

THE HUNGARIAN PRESS

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This is not true

Amerikai Magyar Nepszava has been (in existence since 1884,) first as a weekly under the name Amerikai Mennetor (American Vanguard). In 1889 it became a semiweekly, changed its name to Amerikai Magyar Nepszava, and in October, 1889, after merging with the weekly Magyar Hirado (Hungarian Herald), it became a daily, and has continued as such ever since.

Since 1928 Nepszava has been owned by Frank Wegrzynek, a Pole, who is also the owner of the Polish daily Nowy Swiat (New World). Curiously enough the name of the present owner, Wegrzynek, means in Polish "little Hungarian." Prior to 1928 the paper was owned and edited by Geza D. Berko, the survivor of the two Berko brothers who bought the paper in 1899 and effected the mergers. The younger brother died before the World War, and the elder brother, who edited the paper for twenty-eight years, became the dean of Magyar journalism in America. His generosity, his patriotism, and his consistent efforts to alleviate the lot of immigrants won him great popularity among the Hungarian masses. Berko visited Budapest every year and served faithfully what he considered to be the interest of his country, while remaining loyal at the same time to America. He gave employment to all newspapermen who arrived in America from Hungary, and paid fair salaries. He seldom netted a profit on the enterprise, and was often forced to borrow money in order to continue publication.



Nepszava began as a liberal newspaper devoted to the ideals of Louis Kossuth and fighting against the Hapsburg domination of Hungary.

In American politics the paper has supported Tammany Hall on local issues, but in national affairs its attitude has differed in various periods, depending on specific conditions and the shifting allegiances of the editors and publishers. Its support in the past has been given to both Democrats and Republicans; at present it favors the policies of the Democratic Administration.

Nepszava has been friendly to the Horthy government in Budapest since the end of the World War, although protesting against its anti-semitic excesses and its alliance with Nazi Germany. During the September, 1938, crisis involving Czechoslovakia, the paper adhered to its traditional policy of Hungarian nationalism and greeted the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia with the joyous conclusion that at last the Magyar hopes for the return of the territories lost as a result of the World War were being realized. However, the return of former Hungarian territories after the Munich pact did not change Nepszava's unfriendly attitude toward the Third Reich. Ever since Hitler prevented Hungary from obtaining a common frontier with Poland by occupying the Czechoslovak province of Carpatho-Russia, Nepszava has been carrying on a campaign against him. It also labels the Nazi persecution of Jews as "barbaric" and "inhuman". Although opposed to all radical ideas, the paper has taken a benevolent attitude toward union organization.

Nepszava has editorial offices at Budapest, Hungary, where it is represented by Dr. Andor Kun, an authority on Magyar political affairs.

Its daily issue comprises six pages. On Sundays it contains a literary section and lengthy articles on world events, as well as comics, stories, of Hollywood and Broadway, and other light topics.

Frank Wegrzynek acquired the paper (1928) when it became insolvent, through the Metropolitan News Company, distributors of foreign-language newspapers in New York. He found, however, that it was a losing venture. Some readers resented the fact that their paper had come into non-Hungarian hands, and, since the change, the circulation had dropped to 12,000, whereas at its peak, in post-war years, it was as high as 40,000. The new owner repeatedly tried to obtain a subsidy from the Hungarian Government, finally, in 1931, the paper received \$300 a month for about ten months. Regent Horthy later granted Wegrzynek a decoration, and the subsidy was withdrawn.

Among the editors and staff contributors to Nepszava during the forty years of its existence were such outstanding personalities in Magyar-American journalism as Dr. Michael Singer; Martin Dienes, who was a member of the Hungarian Parliament and editor of a Budapest daily; Joseph Yartin, a veteran Hungarian journalist; Csokar Miklos; and Geza Kende.

During 1919 and 1920, the overthrow of the Hapsburg dynasty was followed in rapid succession by the resignation of the liberal republican government of Count Karolyi and the extinction of the Communist Bela Kun regime. The White Terror, otherwise known as the Horthy regime, raged in Hungary, but Nepszava took a rather lukewarm attitude toward the rising protests against its excesses.

Nepszava had no competitors until 1901, when the Cleveland Szabadsag (Freedom) made its appearance. This daily was founded by Tihamer Kohanyi and soon attained a reputation in the East as well as in the West. The feud between the two dailies developed into a three-cornered fight,

*) "Szabadsag" started much earlier, than the Nepszava in 1891.

when the Hungarian Socialists issued Elore (Forward) in 1903. No real reconciliation has ever been effected among these competitors.

Another attempt at publishing a Hungarian-language daily was essayed by Ignatz Kerekes, a book-store owner, who founded Egyetertes (Harmony) in 1916. He assembled the best professional staff he could find and issued an excellent journal, which carried on for nearly a year. Financial difficulties caused the publication to suspend early in 1917.

The next endeavor was sponsored by a group of ten Hungarian newspapermen and printers. Each contributed \$500 and worked without pay for more than a year. It was called Magyar Ujsag (Hungarian News), and had marked success in obtaining subscribers during the first six months of its existence (1924). Within a year its circulation had risen to 10,000. The receipts, however, were insufficient to defray expenses; soon dissension developed, and the paper had to cease publication.

The third effort was made by the same men in 1934, when they revived Magyar Ujsag in tabloid form. Though the paper was successful in this new form in the beginning, it passed out of existence in 1935, owing to lack of financial support.

The policies of these three defunct papers differed little from that of the present-day Amerikai Magyar Hepszava. They were more or less liberal concerning American policies, and advocated Americanization, but they all supported the national traditions and the policies of the Hungarian Government.

The official organ of more than a score of Hungarian social clubs, benefit societies, and fraternal orders is Egyleti Elet (Social Life), established as a weekly in 1925. Each organization pays Charles Brown,

the publisher and printer, a yearly subsidy varying from \$50 to \$200, in return for which it receives one or two columns of space and free copies of the paper for distribution among its members.

News and editorial matter is supplied by the secretaries of the supporting organizations, but editorials are written by the editor himself. The paper has a circulation of about 10,000, is issued in tabloid format, and contains from twelve to sixteen pages.

The Hungarian Labor Press

Magyar Jovo (Hungarian Future) is the paper read mainly by Hungarian Communists in New York. It made its appearance on December 15, 1938, as an anti-Fascist weekly, advocating a "united front" policy against aggressors. The paper calls itself a "Hungarian newspaper of progress."

It is the successor of a long list of labor papers, the first of which was Nepakarat (Will of the People) -- originally published in 1902, as a Hungarian workers' monthly and later as a semi-monthly - and of three dailies that followed it--the Socialist Elora, the Communist Uj Elora, and the Communist "united front" Amerikai Magyar Vilag (American Hungarian World).

Elora (Forward), a weekly labor publication, replaced the discontinued Nepakarat in 1912, and became the official organ of the Hungarian Socialist Party in the United States. In 1913 it became a daily, and in 1918 changed its name to Uj Elora (New Forward). When the Socialist Party split into two factions, the paper became the voice of the left-wing Socialists and, in 1919, the official organ of the Hungarian Communist Party in America. One of its

editors was John Lekay Leitner, who in 1917 attempted to kill Count Stephen Tisza, the Hungarian premier. (Count Tisza was assassinated in October, 1918, by persons whose identities were never established). He spent a year in a Budapest prison before being liberated by the Communist regime under Bela Kun. Upon the fall of the Communist government and the establishment of the military dictatorship under Admiral Horthy, he escaped (1919) to Vienna and later to America, where he edited Uj Elors until his death in 1927.

Uj Elors reached its peak between 1918 and 1920, when its daily circulation amounted to 25,000. As interest in communism declined, the circulation decreased until toward the end it had no more than 10,000 readers. It was in constant financial difficulties, for, as an ultraradical paper, it was unable to attract advertisers.

When the Communist International established the "popular front" policy in 1935, the paper was moved to Cleveland; shortly afterward it suspended, but later reappeared as a "popular front" daily under a new name. Early in 1937 it was brought back to New York, where it sought the co-operation of Socialists, liberals, and other elements it had hitherto bitterly attacked as "social-fascist" and "bourgeois reactionaries." Under its new name, Amerikai Magyar Vilag (American Hungarian World), it was edited by Csarkar Miklos. The transformation proved unsuccessful, as many of its readers refused to go along with the now more moderate Vilag, preferring the old uncompromising policy of Uj Elors. The Socialists, on the other hand, considered the transformation as a ruse, being suspicious of "people's front" as advocated by the Communist International. The conservative element in the Hungarian colony was enjoined by the clergy and other influential authorities to ignore the revamped paper.

Vilag soon found itself isolated, with its circulation unable to rise above the initial 7,000, and it was forced to suspend in November, 1938. Through a previously arranged chattel mortgage, however, it kept its printing plant, and, with its basic capital formed a press committee to raise funds from leftist and Communist groups throughout the country, in order to make it possible "for this labor organ to continue its struggle against fascism." In this manner \$10,000 was collected, and the first issue of Vilag's successor, Magyar Jovo, appeared in December, 1938, published by the Hungarian Daily Journal Publishing Company. It started as an eight-page weekly edited by John Nagy, a member of the editorial staff on each of the preceding publications, and from the beginning enjoyed a circulation of 7,000. Well edited, it carries illustrations and cartoons usually reprinted from American Communist publications (Daily Worker, New Masses, and others). It also publishes news from Hungary, as well as topics of international importance, and reports of events occurring in the United States. It has a women's section, a department devoted to health and hygiene, sports items, news of workers' organizations, and a club column.

Although the paper claims that it is not a Communist organ, its attitude toward recent European events--and particularly its uncritical defense of Soviet Russia--follows to the latter the line of most Communist publications.

Another labor paper, A Munkas (the Worker), established in 1909, is the organ of the Hungarian Socialist Labor Party in America (not to be confused with the larger and more influential Socialist Party). It is edited by Alexander Kudlik, the national secretary of the party, and appears every Saturday in four pages. It propagates the principles of Daniel De Leon, one of the first proponents of Marxian socialism in America and leader of the first organization of the Industrial Workers of the World.

A Munkas, faithful to its rigid doctrinarism, is not enthusiastic about the social-reform measures of the Roosevelt administration. Work Projects Administration projects, according to this publication, merely succeed in pauperizing the working class. The group represented by this paper is opposed to the American Federation of Labor and its leadership, which they believe has betrayed the real interests of the workers. However, it maintains this same view with regard to the Congress of Industrial Organizations and John L. Lewis. The paper is mainly concerned with news from all sections of America, particularly articles dealing with the labor problems.

The basic idea of the paper is expressed by the slogan carried in the right-hand corner of the front page: "Complete Abolition of the Wage System." This paper approves the foreign policy of Soviet Russia.

The Hungarian Liberal Weekly

The liberal Az Ember is generally considered to be the most important Hungarian weekly in America. It circulates in every country where Hungarians live, with the exception of Hungary, where it is banned by the authorities. Read by intellectuals as well as by educated workers, it represents Hungarian culture in exile and is followed closely by government

circles in Budapest. Its collaborators and contributors are drawn from the best writers of Hungary--those who find it impossible to get along with totalitarian rule and who are devoted to the struggle for democracy and civil rights.

Ferenc Gondor, the editor and publisher of Az Ember, is a progressive journalist with no special party affiliations. After escaping from Hungary in 1919, he found refuge in Vienna where for five years he published his weekly magazine. It had previously appeared in Hungary for a number of years, gaining a reputation for its courage and its staunch defense of liberal principles and the labor movement. Throughout its career in Vienna, the magazine attacked the White Terror in Hungary and the anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist policies of the Horthy government. In 1926 Gondor came to America and established his publication here.

During the years of his exile, the editor of Az Ember has been repeatedly sentenced--in absentia--by the Hungarian courts to years of hard labor, because of his articles exposing conditions in the homeland. He is still being subjected to court procedure, usually on the charge of "insulting the Hungarian nation." While in Vienna he was kidnapped by emissaries of the Budapest government, who forced him into an automobile, intending to take him to Hungary. He escaped, however, shortly before reaching the frontier.

During the time it was published in Budapest, the magazine appeared in editions of 60,000 copies. In Vienna it reached a circulation of 30,000, but in New York its reading public has fallen to 3,000.

Az Ember, has inveighed principally against political corruption. It has fought nazi-ism and fascism, as well as Communist dictatorship. At the start of its career the magazine was a Socialist organ, but at present it could be best characterized as a Hungarian duplicate of the New York Nation.

Az Ember publishes very little material that can be described as news stories, most of its copy being commentaries in the form of articles. It has correspondents in the principal European capitals, and its make-up is European rather than American.

The fervent attachment of this paper to the sanctuary its editors and publishers found in America is almost lyrically expressed in an editorial entitled "Hail America", of September 9, 1939.

Roman Catholic Press

Among the papers having a fairly large circulation in New York, although not published in this city, although not published in this city, particular mention should be made of the weekly Jo Pasztor (the Good Shepherd). It was formerly published in New York, but moved to Cleveland early in 1928. According to Post Office figures, it prints 12,000 copies. It is a violently anti-Semitic organ and publishes all the propaganda material it receives from the Hungarian-Language Press Bureau in Berlin. Sponsored by a group of Catholic clergymen, sympathetic toward the Father Coughlin movement, it also publishes much news concerning Roman Catholic Church affairs.

Early Beginnings

The earlier Hungarian newspapers had great difficulty in establishing and maintaining themselves, and invariably they ceased publication within a year or two. Only two papers, using perhaps shrewder methods to raise funds, managed to survive. Resorting to every conceivable

device in order to exist, they conducted "colonization" campaigns, sold real estate in Florida, organized excursions to the old country, ran beauty contests, arranged balls, promoted theatrical enterprises, and brought over theatrical stars and Gypsy leaders from Hungary. Most of these financial enterprises were based upon the sentimental attachment of the immigrants to the land of birth and its cultural traditions.

The first Hungarian-language paper on record in New York, the Magyar Szamuzottek Lapja (Hungarian Gazette of Political Exiles), made its initial appearance in October, 1853. Its aim was to voice the political theories and aspirations of the Hungarian exiles who found a haven in America after the collapse of the 1848 revolution, and for the establishment of a liberal constitution. The organizers of this paper, sixty in all, were writers, artists, professors, and ex-officers--all associates of Louis Kossuth, leader of the insurrection. The paper was discontinued after six weeks, for the handful of emigres were unable to support its publication.

The second attempt at Hungarian journalism in New York was made in June, 1879, when Magyar Amerika (Hungarian America) appeared under the editorship of William N. Loew and Arkad Mogyorossy. Loew, later a lawyer, poet, and translator of Hungarian literature into English, was also for many years one of the leading figures in the Hungarian colony. Mogyorossy, his assistant on Magyar Amerika, published many Latin textbooks used in schools and universities throughout the world; he wrote them under the pseudonym "Arcadius Avellanus." Magyar Amerika, literary in character, appeared but twice, and was the first Hungarian newspaper to be published in both English and Magyar.

A more successful effort was made in February, 1864, when Amerikai Nemzetor started publication as a monthly and, after a year, was transformed into a weekly. This organ was the first link between the Hungarian colonies of New York, Cleveland, and several other cities. At that time there were no more than 3,000 Hungarians in America.

Nemzetor advertised itself as being the "only paper in the United States of America published in the Magyar language." It served the immigrants well by pointing out the dangers that threatened them from all sides, particularly from various fraudulent agencies that flourished during that period. It was edited by Gustave Erdelyi, the first professional Magyar newspaperman in New York, and published, until 1889, by Schnitzer Brothers, a German-American firm which also issued a German weekly. In that year Nemzetor changed ownership and adopted a new name, Amerikai Magyar Nepszava.

Magyar Hirado made its appearance in 1893, at a time when mass immigration of Hungarians was at its height. It was founded by Dr. Michael Singer, Dr. Henry Baracs, and Count Herman Zichy, an aristocrat who had left Hungary because of differences with his family.

Shortly after the absorption of Hirado by Nepszava, a new weekly appeared, Bevandorlo (the Immigrant), under the editorship of Dr. Michael Singer. This newspaper soon developed into a prosperous publication, appearing on sixteen pages and carrying, a large number of American items in addition to news from Hungary. It was nationalist in policy but contributed much toward the Americanization of recent immigrants. By this time the newcomers had begun to pay more attention to social and political conditions in America,

but they were mainly interested in reports concerning working conditions and wages in various parts of the country. This contributed to the shifting of Hungarian settlements from one industrial center to the other, and mining and steel companies paid large sums to agencies that directed workers to their districts.

Evandorlo, which started with a few hundred subscribers, boasted in 1910-1911 a circulation of 20,000, the highest figure ever achieved by a Hungarian weekly. Evandorlo gained an excellent reputation; it soon became the most important Hungarian-language newspaper of that era, even after two dailies, the New York Amerikai Magyar Napszava and the Cleveland daily Szabadseg (Liberty), made their appearance. Early in the twentieth century, however, these dailies began to make inroads upon the circulation of Evandorlo, and in 1907 it ceased publication.

Out-of-Town Papers in the New York Area

In addition to the newspapers treated above, there are nine weeklies in various towns of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. The majority of these are old-established papers. The oldest is Hirnok (Messenger), of New Brunswick, which was founded about 1910. This newspaper carries more advertising than any other Hungarian-language paper, not excluding the daily newspapers, although its circulation does not exceed that of other out-of-town weeklies.

Hirnok, like the other weeklies, was established with little or no capital by immigrants who had no journalistic experience. Newspapers of this type survive on the bounty of social organizations and individual merchants, together with the subscriptions (\$2 a year), which average no more than 1,000 a year for each publication.

Bridgeport, the Hungarian newspaper issued from Bridgeport, Connecticut, is frankly pro-Fascist and pro-Nazi. It is published by Cornelius Csongrady, an erstwhile linotype operator. The newspaper under its new name Testveriség (Brotherhood) receives the support of the local priest, Father Cserniczky, and his congregation.

Newark Hirlet (Newark News), originally the personal publication of Charles Wisler, a well-to-do Newark manufacturer, is now the joint defender of communism and the Roman Catholic Church and enjoys a measure of popularity and prosperity by means of this rather startling combination. It is an eight-page publication carrying a vast amount of church news. Its editor, Dr. Acs, who succeeded Charles ^E Wisler, has managed to make the paper the favorite organ of Hungarian Roman Catholics in Newark, Linden, New Brunswick, and small towns scattered throughout New Jersey.

The Perth Amboy Hirado (Herald), established 1929 by a former restaurateur and real estate broker, is a four-page tabloid carrying news and church, social, and personal notes, without any political coloration or national policy.

Two other papers published in New Jersey, Fuggetlenseg (Independence) and Jersey Hirado (Jersey Herald), are the largest Hungarian-language weeklies in that State. They are somewhat better patronized by advertisers than are the majority of the other Hungarian weeklies. Both papers are, however, personal organs of the editors and publish little original material, contenting themselves with clippings from the Hungarian-American dailies and newspapers received from Hungary. Politically they

maintain an American conservative patriotism and support Hungarian nationalist policies.

Although published in the large city of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Fuggetlenseg (Philadelphia Independence) shares the general characteristics of the small city weeklies, with the difference that one of its eight tabloid pages appears in English, material being supplied by a syndicate.

Summation

Though the Hungarian press may at present have a certain hold over itsreaders outside of New York, its future is problematical. Like almost all foreign-language newspapers, it is slowly losing its readers to the English-language press, as the first generation of Hungarian-speaking people is dying out and is not being replaced by a sufficient number of new immigrants.

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(Valószínűleg az Amer.
m. Népszóval)

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