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House Group Acts to Save Feleky Books

By Richard L. Lyons
Post Reporter

The West may have scored a gain in the Cold War as the result of a little-noticed hearing at the Capitol yesterday.

A House Administration subcommittee informally agreed that the Feleky collection of books on Hungary should be preserved intact.

Most people probably never heard of Feleky or his collection. But to Hungarian-Americans and Hungarians everywhere such a decision would be great news. They consider the collection—said to be the finest outside the Iron Curtain—as a symbol of a free Hungary, and its preservation a propaganda counterbelow to contrast with the Communists' rewriting of books in Hungary today.

40-Year Collection

Charles Feleky, Hungarian-born musical director who came to America as a young man, spent 40 years collecting every book on Hungary he could find. When he died in New York in 1930 the collection numbered 6600 volumes and thousands of pamphlets, clippings and letters.

It contained "all books relative to Hungary written in English since the year 1562," according to the American Hungarian Federation, and is "the only compilation of its kind outside Hungary."

After Feleky's death, his collection was made the nucleus of the Hungarian Reference Library in New York. When war came, however, the Alien Property Custodian took over the library. The collection was stored in crates until last November when the Library of Congress purchased the 6600 books.

The library announced the collection would be broken up and the volumes scattered on its shelves according to subject matter. The library said it didn't have the space to set up little libraries for every collection it obtained. Also it's easier for the researcher to look on one shelf for the book he wants instead of going from one collection to another.

Hungarian-American groups urged that the collections be kept intact. Their arguments were in effect: Communists are rewriting Hungary's history books; only by preserving such collections as this can the true picture of Hungarian culture be

preserved against the day when Hungary will be free again to correct the record. Also they argued that if America breaks up the collection, Hungary's Communist masters would tell her people: "You see, the Americans who are supposed to be the guardians of freedom aren't interested in your national story."

Last month Rep. Francis P. Bolton (R-Ohio) got interested. Since the Library couldn't keep the collection intact, she introduced a bill authorizing its sale to a private organization that would make it available to the public. Hearings were held on her bill yesterday.

