

AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION
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Washington 6, D.C.

STATEMENT

presented by Mr. Stephen E. Balogh, Executive Director,
American Hungarian Federation to the Subcommittee on
Library, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.
June 30, 1953

Mr. Chairman:
Honorable Members of the Congress:

Thank you for your deeply appreciated courtesy in extending the opportunity and time for my appearance before your Committee.

I am the Executive Director of the American Hungarian Federation, a non-profit, voluntary, citizens agency with its headquarters in Washington, D. C. This Federation was incorporated in the State of Ohio in 1907. The constituents of the Federation are the churches and congregations affiliated with Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish church bodies; national fraternal organizations; Hungarian language daily newspapers; weekly, monthly magazines and periodicals; Hungarian language radio broadcast services; state, district and local level civic, patriotic, cultural, welfare and similar type charitable organizations.

The approximate overall membership of this Federation numbers more than a half million. Our services are maintained by voluntary subscriptions, organizational and individual contributions. The aims and purposes of this Federation are to defend the Constitution of the United States and to maintain the principles of our American democracy through patriotic, civic and cultural services rendered in behalf of our constituent organizations.

I was still the pastor of one of the largest American Hungarian Reformed Churches at Chicago, Southside in 1938 when I received a personal letter from Mrs. Antoinette Feleky, the widow of Mr. Charles Feleky and the heir of the "Hungarian Reference Library". Mrs. Feleky, a distinguished psychologist, author and lecturer, left her studies at Columbia University and devoted all her time to the care of this unique collection. It was 15 years ago this year that I got acquainted with the "Hungarian Reference Library", which includes more than 2,000 rare books, dating from the 16th century to the present time. This great library was created by a traveling conductor who devoted 40 years of his life to become the greatest scientist in Hungarian-English-American relationship, to whom college professors came from all over the world for specialized information. His collection contains all books, including translations, relative to Hungary written in English since the year 1582, as well as innumerable periodicals and pamphlets. One of its most valuable possessions is the oldest British newspaper in existence. An early issue of the "Weekly News" (1620-1621) in which a long article appears on Gabor Bethlen, ruling Prince of Transylvania, a champion of religious liberty.

As Mr. Stephen Duggan, a distinguished author and American analyst, has stated in his article which appeared in the publication of the "Society of Hungarian Quarterly": "the "Hungarian Reference Library" contains about: "6,000 volumes, 10,000 magazine articles, extracted from nearly 800 magazines, bound in book form; there are 31 cases of rare pamphlets as well as collections of letters, manuscripts and pictures. In fact material on all the arts and sciences is contained in this unusual collection." Study of the records shows for example, that the oldest registered student at Oxford University was a Hungarian, Nikolas de Hungaria, to whom Richard, the Lion-Hearted, gave a scholarship "of not less than one half golden marks" as the Pipe Rolls document states. Nikolas de Hungaria was the first scholar

at Oxford whose name has been preserved, other students being listed only 100 years later." Naturally, no one can write about Hungary or the Hungarians unless the rest of the world is mentioned. Since there is no such thing as an absolutely isolated nation, consequently, every library is a history of the world and its civilization. The "Hungarian Reference Library" is a specialized library of Central Europe which includes Hungary, Austria, Germany, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania, and it also includes the British Empire, America, Asia, Central America, etc. It contains an inexhaustible wealth of material that could be tapped to furnish subject matter for thousands of research scholars. As Mrs. Feleky stated in her publication printed in 1938: "the collection is a virgin territory for those who are interested in exploring a field more or less neglected in the past."

The American Hungarian Federation and myself are convinced that the "Hungarian Reference Library" serves the interchange of cultural values between the United States of America and Hungary. It fosters mutual knowledge and understanding of the cultural achievements of the two countries, acquainting each with the fine arts, music, drama, poetry and other artistic, scientific and educational achievements of the two nations.

Since I firmly believe that the "Hungarian Reference Library" was established to document the friendliest feelings of the Hungarian nation toward the United States and it became a specialized research source on Hungary in America, to me it represents a cultural token and trust. The fact that unfortunately situated Hungary was dragged into World War II, and consequently, is now cut off from the West makes it even more important that this expression of the real feelings of the millions of anti-Communist Hungarian souls should be fairly respected and safeguarded in the United States.

That is my reason why I contacted Dr. Luther Evans, Librarian of the Library of Congress and requested a personal interview on February 25 of this year for myself and for our outstanding historian, the Reverend Edmund Vasvary of Washington, D. C. Our purpose was to inquire about the planned disposition of the "Hungarian Reference Library" recently transferred from the Columbia University to the care of your Librarian. Dr. Evans' office informed me that his appointment schedule precluded such meeting and we ~~were~~ referred to Mr. Kurth, Acting Chief of the Order Division. He informed me that the Library intends to follow the policy of *dividing* ~~segregating~~ this collection and integrate the books into the general collection, and that they are determined to disperse the material of the "Hungarian Reference Library" "in the usual manner".

I stated repeatedly both orally and in writing that this homogenous unit should not be dispersed since this is the only compilation of its kind in existence outside of Hungary, a country presently behind the Iron Curtain. A plan to integrate this unit with the existing collections of the Library would forever preclude its reconstitution to the original entity. I firmly believe that in the present psychological world tension the "Hungarian Reference Library" symbolizes and represents an authentic collection of the Hungarian culture free from Communist ideology. I maintain that it would be a very important and effective cultural service to preserve the integrity of this collection under the protection of the Library of Congress. While the past masters of the Communist poison-propaganda contaminate the minds, falsify documents and books, abolish the traditions and culture of their satellite nations, we, the United States, who are the guardians of world freedom can and must afford protection to the invaluable cultural documents of a Communist victim nation. A scattered collection can never serve this purpose.

The dispersion of this Library "to the appropriate subject classes" as the Library of Congress officials state will simply kill the "Hungarian Reference Library", - instead of adding any value to the "concentration of Hungarian culture". The nature of the material contained in the "Hungarian Reference Library" is such that most of the books have been written on varied subjects and their special in-

terest is often a single chapter or sentence referring to something Hungarian. This Library is only valuable if the books stay in rows, on the same shelves and the research worker is admitted to these rows where he can find in them a unique network of information.

It is a very fair estimate to state that out of the 4,000 English language volumes of the "Hungarian Reference Library", the Library of Congress already possesses at least 3,600. So, ultimately, the Library of Congress would be enriched with the maximum of 300-400 volumes. The rest will be classed as duplicates and offered for sale and exchange. In other words, they will be really dispersed throughout the world. There is no earthly means by which a research worker, i.e., interested in Hungarian animal husbandry could again find those works in which special animals of Hungary are mentioned unless he reads all books on zoology in the Library of Congress. The books on Bulgaria or Serbia, but in some pages relative to Hungarian problems, can never again be integrated into a wonderful background which is the unique value of this collection, not to mention the Western books which naturally will be hopelessly dispersed.

A person who happens to know each book and that there is something for his specialized studies in those books can ask for them by title or author in the reading rooms of the Library and would have a chance of getting those books again, but if he just happens to look for special Hungarian material, there will be no living person able to point out to him where it is.

The Library officials promised "the same care for the "Hungarian Reference Library" as for other cultural documents".

The question is who can decide what is a cultural document? As a rule the Library of Congress does not consider bundles of incomplete periodicals, packages of clippings, heaps of pamphlets, travel leaflets, pictures and posters as documents. There is a natural tendency to discard such a material to be pulped. Yet an infinitely valuable, irreplaceable part of the "Hungarian Reference Library" is such material. It is uncatalogued and as far as I know, the existing listing is of no value. Whom will the Library charge with the work of selection? As far as I know, the Library has not a single Hungarian expert trained in Hungarian history or philology who could be trusted to make competent decisions.

These are my reasons why I asked Dr. Evans that the whole "Hungarian Reference Library" should be kept separately like the Slavic, Spanish, Hebrew and similar collections. Or if this cannot be done, then the Library of Congress should select from the "Hungarian Reference Library's" material those volumes which it does not already possess and since this will be only a small portion of the books, the rest of the material should be given to our Federation which is competent to preserve the entirety of this material. This would give the Library of Congress everything it wants, yet not destroy wholly and uselessly the "Hungarian Reference Library".

On March 20, 1953, I addressed an appeal to this effect to Mr. Verner Clapp, Chief Assistant Librarian, who stated in his April 3rd answer to me "that this request raises several questions which must be resolved before the Library can give me a final answer, but that I may be assured that in the meantime, this suggestion will receive careful consideration."

It was at this point that Dr. Joseph Remenyi, a professor of Comparative Literature at Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, contacted Mrs. Frances P. Bolton who graciously introduced HR 5472 to authorize the Library of Congress to sell the "Hungarian Reference Library" to a non-profit group which will preserve this collection intact for public use.

The Board of Directors of our Federation held a special meeting in Washington, D. C. on June 18, 1953 and unanimously recorded their gratitude for the understanding and graciousness of Mrs. Bolton who is loved and respected by the thousands of her Cleveland Hungarian constituents.

In behalf of the Board of Directors and the rank and file of the American Hungarian Federation, I respectfully request the Honorable Members of this Committee to consent to authorize and direct the Librarian of Congress to sell the "Hungarian Reference Library" to the American Hungarian Federation, a voluntary non-profit organization of the American citizens of Hungarian origin. This Federation is a responsible, incorporated agency of Americans of Hungarian descent which is able to provide for the adequate housing of this collection and thus will make it available for its original purpose, which is to serve as a nucleus for study and reference.

Feleky Károly

Kisérlet gyűjteménye
együtt tartására
és megmentésére

1953

Pivány Jenő levele
Mrs. Felekyhez, Bpest, 1931 Apr. 25
a gyűjtemény egy részének meg-
vételéről, Mrs. Feleky
ceruzával ráírt megjegyzéseivel.

11 db lap
5 db levél