

# Despite Liberal Jewish Policy

The emigration law is one of two religious matters that continue to indirectly irritate unofficial U.S.-Hungarian relations at a time when official relations between the two countries are improving.

In churches, as well as in the Foreign Ministry here, there is lingering bitterness over the unwillingness of the United States to return the crown jewels of St. Stephen, Hungary's patron saint.

Legend has it that these ancient relics—a crown, scepter, orb and robe—were given to King Stephen almost a thousand years ago by the pope in gratitude for the king's conversion of his country to Catholicism. Today, the church says that about 60 per cent of this country's 10 million people are Catholics.

The crown jewels are much more than a religious symbol. They are also considered a national treasure.

They fell into American hands at the end of World War II and have been locked in a vault somewhere in the United States ever since. Officially, the United States has said for years only that it will give the jewels back when there is a "general improvement" in relations between the two countries.

Those relations were bad or nonexistent during the 1950s, much worse after the 1956 uprising was crushed by Soviet troops, and stayed poor until the late 1960s, a period during which the late Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty was in asylum at the U.S. embassy here.

Relations have improved since then. Next month the two countries are expected to sign an important new cultural and scientific exchange program, the first of its kind. Trade between the two countries has grown from some \$50 million a year in 1973 to more than \$110 million last year.

The U.S. possession of the jewels, however, is an issue that is tied up

with the deep emotions and political pressures of the 800,000 Hungarian-Americans, especially the 150,000 who fled to the West during the 1956 uprising.

The second presidential candidates' debate in which East European policy became an issue is apt to make it even harder to settle the jewels issue quietly, as the government here had hoped would happen soon.

"This is such a minor thing for Americans, but not for us. What does it mean for such a rich country to hold another's treasures so long after the war, and when other countries have had their treasures returned? What is the explanation?" a senior Hungarian official asked.

