

A KOSSUTH CENTENARY

On Dec. 7, 1851, the cannons boomed the church bells rang and the whistles of the boats in New York harbor went full blast as Louis Kossuth, Hungary's dauntless exile, stepped ashore at the battery. New Yorkers by the thousand gave him a wildy enthusiastic welcome, and we on THE NEW YORK TIMES can take pride in the fact that it was Henry J. Raymond, publisher of the newspaper which had been founded only three months before, who was the principal champion in America of the Magyar cause. For Raymond, Kossuth was a symbol of European liberty; he was also a good news story. A few years later when Kossuth went to live in England he contributed to this newspaper.

He caused so much excitement here because he symbolized something dear to Americans—the spirit of freedom. He was a strange genius and by no means all of a piece, a hero with feet of clay but a hero nevertheless by the judgment of history. He fought for Hungarian freedom, but would have repressed non-Magyar minorities in Hungary. He was arrogant, dictatorial, chauvinistic. Today when we see what a curse nationalism can be in the world we may wonder whether a man who gave his passionate life to the cause of European nationalism should be honored. But we do not honor him for his chauvinism but because he did, for all his faults, burn with the clear passion of freedom.

On Dec. 7, 1951, we read about a 323-page Hungarian White Book detailing 167 "hostile acts" of the United States against the Hungarian Communist regime. We also read about a continuation of the horrible deporta-

tions of middle-class elements from their homes by orders of this self-righteous and outraged Hungarian Government. We have likewise in mind the fact that the Hungarian Government is holding innocent Americans as prisoners because their airplane strayed, through some mischance, over Hungarian territory.

We do not know yet just what that regime calls our "hostile acts" but if Americans have any regrets it is more likely to be that the total was not 1,057 instead of only 157. We are not hostile to the Hungarian people; we are not hostile to Hungary—the real Hungary that we would honor today as we did a century ago when Louis Kossuth stepped ashore in Manhattan.

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