

FOREWORD

Whether a "melting pot" or a "mosaic," America did serve for centuries as a haven of refuge for many of the poor, the persecuted and the dispossessed. Some of these refugees came in colonial days, or in the early days of the Republic. Others, however, did not discover the advantages offered by this "Land of Liberty" until the second half of the nineteenth century. To the latter group belonged the Hungarians or the Magyars, whose mass immigration began only in the mid-1870s, and reached its climax in the decade immediately prior to World War I. In fact, during some of the pre-war years (1905-1907), the annual number of immigrants from Hungary hovered in the vicinity of 150,000.

While many of the available statistics are unreliable, incomplete, contradictory, and do not contain information on the illegal immigrants, the number of those who have left Hungary for the United States since the beginning of the Great Migration may be as high as 2,300,000. But because historic Hungary prior to 1918 was a multinational state, not all of these immigrants were Magyar speaking. Many of them came from the ranks of Hungary's non-Magyar national minorities, such as the Slovaks, Ruthenians, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, and Germans. Moreover, when conditions permitted--especially in the two decades prior to World War I--some of them (perhaps as many as twenty percent of the total) returned to the land of their birth.

Like most nationalities who immigrated in great numbers, the Magyars also came to the United States in several waves and for a variety of reasons. In the three centuries before the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849, their numbers were few, and their ranks included mostly travelers, adventurers and soldiers of fortune--some of whom participated in the American Revolutionary War. Following the defeat of the Revolution of 1848-1849, several thousand came as political emigrés. Most of these stayed and made respectable careers for themselves. About 800 of these political emigrés (including seven generals, fifteen colonels, and fourteen majors) fought on the side of the North in the Civil War.

While Hungarians did have some impact on American society even in these early centuries, mass immigration and mass impact did not begin until the 1870s, when economic considerations--mostly agricultural overpopulation and the promise of quick money--prompted many of them

to come. During the next four decades nearly two million immigrants (at least 80% of the Hungarian citizens who ended up in the United States) came to this country. Of these, close to 95% were in the category of small farmers ("dwarf holders"), landless farm hands, unskilled industrial workers, day laborers, and domestic servants, and thus they represented basically the most disadvantaged segment of Hungary's population.

The next wave of immigrants, who came during the 1920s and early 1930s, were also driven largely by economic considerations. They hoped to escape from the hardships of post-World War I mutilated Hungary. But among these immigrants, the percentage of skilled workers and professionals was much higher. They were followed in the late 1930s by a relatively small number of mostly educated people and highly trained professionals who were fleeing from the impending terrors of Nazism; then by the more numerous political emigrants (DP's) of the post-World War II period, the majority of whom were in the category of middle class, and represented interwar Hungary's civilian bureaucracy, military establishment, as well as much of her technological and literary intelligentsia; and finally by the even more numerous, and even more technologically oriented immigrants of the Revolution of 1956. Whereas the pre-World War I immigrants were primarily low-skilled workers, who were simply a source of cheap labor for the American industrial establishment, the last three waves contained a large percentage of skilled workers and highly educated professionals who--along with the second and third generation descendants of the earlier immigrants--managed to put their mark on American society very quickly. Thus, in addition to several Nobel Prize winners and many others in the same category, today we have virtually thousands of Hungarian-American scholars, scientists, managers and artists who are associated with some of America's greatest universities, research institutes, corporations and other establishments, and whose contributions to American intellectual, scholarly, scientific, artistic and business life, and to American society in general are incalculable.

Although in comparison to their numbers, Hungarian contributions to American society rival those of many other nationalities or ethnic groups, the story of these contributions is far from adequately documented. In fact, we may even say that the history of the Hungarians in the United States, and the assessment of their contributions to the fabric of American civilization has been a stepchild of scholarly studies on both sides of the Atlantic.

One of the reasons for the relative lack of attention to the Hungarian-American past was the widespread lack of appreciation for

ethnic studies in general by professional scholars in the United States--even as late as the 1960s. This lack of scholarly attention resulted in the absence of organized source collections and adequate bibliographies which made it very difficult for any of the interested to get into the field. While the situation is still far from ideal, the past decade has seen a number of significant steps in the right direction. One of these developments has been the new emphasis on ethnic studies, and the resulting establishment of several archival library collections, including the Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota, which collects published and unpublished material on twenty-four different nationalities and ethnic groups from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe--including the Hungarians. Another promising sign is the recent or imminent appearance of several bibliographies and basic handbooks on Hungarians in America, which will undoubtedly serve as an encouragement and starting point for those who are entering the field.

The present work is one of these basic and urgently needed tools in the area of Hungarian-American studies. Although this bibliography lists only the Hungarian material in the Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota, it is still a rather comprehensive work that encompasses over a dozen categories and contains over nine hundred items. Thus, even though it concentrates on a single collection, it is still the most comprehensive bibliography on this topic to date. Like the author's earlier related works, this bibliography will also serve as a useful scholarly aid in the effort to portray the whole spectrum of Hungarian contributions to the makeup of American civilization.

The author-compiler of this volume is a librarian and a bibliographer who has already done much to advance the cause of Hungarian studies in the United States. Born and educated in Hungary (with a degree in library science from Budapest), Joseph Széplaki came to the United States after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Since then he has been employed in various professional positions in the libraries of Brandeis University, Ohio University, and the University of Minnesota, and has also published extensively in the area of Hungarian American studies. Thus, in addition to several shorter bibliographies on such topics as Béla Bartók, Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and American doctoral dissertations on Hungarian-related subjects, Joseph Széplaki has authored the following works: The Hungarians in America, 1583-1974 (1975), Louis Kossuth: "The Nation's Guest" (1976),

and "The Champion of Liberty": The Image of Louis Kossuth in American and English Poetry (in press). These works have all contributed to the collective knowledge about the American Hungarian past, and have made it easier for all interested to work in the field.

Széplaki's ultimate goal is to produce a series of definitive bibliographies about the whole spectrum of Hungarian-American. Those of us who work in the field can only hope that he will achieve his goal in the not too distant future. Meanwhile, however, we are also grateful for his less comprehensive works that deal with a single collection or with a single aspect of Hungarian American studies. Without them, most of us would face even greater difficulties than we do; and younger scholars who are just entering the field would be almost as lost as we were when we took on the challenge to reconstruct the history and achievements of the Hungarians in the United States.

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