugene Novacek who was Joseffy's contemporary, only lived in New York from the time of his arrival in 1891 to his death in 1900, he managed to make himself known in that short period of time. Since he received excellent training as a violinist at the Leipzig Conservatory, he soon became the first violinist of the Philharmonic Symphony Society of New York. He also did some work for the Metropolitan Opera and composed pieces for the piano and violin.<sup>21</sup>

19 Anonymous, Munczi Lajos and His Orchestra, a handbill advertizing of the orchestra printed by the Eden Musee and in the possession of the Hungarian Reference Library.

20 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar-American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 3.

21 Ibid., p. 6.

Another popular figure around the turn of the century was Lajos Serly who was the greatest and most popular composer of Magyar song in America. He was a well-beloved figure in New York's Hungarian musical and social life.<sup>22</sup>

A composer of classical music, a pianist, and a teacher was Max William Vogrich who died in New York in 1916. Born in Szeben, Hungary (now Rumanian) in 1852 he went to the Leipzig Conservatory for his musical education. After that he wandered far afield to Germany, Russia, France, Italy, Spain, Mexico and South America. In 1878 he was in New York for the first time but went to distant Australia next. From 1886 to 1902 he was again in New York. From 1902 to 1914 he lived first in Weimar and then in London. The last two years of his life were spent in New York. His compositions include operas, oratorios, cantatas, symphonies and violin and piano pieces.<sup>23</sup>

Franz Lehar is always remembered for his great hit, the Merry Widow. Few know, however, that he is a Hungarian because he has been so closely associated with Vienna, where he has lived ever since the Merry Widow brought him fame and riches.<sup>24</sup> Although he has never set foot in New York, no one can claim that he does not hold a secure place in its music world as long as the Merry Widow Walse is played.

Although Lehar has never been here, other famous Hungarian composers of operettas have chosen this city as their residence. Victor Jacobi who died in New York in 1921 was born in Budapest and is the composer of Rambler Rose and Apple Blossom. Armand Vecsey is especially noted for

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22 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar-American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 12.

23 International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 1991.

24 Kitchen, Karl K. "An Interview with Franz Lehar," The Theatre, Vol. XX, No. 162, Aug., 1914, pp. 64-66.

his Rose of China.<sup>25</sup> The most outstanding of this group of composers of light opera is Sigmund Romberg. He was born in Hungary in 1887 and was originally trained to be a civil engineer. Later he studied music with Victor Heuberger in Vienna and found his true vocation. In 1913 he settled in New York where he has written more than 70 operettas combining Austrian and American styles of popular music. Some of his outstanding successes which New Yorkers will easily recognize are Blossom Time, The Desert Song, Maytime, and the Student Prince.<sup>26</sup>

Another aspect of music in which Hungarians have achieved prominence is that of orchestra conducting. Some outstanding Magyar wielders of the baton have been Anton Seidl, Max Fleischmann, Fritz Reiner, Erno Rapee, Eugene Ormandy, Sandor Harmati, and Edward Kilenyi whose background and achievements I have already described. Although some Hungarian writers also list Arthur Bodansky of the Metropolitan opera as a Hungarian, judging from accounts of his life which appeared in the newspapers after his recent death and from reading Who's Who in America, I think that there is no reason for considering him anything but Austrian. The list of conductors whom I have mentioned are all those who have had some connection with New York City.

The earliest to make a name for himself was Anthony Seidl who was educated in Europe and became the conductor of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society. In 1885 he succeeded Damrosch as conductor of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and was noted for his skill in rendering Wagner. He passed away in New York in 1898.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 303.

26 International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 1570.

27 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 6.

Max Fleischmann who is now the assistant conductor of the Roxy Symphony Orchestra was born and educated in Budapest. Since 1923 he has conducted orchestras at the Rialto, Rivoli and Criterion Theatres.<sup>28</sup>

The two most outstanding contemporary Hungarian-American conductors who were both trained in Budapest are Fritz Reiner and Erno Rapee. Reiner resides in New York but his contemporary musical ties are with the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra of which he is the director. Reiner was very well-trained at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest and is also a graduate of the law school of the University of Budapest. He was the conductor not only of the Opera Comique in his native city but also directed on occasion at Dresden, Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna, Rome and Barcelona. He has performed all over the United States as well.<sup>29</sup>

Erno Rapee is more closely associated with New York City in his work. He received his musical training in the Budapest conservatory where he was outstanding as a pianist. In 1912 he came to the United States. Here he was the conductor in turn of the Capitol Theatre Orchestra, the Roxy Theatre Orchestra, and of the General Motors Orchestra. Since 1933 he is the director of music for the Radio City Music Hall Corporation and has broadcasted since 1920. In the course of his work he has introduced several lesser known Hungarian and American compositions and has helped fellow-Hungarians to find a place for themselves.<sup>30</sup>

Eugene Ormandy is another young Hungarian conductor who has become

28 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 10.

29 Ibid., p. 10.

30 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 10.

an American and a success. Ormandy was born in Budapest in 1899 and soon displayed ability as a child prodigy. At the age of five he entered the Budapest Royal Academy of Music and by 1914 he obtained the State Diploma for violin playing after touring Europe. In 1919 he was appointed a professor at the Hungarian State Conservatory of Music but left for America the next year. In this country he did not have to wait long for success since by 1921 he was concertmaster and later conductor of the Capitol Theatre Orchestra. In 1927 he became naturalized. In 1930 he was guest conductor of the New York Stadium Summer Concerts, but since then his activities have taken him far afield from New York. From 1931-1935 he was the conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and since 1936 he has been co-conductor with Stokowski of the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 1936 he conducted the Bruckner Festival in Linz.<sup>31</sup>

Sandor Harmati died in 1936 in New Jersey, but since from 1922-1923 he conducted the Women's String Orchestra in New York he falls within our classification. In reality he was more than just a conductor since he was also a composer and violinist. He was born in Budapest in 1892 and received his musical training in the Budapest Academy of Music. After achieving recognition in Hungary as Concertmaster of the State Orchestra in Budapest and Concertmaster of the People's Opera there, he tried his luck in America, arriving as a member of the Letz Quartet in 1917. He rose to the leadership of this group 1922-25 at the same time that he undertook new obligations with the Women's String Orchestra. In 1927 he conducted the International Festival at Frankfort

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<sup>31</sup> International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 1332.



and from 1925-1930 he conducted the Omaha Orchestra. During his life he was frequently a guest conductor here and abroad.<sup>32</sup>

Hungarian opera singers have also achieved some measure of success with the Metropolitan. Outstanding among them is Margaret Matzenauer who was born in Temesvar, Hungary. A good musical background in the home served as an inspiration, since her father was an orchestra conductor and her mother a dramatic soprano. She studied under Mme. Neuendorff, Antonia Mielke and Franz Emerich and made her musical debut at the Strassburg Opera. From 1904 to 1911 she was a contralto at the Court Opera in Munich. In 1911 she made her initial appearance at the Metropolitan and has been its frequent guest artist since. She has also sung at Buenos Aires, Berlin, Paris, London, Madrid and Vienna.<sup>33</sup>

Another Hungarian soprano who has been with the Metropolitan a long time is Anna Roselle. She received her training in Hungary too and is a resident of New York. At a recent dog show by the Hungarian Reference Library she exhibited her pure Hungarian puli dog.<sup>34</sup>

Frederick Schorr and Arnold Gabor are two male Hungarian contributions to the Metropolitan. Gabor, who is a baritone, received his training at the Liszt Academy and sang in operas in Budapest and Germany.<sup>35</sup> Schorr is widely known as a German but he was born in the Hungarian city of Nagy-Varad in Transylvania which was ceded to Rumania after the World War.<sup>36</sup>

32 International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, p. 747.

33 Matzenauer, Mme. Margarete, "Get a Musical Education First," The Etude Music Magazine, Vol. XLIV, No. 4, April, 1926, p. 261.

34 Personal observation and interview.

35 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 2.

36 Ibid., p. 6.

A writer of Hungarian opera, Arpad Doppler, also spent years in America on the staff of the Grand Conservatory of New York. He was born in Budapest and received his earliest training there but later he continued his education at Stuttgart. He wrote many operas in the old Magyar style.<sup>37</sup>

Some Hungarians who perform on one instrument such as the piano, the violin, or the organ have found a place for themselves. The organist of Radio City Music Hall is a Hungarian, Deszo-Antalfy-Zsiross.<sup>38</sup> Erno Balogh is a popular pianist and music teacher in New York.<sup>39</sup> A woman pianist of merit is Yolanda Mero who is the wife of the manager of the Steinway Piano Company. She was born in Budapest, studied there at the Liszt Academy and has since toured all over the world.<sup>40</sup> Among the violinists a young hopeful is Alexander Harsanyi who is the son of the pastor of New York's Magyar Presbyterian Church. He received his bachelor's degree from Columbia and won a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music. He studied in America and in Paris and has already toured Europe twice. Harsanyi is an example of the successful American-born generation of Hungarian descent.<sup>41</sup> A practitioner of the ancient Hungarian art of cimbalom playing is not lacking either. Ladislav Kun who is an excellent concert artist of New York at present was a professor of this quaint instrument at the Liszt College of Music in Budapest.<sup>42</sup>

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37 "Musical Who's Who," Young Magyar American, July - Sept., 1936, p. 2.

38 Ibid., p. 2.

39 Ibid., p. 2.

40 Ibid., p. 2.

41 Ibid., p. 2.

42 Ibid., p. 2.

From this lengthy list of personalities it is quite obvious that the Hungarians have contributed most to American culture in the world of music. Another impressive fact is that many of these artists came to America in the post-World War period when intellectuals in Hungary could not make a living. Hungary's loss proved to be our gain.

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## CHAPTER X

### PROMINENT HUNGARIAN SURGEONS IN NEW YORK

Two Hungarian surgeons have achieved particular distinction in New York - Arpad Gerster and Tibor de Cholnoky. The latter is making his name now whereas the former passed away in 1923 after he had won wide-spread recognition in his profession. Each of these men contributed something original to medicine at the same time as he remained active in Hungarian-American life in New York City. Of course, there are many other Hungarian-born and trained doctors in New York City who do not meet these specifications. Mr. Joseph Szentkiralyi, Librarian of the Hungarian Reference Library, lists some of these others who are supporters of the library - Dr. Ladislav Boldizsar, Dr. Arpad Lux, Dr. Kalman Molnar, Dr. Stephen Pakin, Dr. Camille Kereszturi, and Dr. Joland Ladok.<sup>1</sup> In addition there must be many more Hungarian-American doctors who have broken with Hungarian organizations. However, the two men that I have chosen to discuss have done the most in Hungarian and medical circles.

Arpad Gerster was born in the critical year 1848 in Kassa, Hungary. He received his training for medicine partly in Hungary and partly abroad. After completing his work at the University of Vienna he was an interne for a year in Berlin when Germany was the leader in science. Hospital work and army medical service in Hungary also helped to fit him for his task. When he was only twenty-six years old he decided to continue his work in America, settling in Brooklyn. The first New York hospital with

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<sup>1</sup> Manuscript list compiled by Mr. Joseph Szentkiralyi of Famous New York Magyar-Americans which is available at the Hungarian Reference Library.

which he was associated was German Hospital (now Lenox Hill). In 1879 he changed his hospital to Mount Sinai where he continued to exercise his skill in performing operations for rich and poor alike for the rest of his productive life. As an instructor in medical schools he was associated with the New York Polyclinic Medical School from 1882 to 1894 and also became a Professor of Surgery at Columbia University in 1910. In the medical profession his fellow-surgeons recognized his eminence when they made him President of the New York Medical Society in 1891 and again in 1911 when he was chosen President of the American Medical Association. He is also known for numerous articles which he contributed to medical publications. Nevertheless he still found time to function in Hungarian affairs. In the chapter on Hungarian Charitable Institutions, I shall describe his work as President of the Magyar Tarsulat (Magyar Association). His native land recognized his devotion to Hungarian affairs and his prominence in medicine by conferring membership in the Budapest Medical Association upon him in 1891. Gerster was indeed a frequent visitor to Europe and was fond of other diversions besides traveling, such as reading, sports and music.<sup>2</sup>

The family tradition is being carried on by his son, John Carl Arpad Gerster, who is a prominent surgeon of New York City and a graduate of Columbia and of the University of Bonn. He has also been a contributor to scientific journals.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Tibor de Cholnoky also received his training in Hungary and is now an associate Professor in Surgery at Columbia and Assistant

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2 Gerster, Arpad, Recollections of a New York Surgeon, passim.

3 Who's Who in America, 1938-1939, p. 997.

Surgeon at Post Graduate Hospital in New York.<sup>4</sup> He is especially interested in cancer and has written numerous articles on the subject.<sup>5</sup> Professor Cholnoky is closely connected with New York's Hungarian life and with the Hungarian Reference Library. He is the owner of a prize-winning Hungarian shepherd dog. As I have already stated in my chapter on music, he was jointly responsible with Dr. Telkes for the Hungarian concerts of the Budapest University Chorus in New York City.

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4 The American Journal of Surgery, Vol. XXX, No. 2, Nov., 1935, pp. 298-304, 309 and 386.

5 Cholnoky, Tibor de, "Round-Cell, Spindle-Cell and Neurogenic Sarcomas of the lip." A pamphlet in the Hungarian Reference Library which is a reprint from an article in The American Journal of Cancer, Nov. 1934.

## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF HUNGARIANS

#### IN NEW YORK

Until very recently, profound interest in cultural activity among Hungarians was largely lacking because most of the immigrants were of the peasant class. A Hungarian newspaper, which I shall describe later, was established in 1879 to promote literary and historical articles, but failed dismally after the second issue. No artists, writers, or historians of importance emerged. Records of the feeble Hungarian-American activities which existed were not carefully kept. No attempt was made to acquaint Americans with Hungarian culture in the true sense. Few Hungarians achieved prominence in American cultural circles. Since the turn of the Twentieth Century and especially since the World War some attempt has been made to remedy these conditions.

Hungarian-American professors are now employed in American universities, and in New York City in addition to Professor Cholnoky we find Arpad Kovacs teaching Modern European History at St. Johns, Gabor de Besseneyei teaching Political Science at Fordham, and Francis Deak at the Columbia Law School.<sup>1</sup> Columbia University's close connection with Hungarian affairs is noticable and manifests itself in collaboration with Hungarian cultural activities such as the Bela Bartok Concert which will take place on May 1, 1940 at Columbia's McMillin Theatre. Columbia

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<sup>1</sup> The names were supplied by Elsa Petro at the Hungarian Reference Library, who is active in Hungarian-American social life.

also gives a \$1,000 scholarship for study in Hungary. A similar function is served by the Institute of International Education in New York - a Carnegie Foundation - for the exchange of students of both sexes.<sup>2</sup> In the University Extension Division of Columbia University, Joseph Szentkiralyi, the librarian of the Hungarian Reference Library, gave courses in the Hungarian language and in Hungarian literature during the 1939-1940 school year.<sup>3</sup>

While others ignored the Hungarian-American past. Charles Feleky became an avid collector of all English materials on Hungarian subjects. Feleky's vocation was the directing of music for stage plays and in this work he was associated with Martin Beck for twenty-two years. However, he is more prominent in the memory of Hungarian-Americans for his avocation, the collection of an English library on Hungarian subjects which became the core of the present Hungarian Reference Library. According to Mrs. Feleky, the spirit of collecting was aroused in him by the purchase of a book about Louis Kossuth that he saw in the window of a Pittsburgh antique shop.<sup>4</sup> From these humble beginnings grew a library containing all books relative to Hungary and Hungarians written in English since 1562 and a collection of periodicals and pamphlets. At present the library is in the possession of the Hungarian National Museum which contributes part of the money for the Hungarian Reference Library's maintenance; the rest comes from the receipts realized from exhibits, concerts and other entertainments held every Wednesday evening, and from membership fees.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Laszlo Telkes, a Hungarian-

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2 Josika-Herczeg, Imre de, Hungary After A Thousand Years, p. 169.

3 Columbia University Extension, Department of East European Languages, Announcement of Evening Courses in Hungarian.

4 Feleky, Antoinette, Charles Feleky and His Unpublished Manuscript, p. 8.

5 Ibid., pp. 10-11.



American Harvard graduate is its director and also lectures on Hungarian subjects frequently in connection with the Wednesday evening programs. Mrs. Antoinette Feleky, the widow of the famous bibliophile and a well-known psychologist in her own right, kept the collection intact from the time of Charles Feleky's death in 1930 up to the official acquisition of the collection by the Hungarian National Museum in 1937. Since 1937 this has been a free reference library for students, journalists and others.<sup>6</sup>

This newly awakened interest in Hungarian-American affairs has also resulted in the founding of a society to study Hungarian-American historical ties. In 1932 when the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth was celebrated, Dezso Balogh de Almas initiated "The Colonel Commandant Michael de Kovats Society of America" in New York which has since set up branches throughout the Union. Colonel Kovats was connected with George Washington as Commandant and Drill Master in Washington's army and lost his life for American independence during the American Revolution in 1779 at Charleston, West Virginia. The Society worked to keep his memory alive by planting a tree each to the memory of Washington and Kovats in Central Park on the anniversary of Kovat's death. On the same evening the Society gave a ball and historical pageant dealing with the American and Hungarian Revolutions. In 1939 a delegation of American citizens of Hungarian descent presented the New York Historical Society with a plaque of Kovats by Alexander Finta, the famous Hungarian-American artist whom I have already described; this was the fourth plaque executed by Finta whose first appeared in 1929 commemorating the 150th anniversary of Kovat's death. On January

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6 This information was derived by personal conversation with the individuals associated with the library.

24, 1940 a Kovats memorial was also unveiled in the Hungarian Reference Library.<sup>7</sup> In the future the Kovats Society may do great service in revealing more half-forgotten historical facts about Hungarian-American life and ties.

The New York World's Fair of 1939 was truly educational and the Fair of 1940 is expected to be still better. Hungary participated last year and will do so again. Many prominent Hungarians of New York, and especially the staff of the Hungarian Reference Library, were actively associated with the Hungarian exhibit. Hungarian clothing, ceramics, embroidery, and art objects were on view. In the Hungarian restaurant the famous Hungarian dishes which I described elsewhere were available and Hungarian wine and music were introduced to Americans. A special counter where small portions of Hungarian goulash were served for thirty-five cents was a very popular feature.

If we look at the World's Fair from a different point of view we realize that in addition to being an educational and cultural revelation it is a business proposition. Hungarians, like the other nationalities represented, tried to sell their wares to Americans. However, this is not the only means used and not the first attempt tried to make Americans purchasers of Hungarian products. The Royal Hungarian Office for Foreign Trade advertized in the Young-Magyar American before that magazine ceased publication. Most of the articles for which the Hungarians were trying to find buyers were luxury products. The list includes: "Kando Single-Phase System for Railway Electrification,

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<sup>7</sup> Colonel Michael de Kovats; American Revolutionary Hero, Edited by Joseph Szentkiralyi, passim.

Szilvay's "Dry" Fire Extinguisher, Finest Quality Leathers and Goods, Waterproof Hemp, Twines and Cords, "Farinograf" Wheat-Gluten Meter, Curative Sparkling Mineral Waters, Packing Mud for Rheumatism, Condensed Paprika Vitamin C, Carriage, Riding and Polo Horses, Pure-bred "Puli" Shepherd Dogs, Rubber Toys, Quality Garden and Field Seeds, Fancy Meat Dishes in Tins, Wines, Liquors, Champagne, Salami, Bonbons, Liquir-filled Drops, Paprika, Poppy-seed, Spices, Herbs, and Medicinal Roots."<sup>8</sup> However, there are also flourishing Hungarian import companies in private hands such as the business of Paprikas Weiss, leading Hungarian importer of New York.

The actual quantity of articles imported into the United States from Hungary is very small. In 1922 Emil Kiss, the prominent Hungarian-American banker of New York, found that Hungary's imports from the United States exceeded her exports to this country twenty times. The items bulking largest in Hungary's export trade to the United States were paprika, broom-straw, juniper berries, bed feathers, lard, champagne, hats, basketware, toys, woodenware, and perfumed soap.<sup>9</sup>

In 1922 Hungarian-American business men of New York tried to improve the trade between the two countries by establishing an American-Hungarian Chamber of Commerce which also published a magazine called the New York Economist. The first issue of this magazine appeared in November, 1922 and the last in October, 1923, after which the magazine petered out but the Chamber of Commerce continued in existence. The

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<sup>8</sup> Royal Hungarian Office for Foreign Trade, List of Hungarian Export Articles, Young-Magyar American, Vol. II, No. 1, June 1937, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Kiss, Emil, The Industrial Conditions and Commercial Relations in Hungary; Report of Emil Kiss, President of the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce to the Department of Commerce, Washington, pp. 20-22.

organization listed its purposes under ten headings:

- "1 Scientific and expert study of economic opportunities in the United States and Hungary.
- 2 Devising of practical plans for the exploitation of such economic, financial and commercial opportunities in the interest of both countries.
- 3 Active participation and leadership in promotion and carrying out of constructive plans destined to improve economic conditions in Hungary.
- 4 Working out of regular channels of communication with the Hungarian Government and financial and commercial organizations in Budapest as well as with the proper governmental authorities and important economic organizations in America.
- 5 Organization of a permanent New York exhibit of raw materials, half-finished and finished products of Hungary, thus opening up, directly and actively, the American market for Hungarian commerce and industry.
- 6 Protection of rights of authors, composers, literary men and artists.
- 7 Organization of an information bureau, securing and diffusing accurate and reliable information as to the standing and financial responsibility of merchants and other matters, including the various rules and regulations governing the export and import business and the custom duties in Hungary and America.
- 8 To procure uniformity and certainty in the customs and usages of trade and commerce and to secure freedom from unjust and unlawful exactions.
- 9 To settle differences between its members and to promote a more enlarged and friendly intercourse between businessmen.
- 10 Publication of a monthly magazine to promote an active interest in the purposes and objects of the chamber."<sup>10</sup>

In February 1923, the organization had 606 members,<sup>11</sup> including many prominent Hungarian-Americans of the time, such as Emil Kiss the

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<sup>10</sup> The New York Economist, March, 1923, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., February 1923, p. 1.

banker, Geza D. Berko, the editor of the largest Hungarian daily newspaper in America, and Captain James G. Pedlow who was responsible for the shipping of packages to the poor of Hungary from their American relatives at reduced rates. The by-laws of the organization were drawn up by Morris Cukor, an outstanding lawyer among the Hungarian-Americans of New York.<sup>12</sup> An outstanding achievement of the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce was the dinner, attended by four hundred guests at the Hotel Astor, which it gave in honor of Count Laszlo Szechenyi, the first Ambassador of independent Hungary to the United States.<sup>13</sup>

If Hungary's trade with the United States was in need of improvement in 1923 as a result of the World War, it is even worse today due to the present war in Europe. Very little can be expected in direct trade promotion from the World's Fair now, but good will may be won for the future and Americans may be educated to desire and recognize Hungary's products.

A different type of educational and cultural work is being performed by the Hungarian churches in New York, which are real community centers like American churches. Every type of Hungarian religion is represented in New York at present. The majority of Hungarians are Catholics and in New York St. Stephen's Hungarian Roman Catholic Church on 82nd Street carries on the Hungarian traditions under the Reverend Father Peter Feher. A Holy Name Society, the St. Klara Society, A Mothers Club, the St. Imre Junior Society, and a Sickness Aid Society are all connected with this church. The First Magyar Presbyterian Church is also well-organized under its pastor, Ladislav Harsanyi.

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<sup>12</sup> The New York Economist, January, 1923, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., May, 1923, pp. 5-10.

At its church in East 116 Street a parents association, a Reformed Men's Division, and a Reformed Singing Circle meet. Geza Takaro, pastor of the First Magyar Reformed Church, on East 69th Street, is very prominent in Hungarian circles; before Mr. Szentkiralyi took it over, Dr. Takaro lectured at Columbia on the Magyar language and literature.<sup>14</sup> The 69th Street Church has two well-organized women's leagues. The third of the important Hungarian Reformed Churches is the Free Hungarian Reformed Church whose pastor is Sigismund Ladanyi. At its 11th Street center a Reformed Women's Society and a Reformed Men's Circle meet. The other Hungarian churches of New York are smaller and less well-organized. On East 20th Street there is a Lutheran Hungarian Church and there is another on Leonard Street in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Other smaller sects also have churches - the Magyar Adventists on 83rd Street, the Baptists on 80th Street, and the Greek Catholics on 82nd Street. The Hungarian Jews apparently do not have a synagogue of their own.<sup>15</sup> It is customary for the Hungarian churches to give socials and summer picnics.

From time to time Hungarian churchmen have come to America to address Hungarian-American congregations in the hope of raising funds for Hungarian church activities at home. One of the earliest was John Kovacs of the Hungarian Unitarian Church who came to take part in the Saratoga Unitarian Conference in 1882. Thereafter the conference backed him in tours to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington

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14 Young Magyar-American, March 15, 1938, p. 9.

15 Szentkiralyi, Joseph, List of Hungarian Churches, manuscript in the Hungarian Reference Library.

and Chicago where he spoke in churches and before university and Sunday school audiences about Hungarians and the Hungarian Unitarian church. During the five months he spent in America he collected \$12,000 for his church.<sup>16</sup>

In 1925, the Reverend Nicholas Jozan, Suffragan Bishop of the Unitarian churches of Hungary preached in New York. The week of March 22 proved to be a busy one for him as the following itinerary shows:

Sunday, March 22 - West Side Church, N. Y.

Monday, March 23 - Noon Service, All Souls Church, N. Y.

Wednesday, March 25 - Brooklyn, Vesper Service in the Church of the Savior.

Friday, March 27 - Noon Service, All Souls Church, N. Y.

Sunday, March 29 - All Souls Church, N. Y.

These were only his New York services, but in between he took quick trips to nearby out of town churches.<sup>17</sup>

The Unitarians are not the only ones to come; Catholics and Protestants have been here for the same purpose. For example, John Cserna, a famous Hungarian archbishop, visited the Hungarian Congregations in America about ten years ago when he participated in a Catholic Eucharistic Conference in Chicago.<sup>18</sup>

16 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, p. 78.

17 Christian Register, Vol. 104, No. 8, March 19, 1925, p. 281.

18 Related to me by my mother who heard him speak.

Political clubs among the Hungarians also promote cultural activities to some extent. At the present time Hungarian political clubs are all Democratic - the KPTI Democratic Club on 79th Street, the Yorkville Independent Democratic Club on 80th Street, and the Independent Democratic Club on Stanton Street.<sup>19</sup> However, this contemporary trend toward the Democrats merely illustrates the spirit of the times I think, since New York State is now overwhelmingly in the Democratic camp. Formerly Hungarians seemed to favor the Republicans when they were in power. In 1868, the Grant-Colfax Magyar Republican Club was organized to fight for the election of Grant.<sup>20</sup> Two Presidents of the United States were feted by the Hungarian Republican Club of New York - Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft.<sup>21</sup> The record of the proceedings of the Roosevelt Dinner indicates that the main theme of the speeches at this gathering was the idea that the foreign - born can be loyal supporters of the government. The event took place in the Cafe Boulevard on Second Avenue and 10th Street which was then a famous rendez-vous of Hungarians and the food, decorations and surroundings were all typically Hungarian.<sup>22</sup>

The two outstanding cultural influences among the Hungarians of New York are the Hungarian newspaper and the benefit society or lodge. Each of these movements has a history of its own and deserves a separate chapter.

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19 Szentkiralyi, Joseph, List of Hungarian-American Associations, manuscript in the Hungarian Reference Library.

20 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. 2, p. 21.

21 Cukor, Morris, "The History of Magyar-America is the History of the Forty Year Old Amerikai Magyar Nepszava," Amerikai Magyar Nepszava, 40th Jubilee Edition, Section 2, June 18, 1939, p. 3.

22 Proceedings of the Banquet Tendered Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States by the Hungarian Republican Club of the City of New York, editor William Blau, passim.



## CHAPTER XII

### HUNGARIAN BENEFIT ASSOCIATIONS, LODGES, AND CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS IN NEW YORK.

Until recently social security for Americans was non-existent.

The poor man's only protection was his life insurance policy. Another alternative was the benefit and charitable work carried on by labor unions. All of these proved inadequate for the Hungarian immigrant laborer who could not speak English and was not Americanized enough to join American labor unions. Furthermore, he could only afford to pay in small sums at a time and he needed protection not only in case of death, but also sickness and unemployment benefits. In answer to this need Hungarian lodges were formed with insurance schemes as their primary purpose. Then, in order to fill their coffers they turned to entertainments and became centers of social life as well.

At the present time there are about fifty four such lodges in New York City.<sup>1</sup> Many of them are branches of four large nation-wide associations:

Verhovay Aid Association, 37,965 members, 494 branches, \$3,903,996  
wealth

American-Magyar Reformed Society, 20,063 members, 319 branches and  
\$1,229,502 wealth

Rakoczi Magyar Sickness Aid Society, 17,402 members, 130 branches  
and \$2,261,556 wealth

American Magyar Aid Society, 15,000 members, 463 branches, and  
\$1,701,566 wealth<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Szentkirolyi, Joseph, List of Hungarian-American Associations, manuscript in the Hungarian Reference Library.

<sup>2</sup> Nagy, Ivan, Az Amerikai Magyaracig, p. 9.

This seems like an amazing number, but even in 1911 Hungarians had formed 78 lodges in Manhattan and seven in Brooklyn.<sup>3</sup> The decline in the number of lodges since then can be accounted for by the consolidation of the stronger associations. However, the most surprising fact is that these societies all grew up very suddenly since 1865.

In 1865 the Hungarian Jews set a precedent by forming a German-speaking sickness aid society consisting largely of merchants and professionals which still exists today under an English name.<sup>4</sup> Immediately thereafter the Hungarian-American residents of New York copied the example and formed the Magyar Society of New York with no religious barriers. This became the most important Hungarian organization in New York for social and insurance purposes and counted in its membership the most prominent Hungarians of New York from 1865 to 1908, such as Michael Heilprin, Mathew Rozsaly, Michael Perczel, Elek Ludwig, Gyula Stahel, Gyula Roth, Geza Berko, Jozsef Horvath, Morris Cukor, and Emil Kiss, most of whom I have mentioned in other connections. It started with about forty members but soon increased and improved its facilities to include a piano, a library, and billiard tables. In 1888 it was further strengthened by amalgamating with the Magyar Amateur Theatrical Society. Unfortunately the official records of the organization were lost or destroyed. Its demise in 1908 was rather sudden when its members wanted to reorganize and set up a Magyar Club instead, but in reality they lost what they already had and substituted nothing.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Hoffmann, Geza, Csonka Munkasoztaly Az Amerikai Magyararsag, pp. 352-3.

4 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, p. 10.

5 Ibid., pp. 10 - 17.

The Magyar Tarsulat (Magyar Association) set up in 1885 under the presidency of the celebrated Dr. Arpad Gerster was more of a charitable organization, since it aimed to help the defenseless Magyar immigrants who arrived in New York. The original funds for the enterprise came from the proceeds of the first Magyar Folk Festival in New York on August 7, 1884. All the familiar festival props were included, such as a parade through the Magyar District of Houston Street and Avenue B to Sulzer's Harlem River Park where contests, games and songs as well as numerous speeches in Hungarian, German and English filled the day. Color was added to the occasion by the wearing of Hungarian peasant and cowboy costumes.<sup>6</sup> After this the folk festival became an annual feature to supply funds for the Tarsulat and was aided by the Magyar benefit societies then in existence.

In every way the Tarsulat catered to the needs of the immigrant. Legal advice was supplied by Frank Malocsay, the organization's lawyer, and later by Morris Cukor, who is still a prominent Hungarian lawyer in New York. Money and clothes were given to indigent Magyars and many old and destitute Hungarians were given return tickets to their native land. To guide helpless Hungarians at Castle Garden, then the port of entry to America, the Tarsulat sent its representative Carol Semsey who was an emigrant himself, a Civil War veteran, and later an employee of the United States Government at Ellis Island. Frequently Hungarian immigrants who expected to return to the fatherland sent money home to the families that they had left behind them, and to assist these people the Magyar Tarsulat opened a bank to specialize in money shipments.

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<sup>6</sup> Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, pp. 56-58.

A travel bureau finally arranged for the return trip to Hungary.

The bank proved to be the Tarsulat's undoing. Deficits piled up right from the beginning, and were made worse by a scheme to arrange for a group-journey by Hungarian-Americans to the homeland to celebrate the Thousandth Anniversary of the Hungarian nation in 1896. It was planned to send about a thousand Hungarians on a separate ship with a Hungarian crew, and Hungarian wine, food and music. After elaborate preparations were made the plan had to be abandoned for lack of voyagers and the Tarsulat found itself in even greater financial difficulties because of the expenses incurred. Then, it was found that the bank's manager had pocketed some of the proceeds. In disgust, the President, Arpad Gerster, resigned and made arrangements for the transfer of funds left after the accounting to a bank to lie there until a suitable use could be found. Finally in 1898 the New York Magyar Aid Society was organized, with the financial support of the Hungarian Government, which established a Magyar House of Refuge for Hungarian immigrants.<sup>7</sup>

While the Magyar Society and the Magyar Garsulat flourished, a number of other Hungarian benefit societies of today originated. In 1868 the Hungarian Jewesses organized, and in 1871 the Hungaria Sickness Aid Society appeared.<sup>8</sup> New York's First Magyar Conversational and Sickness Aid Association founded in 1884 was unusual in that it sought to propogate the Hungarian language in addition to its benefit functions. Another peculiar characteristic of this society is that it was the first among the Hungarian associations to exclude Jews from its membership.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. II, pp. 84-91.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-66.

In 1886 the largest of the present nation-wide Hungarian societies, the Verhovay, was founded at Hazleton, Pennsylvania by miners who named their organization after a fiery Hungarian newspaper editor.<sup>10</sup>

Hungarian associations have cooperated whenever emergencies arose requiring their help or when important receptions in honor of Hungarian visitors occurred. In 1915, 1916 and 1919 they held Bazaars to supply funds for war widows and orphans in Hungary. On gala occasions, like the reception of the Hungarian Olympic Team, they also put on marvelous displays.<sup>11</sup> Recently the American-born younger generation has also organized, not so much for insurance purposes, but to create a social center for singing societies, dances, and picnics. Examples of such organizations in New York City are the Ifjusagi Kor es Daltestület on 79th Street, the New York Fuggetlen Magyar Ifjusagi Egyeslet, and the Amerikai Magyar Orszagi Ifjusagi Egyesulet.<sup>12</sup>

10 Ibid., pp. 70-73.

11 Cukor, Morris, "The History of Magyar-America Is the History of the Forty Year Old Amerikai Magyar Nepszava," Amerikai Magyar Nepszava, 40th Jubilee Edition, Section 2, June 18, 1939, pp. 1, 3.

12 Szentkiralyi, Joseph, List of Hungarian-American Associations, manuscript in the Hungarian Reference Library.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE HUNGARIANS OF NEW YORK IN THE NEWSPAPER WORLD.

There is a Hungarian press in New York quite apart from the American newspaper world; its reporters and general personnel are not known to outsiders. On the other hand at least one Hungarian—American, Joseph Pulitzer, left an enduring mark upon American journalism. Furthermore, Emil Lengyel is at present the most successful lecturer, author, journalist, and book-reviewer of all the Hungarian immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Pulitzer's life reads like a Horatio Alger success story. He was born in Mako Hungary in 1847<sup>of</sup> a Magyar-Jewish father and an Austrian-Christian mother. Until the father died when Joseph was sixteen, the family was in comfortable circumstances. Young Pulitzer was adventurous and tried unsuccessfully to join the army in Austria, France and England, but in each case he was rejected for frailness. The American Civil War was going on at this time and recruiting agents were not too concerned with whom they took. Pulitzer signed up for the Union Army and was brought to Boston but slipped over the side when he arrived there and came to New York. Here he joined the army again and had an opportunity to fight at Gettysburg under Carl Schurz. After the war was over the young veteran faced the usual problem of readjustment and was unable to earn a livelihood. He was forced to sleep on a bench in City Hall Park and "rode the rods" to St. Louis like any other

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<sup>1</sup> Roucek, Joseph Slabey, "Hungarians in America," Hungarian Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 2, Summer 1937, pp. 358-366.

hobo.<sup>2</sup>

In St. Louis he obtained temporary work at various odd jobs and even worked as a fireman on a ferry and as a stevedore. Through his interest in books, he made his way into German society and found a place on the Westliche Post as a reporter. He also improved himself by studying law and was admitted to the bar in 1868.

Once given a start, he rose rapidly and became part owner of the Westliche Post. He became interested in politics and served as a member of the Missouri Legislature in 1869. In 1874 he participated in the State Constitutional Convention of Missouri and in 1876 he was a representative in Congress from that state. At this time he also aligned himself with the reform movement which was sweeping the country, following the evils of the Reconstruction Era. In the meantime he had acquired another newspaper, the St. Louis Dispatch, and now merged it with the Post to form the Post-Disptach.<sup>3</sup>

New Yorkers learned to know Pulitzer after he became the owner and publisher of the New York World, which he purchased in 1883. Although he sometimes violated conservative standards, Pulitzer introduced some original ideas in the New York World. He made his journal a popular paper with an aggressive editorial policy, special Sunday features, color comics, and all the other devices calculated to raise the circulation of the paper by an appeal to the masses. Although the World was in a bad financial condition when he took it over, he speedily

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2 Seitz, Don Carolus, Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters, pp. 40-56.

3 Beard, A. E. S., Our Foreign-Born Citizens, pp. 196-197.

overcame this difficulty and acquired wealth. However, the later part of his life was saddened after 1887 by his blindness which came on gradually as a result of the strain to which he subjected his eyes earlier in life when he worked day and night.<sup>4</sup>

Some Americans perhaps regard him merely as a man who, along with Hearst, helped to lower American newspaper standards. However, he merely satisfied a growing demand for the type of news which the proletariat desires. Furthermore, he was progressive in his ideas and built the first modern publishing house, the Pulitzer Building, which was one of the first skyscrapers of New York. Finally, his bequests after his death in 1911 show that he was truly interested in promoting journalism, scholarship, literature, and art.

Pulitzer's connection with Columbia University is very close, since he left \$2,500,000 to found the School of Journalism which was opened in 1912.<sup>5</sup> The Columbia University trustees also award the famous annual prizes in journalism and literature which he established:

\$500 - gold medal for public service by an American newspaper

\$1,000 - best example of a reporter's work

\$1,000 - best American novel

\$2,000 - best book on United States history

\$1,000 - best American biography

\$500 - best cartoon

\$1,000 - best book of verse.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Seitz, Don Carolus, Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters, pp. 56-430 passim.

5 Ibid., pp. 435-462; also Pulitzer, Joseph, "The College of Journalism," North American Review, Vol. 178, No. 5, May 1904, pp. 641-680.

6 Seitz, Don Carolus, Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters, p. 462.



He also provided \$250,000 in funds for the support of three graduates of schools of journalism who could pass certain examinations to study political, social and moral conditions in Europe for one year.<sup>7</sup>

Art and music also profitted by his bequests. He left \$500,000 each - later raised to \$919,416.33 - to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Philharmonic Society. Funds were supplied in his will for the erection of a fountain in the square on Fifth Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets, and for a statue of Thomas Jefferson which is now in the inner court of the School of Journalism. Scholarships were arranged for European study by promising American art and music students.<sup>8</sup>

Although he has been accused of ignoring his fellow - Hungarians, the record indicates otherwise. When Michael Munkacsy, the great Hungarian painter, visited America, Pulitzer was the President of the Magyar Committee which gave a dinner in his honor. Furthermore, Pulitzer was known as a liberal contributor to Hungarian entertainments.<sup>9</sup>

A man like Pulitzer appears but rarely on the Hungarian-American scene but everyday life among the Hungarians of New York goes along on an even keel with an occasional church or charity social to stir up some excitement. In the Hungarian press of New York these everyday Hungarian events are faithfully chronicled in addition to the latest news of the world which many Hungarian immigrants are unable to read in English.

The best index to Hungarian-American life in New York is the Amerikai Magyar Nepszava (American-Hungarian People's Voice) which started as a

7 Beard, A. E. S., Our Foreign-Born Citizens, p. 200.

8 Seitz, Don Carolus, Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters, pp. 463-464.

9 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. w, pp. 35-42.

weekly in 1899 but became a daily in 1904. Its publisher up to his death over ten years ago was Geza Berko who functioned in New York's Hungarian affairs and revived the movement in 1926 for a statue of Kossuth in New York. On June 18, 1939 the newspaper celebrated its fortieth anniversary with a special jubilee edition and published congratulatory messages from President Roosevelt, Governor Lehman, and a number of Hungarian concerns and societies. During these forty years the Nepszava has become a focal center of American life.<sup>10</sup>

In its columns may be found American and Hungarian news, stories, lodge notices, and advertisements of the chief Hungarian concerns. Every major Hungarian activity during the past forty years was described in the Nepszava and the newspaper heartily supported most Hungarian enterprises, but especially the erection of the Kossuth Statue on Riverside Drive which was Berko's dream. Not only has the paper devoted itself to publication of the news, but it also prints an annual almanac<sup>11</sup> and books appear under its auspices from time to time, such as Dr. Imre de Josika-Herczeg's, Hungary After A Thousand Years in 1934. In order to familiarize the American-born children of Hungarians with the old homeland, the Nepszava also conducted annual beauty contests for American girls of Magyar parentage when circumstances were favorable for sending five winners to Hungary free of charge with the stipulation that they write articles for publication in the Nepszava from time to time during the trip about their Hungarian experiences. The Hungarian government saw to it that they had something to write about by giving them receptions

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<sup>10</sup> Amerikai-Magyar Nepszava, 40th Jubilee Edition, Section 2, June 18, 1939, passim.

<sup>11</sup> I glanced through back copies of it at the Hungarian Reference Library.

all over the country. In another contest for free trips to Europe the winners were chosen on the basis of prize-winning essays about Hungary's past. The Hungarian associations, especially the Verhovay Society, sent young people to Hungary who had secured the most new members for the society within a given period of time.<sup>12</sup> Another great concern of the Nepszava has been to secure the revision of the Treaty of Trianon whereby Hungary lost two-thirds of her territory during the last World War. In its attitude on social and political questions the Nepszava is conservative and generally non-partisan.<sup>13</sup>

Only two other daily newspapers rival the Nepszava and they are both published outside of this city. Cleveland's Szabadsag first appeared earlier than the Nepszava, in 1891. Tihamer Kohanyi, its editor, was a great crusader in Hungarian circles and was also responsible for the erection of a statue of Kossuth in Cleveland back in 1902, long before the one in New York was set up. Indeed, Kohanyi occupies the same position as Geza Berko did with the Nepszava.<sup>14</sup> Differing very much from these two conservative newspapers is the Uj Elore (New Forward) which is also sold in New York, but is published in Cleveland by a group of communists. The original Elore (Forward) was a Socialist newspaper of New York which began in 1904.<sup>15</sup> When Charles Varga was its editor it was unique in that the employees managed the publication

12 Young-Magyar American, August 1937, p. 12.

13 The opinion of my mother who has been a reader for many years.

14 Brown, Francis James and Roucek, Joseph Slabey, Our Racial and National Minorities, p. 315.

15 Hoffmann, Geza, Csonka Munkasosztaly As Amerikai Magyarasag, p. 307.

cooperatively.<sup>16</sup> Since its revival the Uj Elore has not been achieving as high a circulation figure as the other dailies, but as the newspaperman Gyorgy Kemeny points out, none of them have ever made their owners wealthy.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, for these three dailies that have survived many Hungarian newspapers have perished. I have already described the rise and demise of the Hungarian Exiles' Paper of 1853. From that time to 1879 no attempt was even made to set up a Hungarian newspaper. In that year a flood of the Tisza River in Hungary created a group of homeless people whom the American-Hungarians helped with funds. This helped to bring the Magyars of New York together sufficiently to arouse in the minds of William Loew and Eric Mogyorossy the desire to establish a weekly newspaper devoted to Hungarian and American intellectual affairs and appearing in both languages. The only trouble was that the readers were not scholarly enough for the paper which never published more than a second copy.<sup>18</sup>

William Loew who was the editor of the next Hungarian newspaper in New York, the Amerikai Magyar Nemzetor (American Hungarian Guardian of the Nation) did not repeat the same mistake again. Indeed this was the first Hungarian newspaper in New York which existed for a period of years from 1883-1897. It was a newspaper which came right down to the level of its readers and kept them informed of Hungarian and American current events. Since this bi-monthly journal was the only Hungarian newspaper

16 Bercovici Konrad, Around the World in New York, p. 361.

17 Kemeny, Gyorgy, "Emlekezzunk Regiekrol," Amerikai Magyar Nepszava, 40th Jubilee Edition, Section 2, June 18, 1939, p. 344.

18 Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. 2, pp. 30-34.

in America for a long period of time (down to 1891 when the Szabadsag appeared) it was read by Magyars all over the United States, but even so it sold only about a thousand copies for each issue. Whether any of these copies still exist is doubtful, but if they do, they are in private hands. Ownership and editorship of the paper passed to Gustav Erdelyi who made it a powerful instrument in Magyar movements. Erdelyi was educated as a lawyer and a judge in Hungary even though he had to work as a cigar-maker here, at first. Everything went well until the competition became too keen. In addition to the Szabadsag, the On Allas (Independent) came into being in Pennsylvania and in 1894 a New York rival appeared in the Magyar Hirado which after 1897 merged with the Szabadsag. However, by then it was too late since Erdelyi's worries brought on tuberculosis from which he died in 1895 and his widow had to give up the paper in 1897. Geza Berko, of Nepszava fame received his newspaper training on the Nemzetor.<sup>19</sup>

After 1894 Magyar newspapers appeared fast, one after another but usually they did not last very long. Socialism was a fad around 1900. Even the Nepszava began as a socialist paper from 1894-1899 when it was completely changed. The Nepakarat (People's Will) was another socialist newspaper which appeared in 1903. In 1910 A Munkas (the Worker) sponsored the same political ideas. Other newspapers were put out by special groups - for example the printers started a socialistic paper in 1910 - in New York - Nyomdaszak Lapja. The world of sport has its Hungarian interpreter and papers dealing with church and theatre appeared.

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<sup>19</sup> Kende, Geza, Magyarok Amerikaban, Vol. 2, pp. 49-55 and pp. 128-133.

However, all of these papers differ from the three great dailies of today in that they do not appear daily, specialize in one subject, and rarely last long.<sup>20</sup>

Since the immigration of Hungarians has declined attempts have been made by Hungarian Organizations to reach the American-born children of Hungarians. A cultural magazine with this objective in mind was the Young Magyar American which was printed in English. It used to appear monthly and was printed in Canada but had a distribution point in the same building as the Hungarian Reference Library. Indeed, copies of it were supplied to library members. In its copies were translations of Hungarian classics, brief biographical notes on visiting Hungarian celebrities, and descriptions of Hungarian contributions to American life. An outstanding achievement of the magazine was the publication of a "Hungarian Musical Who's Who." On the associate board of contributors were Dr. Francis Deak, Professor at Columbia's Law School, and Dr. Lazlo Telkes of the Hungarian Reference Library. Unfortunately after a seemingly successful career since 1936 the magazine had to suspend publication last year for lack of an adequate circulation to meet labor costs.<sup>21</sup>

The fate of the Young Magyar American denotes a tendency in the Hungarian press of America. As time goes by and the older folks pass away, this foreign press will have to turn more and more to their American-

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20 Hoffmann, Geza, Csonka Munkasoztaly As Amerikai Magyarsag, pp. 307-308.

21 This information was secured by consultation with members of the Hungarian Reference Library staff and I also looked through the collected copies of the magazine.

born children for readers, since immigrants are fewer. Therefore, experiments are carried on with articles in English stressing the Hungarian heritage, some of which have also appeared from time to time in the Amerikai Magyar Nepszava. A similar appeal to the young people of Hungarian descent is made by the Hungarian lodges and other institutions. On whether or not these Hungarian-American institutions will be able to hold the interest of the American-born depends the future of the Hungarian movement in America. If these organizations and projects are allowed to collapse like the Young Magyar American did, the time may not be distant when the whole Hungarian community built up for over sixty years in New York City will melt away.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONCLUSION

I undertook to study the Hungarians in New York because I am of Hungarian descent, and because I realized that I knew very little about the subject. Since I have not lived in Manhattan proper, I seldom had contacts with Hungarians or their functions except on such outstanding occasions as the visit of the Budapest University Chorus, when I went to hear them. My parents read the Hungarian newspaper, the Nepszava, but not as regularly now as formerly. They are exceptions to the rule in that they do not belong to any Hungarian lodge or association. Since before I was born, their contacts with Hungarian circles have ceased completely. Therefore, I realized that I knew very little about what the Hungarian-American world was doing, and I wanted to know more. At present there is great interest in the folk customs of the different nationalities which have contributed to American life; even in the case of the Indian we want to revive the old tribal ways whenever no harm results from it. The United States has reached a more mature and settled state and is now taking stock of itself and its component elements.

In trying to decide whether I could be of service in revealing the Hungarian element's past in New York's history, I found two factors working in my favor; I can read Hungarian and English almost equally well and this made it possible for me to use all the available material; secondly, a vast store of material has just recently been made available by the opening of the Hungarian Reference Library.



I enjoyed collecting the material for my thesis since everyone at the Library was very helpful, and the pamphlets and magazines were especially interesting reading. Since the library specializes in English material on Hungarian subjects it is not surprising that most of my source material was in English. In one way I was disappointed, however. Most of the Hungarian organizations of the past failed to keep or preserve records. Even files of the earlier newspapers in Hungarian are lacking. Few of the prominent Hungarians bothered to keep records of their daily activities and only Gerster wrote his reminiscences. Most of my material about prominent Hungarians had to come from English articles in English newspapers about them. Furthermore, most of the pamphlet and periodical material in the Hungarian Reference Library deals with Hungary itself rather than with the Hungarians who settled in America. It may seem that I relied rather heavily on books about the Hungarians in America by other Hungarians, but in these cases, especially in the case of Kende, I think that it was justified, because he lived through the period about which he wrote and he was personally acquainted with most of the individuals and movements that he described. Many of the people that he wrote about are now dead and others are old and live far away or choose to enjoy privacy. Even from an interview I can get very little information because I did not know those interviewed intimately. Furthermore, I often found confirmatory evidence of Kende's statements in pamphlets and other periodicals. At any rate I had the experience of consulting a wide range of primary and secondary sources and enjoyed the task of fitting them all together into one clear-cut picture.

My topic I think presented unusual difficulties of organization, and with all due respect to my predecessors and fellow-chroniclers I think that that is the aspect in which all works on the Magyars have been weakest. I am not too sure that I solved the problem wisely myself. I attempted to introduce the Hungarian nationality and to show why Hungarians came to America at different times. Then, I tried to picture their life here and their influence on the American scene. In doing this I have no thesis to propound; I am merely trying to present the facts. I admit that I was rather impressed myself with all that the Hungarians have done in New York in the Hungarian and American spheres, always remembering that they are such a small group. However, I was also saddened by the knowledge that so many Hungarian peasants who came here in the past lived such narrow lives, simply accumulating money for a return to Hungary without ever understanding the blessings of democracy or joining in the American cultural pattern. Fortunately, men like Joseph Pulitzer, Arpad Gerster, and the many others whose lives I have sketched, make up for these short-comings. Indeed, I accumulated a little information about so many people in my essay, that I might have called it "Smatterings of Ignorance" like Oscar Levant did in his book. However, for a bird's-eye view of Hungarian life in New York the reader may, I feel, profit from an examination of my essay. Whether or not the reader considers the Hungarian a desirable immigrant, I leave to him to decide after he has examined the record.

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