

BOSTON, SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1942

Glamour of Hungary Brought to America

Descendants of Magyars put in predicament by alliance of native land with Axis—Younger generation in America strongly pro-Ally—Some disloyal elements found—Kossuth's valor cherished.

Americans at War
Thirtieth of 48 Articles

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In practically every American industrial center are found Hungarian settlements. They consist mostly of workers who used to be peasants. These constitute one of the most loyal groups in the United States. Their contribution to the Arsenal of Democracy, the Navy of Democracy, and the Army of Democracy is of a high order. Among the Americans of Hungarian origin, in addition to these workers, are also found "intellectuals," such as artists, actors, clerics, lawyers, professors, journalists. Some of these are disloyal to America in this war. They are against a victory of the United Nations.

One of the most popular and spectacular visits to the United States ever made by a foreigner, was that of Louis Kossuth, a Hungarian revolutionist, who fought for democracy. When Kossuth landed here, scores of thousands of Americans lined the streets to greet him and he was honored by the United States Congress with an almost unprecedented cordiality. This Hungarian champion of liberty seemed to personify the ideals and aspirations of all forward-looking Americans.

At that time Abraham Lincoln was beginning his crusade. Walt Whitman was exalting the plain man, William Lloyd Garrison was shouting for emancipation, and ardent young Americans believed all men might become free. Kossuth, the romantic fighter against wrong, naturally became their hero. He has won a place in American hearts beside Lafayette and Garibaldi.

Glamorous Kossuth

He is also loved by his own people, the Hungarians. He is the most popular figure in modern Hungarian history. More streets and squares have been named after him and more statues raised to him than to any other Hungarian, not excluding the adored king, St. Stephan. Almost every Hungarian, when in an inspired mood, wants to be a little Kossuth—or a big one.

The lure of the famous revolutionist is enhanced by the fact that he had a remarkable flair. He was glamorous. His beard, hair, costume, stature, sword would make Robin Hood seem tame and fill a Texan Ranger with envy.

Most persons like flashy figures—especially Hungarians and Americans. So Kossuth, in both his glamour and his fight for freedom, showed how much Hungarians and Americans have in common. Most Hungarian immigrants have felt much at home here.

Most of them came to escape hard conditions. The Hungarians were being oppressed by Hungarians. It is to be recalled that most racial groups in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were repressed and exploited by the two dominant nationalities, the Germans and the Hungarians. It is not strange that Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Slovenes, Rumanians, Czechs, and Ruthenians came to America to escape the yoke of foreigners.

Escape From Yoke

Some of them had so long been humiliated and de-nationalized by their masters that they were ashamed of their own origins. Ukrainians on landing here often said they were Austrians or Poles; Slovaks sometimes registered themselves as Hungarians or Russians. But the Hungarian immigrants were of the master race, and lived in a rich, highly favored country. Yet, they, too, ran away, so as to escape their own Hungarian feudal yoke.

Many of them arrived extremely poor and began to work at humble tasks. They were common laborers and belonged to a mass of the commonest laborers. In their own

land, Germans had done most of the work requiring skill.

These untrained Hungarian descendants of serfs, from a land where serfdom was not abolished until 1848, found hope in America, even though their work in mines and foundries was hard, the hours of toil long, and living conditions drab. They have worked their way up. Their children have mingled with the children of all other American groups and enjoy an equal share of the goods and conveniences and chances, falling to America's plain people.

If one should listen to any of the Hungarian-language radio hours, which are filled with personal references to family gatherings, parties, birthdays and weddings, he would hear the names of many young Hungarians, but he wouldn't know the bearers are Hungarians, for the names are Tom, Mary, Lou, John, Beth, and other common American cognomens.

Americanization

The children don't want "funny" names or "funny" costumes. They Americanize themselves. Poles Americanize them, Italians Americanize them, Swedes Americanize them; they all Americanize one another. Freedom and tolerance and the sweeping away of boundaries make them all Americans.

Marton Himler, the leading publisher of Hungarian-language papers, whose headquarters are in Detroit, told this writer that he receives hundreds of letters from factory workers and miners of Hungarian origin, assuring him that they are glad to make any sacrifice for America. Whatever they may have to forgo, many write, they are better off here than they would be any place else. These are sincere letters, from earnest people.

Such new Americans of all nationality origins usually refer to the U. S. as Uncle Sam, each language group using its own word for "Uncle."

This informal, intimate conception of America is helpful for our newer citizens. Their old country may still be considered a "motherland" or "fatherland," so it seems to them especially appropriate to look upon America at first as an "Uncle," a rather genial, good-natured, not very pompous uncle. Sam has no more devoted nephews and nieces than these children of Magyar.

Revel in Drama

And no more delightful ones. They are temperamental. They revel in the drama, movies, songs, and dances. They eat well; indeed, often elaborately. They like holidays, jaunty costumes and flashing colors, that stream from ribbons or glisten from folds and ruffles and bows. They delight in heightened effects, and give themselves with extreme ardor to sport, or hospitality or polemics or nationalism. They curtsy low, their eyes are bright, their boots shine, the fire in their words is fierce, the honey in them equally sweet. Their goulash is hot, their hearts warm. When they gather together all make eloquent speeches; when supremely happy, they cry. At such moments they all imagine they are heroes.

When I'm in Texas I think of Hungary. When among Hungarians, I think of Texas. Strange to say, the boldest Texas cowboys wear ladies' boots; the hardest Magyar cowboys wear ladies' blouses. Texans exaggerate with the brims of their 10-gallon hats; Hungarians with the crowns of theirs. Both are men of the plains, attached to saddles.

Yet, with all this similarity and this deep loyalty, the Americans of Hungarian descent have a vital problem, for the present Hungarian government is at war

with America. It has formally opened war against us. Also, while Hungary fights against us, aiding those trying to effect our humiliation and destruction, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are on our side. They are making extreme sacrifices to aid us. So, if our side wins, it is unthinkable that Hungary, our enemy, will be favored to the disadvantage of our Allies and in violation of elemental rights. Therefore, in helping America win through, the Americans of Hungarian origin are opposing America's enemy, Hungary.

In this dilemma, the mass of the Americans of Hungarian origin have taken their stand unequivocally and unconditionally. Of the new generation, 90 per cent have only one country; that's America. Sam is not only their Uncle, but their Father and Mother. These younger Hungarian-Americans are coming to be the ones who count most. It is significant that when a Hungarian-language paper has something important to say, it often says it in English. Young Bill Polya from "Little Hungary," Detroit, has no more loyalty to Horthy's feudalistic state than Bill Jones of Denver.

However, there is a group of editors, lawyers, clergymen, professors and other "white-collared" Hungarians here, some nationalized and others alien, who are disloyal. A small percentage of them are out and out pro-Nazi, others are just pro-Horthy and want to restore a dominant Hungary with 10,000,000 subject people.

There are no fewer than 45 current Hungarian-language publications in the United States. Most are weekly, a few are dailies. They ap-

pear in most of the industrial centers east of the Mississippi, many of them in Ohio. The chief Hungarian center is in New York City. One of the best New York Hungarian papers, Az Ember, has headed its chief article on the front page since Pearl Harbor with such titles as "Let Freedom Ring," "Forward to Victory," "Why We Shall Win," "Washington at Valley Forge."

Press Divided

These excellently written articles show as much loyalty to America's cause as anything appearing in the American press. They set a high standard. Approximately 10 other Hungarian-language papers write somewhat in the same spirit.

More than half the papers are rather neutral, meaning they would like to see both America and Hungary win. However, one group is decidedly against a victory of the United Nations. Then, there are a few Hungarian language papers that are openly pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic. They print material similar to that of Goebbels. At least one of them has gone so far as to urge American-Hungarians to listen to the Nazi radio from Budapest, to call the President "Rosenfeld," and to predict that Hitler would come here and drive him out. Such men, of course, are traitors. Some of them are aliens, in addition.

Also, the chief American-Hungarian organization in America, through its leaders, has expressed itself unequivocally and repeatedly in favor of the complete restoration of St. Stephen's kingdom. That means the permanent annihilation of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Spokesmen for this organization,

have publicly attacked other Hungarian-Americans, who are working for real Danubian co-operation, on a basis of racial equality, and called them the same offensive names Goebbels himself uses. This Hungarian organization is closely affiliated with an extremely nationalistic, anti-democratic organization in Budapest, supported by the Hungarian pro-Nazi government.

An "Independent Hungary" movement, supported by this chief American-Hungarian organization has been launched under the leadership of Tibor Eckhardt, who has come here direct from Hungary and is carrying on unceasing propaganda against some of the Allies of the United States. Mr. Eckhardt's activity as shown by his words and deeds, serves to hinder a triumph for America and its loyal associates in this war.

Is it still necessary to repeat that Hitler is a Nazi, that he is opposed to democracy and that his agents are opposed to democracy? The present Hungarian government is his agent and all who cooperate with it in working for a restoration of St. Stephen's Kingdom are his helpers. They are America's enemies.

Americans can well be proud of the loyalty accorded it by the half million Hungarians who came here to escape Hungarian feudalism. It honored itself in honoring the magnificent Kossuth. Will it shame itself now by harboring foreigners or naturalized agents, trying to prevent the United States from maintaining a world in which the democracy that Kossuth championed may thrive?

