

## Preface

**Our journal** is fortunate enough to present another volume of essays dealing with contacts and interactions between Hungarians and North Americans, and Hungary on the one hand and the United States and Canada on the other.<sup>1</sup> The time-span covered is more than a century-and-a-half, from the early 1850s almost to the present. The authors in this volume represent a good mix of scholars based in the United States, Canada and Hungary. By background they are mainly, but not exclusively, Hungarian. In terms of expertise, most of them are historians, but some of the authors represent other disciplines.

More than half of this volume is devoted to themes of Hungary-USA interactions as well as links between Hungarian and American politics and cultures especially in America, in particular in the Hungarian-American immigrant communities.

The first paper in this first part of the volume is by István Kornél Vida and deals with a hitherto neglected aspect of Lajos Kossuth's visit to the United States in the wake of the Hungarian struggle for independence in 1848-1849: the reactions to the Hungarian statesman's tour and his reception by some of the outstanding figures of contemporary America's literary renaissance. From this study it becomes evident that America's writers were just as divided about Kossuth and his cause as was the American public, especially as the initial great enthusiasm which he was greeted with began to wane. In the end Kossuth left America as a disappointed man who achieved none of his major expectations.

The second paper, by Susan Glanz, also deals with the American tour of a prominent Hungarian, though not nearly as prominent as Lajos Kossuth. This Hungarian was Imre Széchenyi and he, in the company of several of his aristocratic relatives and friends, made a grand tour of North America (he visited Manitoba, Canada also) in 1881.

It is interesting to compare these two American tours. Of course, their context is very different. Kossuth was an exiled leader of a Hungary under renewed foreign (Habsburg) domination. Two decades later Imre Széchenyi came as an unofficial representative of an autonomous, almost independent Hungary. In terms of success, as we have mentioned above, Kossuth's tour was near-total failure, while Széchenyi must have been quite satisfied with the results of his time spent in America. Yet, in the long run, Széchenyi also failed to achieve his aims. He had hoped to implement modern agricultural practices he had seen in America in his native land, but very little came of these expectations.

The next paper, by Thomas Sakmyster, deals the interactions of the Stalinist dictator Mátyás Rákosi's Hungarian Communist Party with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). It shows how the meddling by Rákosi in American communist affairs, in particular the false accusations he made against Hungarian members of the CPUSA, in the long run discredited him and Stalinism in the eyes of many American communists, caused much soul-searching for many of them and, together with the events of the autumn of 1956 in Hungary, helped to accelerate the decline of the communist movement in the United States. The story told documents in great detail the gradual disillusionment in the communist ideal of many of the first-half-of-the 20<sup>th</sup> century's left-leaning newcomers to America from Hungary, and more importantly, of their American ideological soul-mates. Sakmyster's overall conclusion is that Rákosi's machinations and meddling in American communist affairs "contributed to the shattering of the CPUSA" a few short years later.

While Professor Sakmyster tells the story of a part of the communist movement in the United States, Myron Momryk recounts the sad fate of a Hungarian immigrant to Canada who, under the difficult circumstances of the Great Depression, was driven into the arms of that country's Communist Party. For this choice Canada's authorities deported him from Canada, but before he could be delivered to his native land, he escaped and ended up in the Soviet Union — where he became a victim of Stalin's purges.

The last paper in this volume to deal with the Hungarians of the United States is by Katalin Pintz. This exhaustive study traces the history of the efforts of the Hungarian-American communities of New Jersey, especially of the city of New Brunswick, to maintain the Hungarian culture, especially the Magyar language. Pintz finds that heritage maintenance was quite suc-

cessful here, partly because this part of the American East-coast had always been multi-ethnic, and partly because there had been, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a solid Hungarian presence in the region. Another factor that makes for the continued survival of the Hungarian culture here is the fact that New Brunswick has been receiving immigrants, as well as visitors who often come for long stays, from Hungary — even in recent decades. According to the author, most of the work of culture maintenance has been carried out by the Hungarian institutions — social clubs, ethnic schools, cultural organizations and the immigrant churches — of New Brunswick and neighbouring municipalities. Despite the enviable success of these communities in heritage maintenance, the forces of assimilation have been felt here too. Especially sad in this respect is the fate of Hungarian-language services in the local Magyar churches — which have all been cut back and are nowadays threatened with disappearance.

The following paper, by Judith Galántha Hermann, chronicles the story of the Hungarian voice of Radio Canada International, an institution that was born in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and lasted till the birth of the post-communist era in Hungary. The story is a chapter in the history of the Hungarian ethnic group in Canada. It is not surprising that the RCI's Hungarian voice coincided with what has been called the “golden age” of this immigrant group, an age that lasted from the late 1950s to the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup>

The next item in our volume is a book review section. Two of the works reviewed here (the ones discussed by Lee Congdon) relate to the theme of “links and interactions” between Hungary and Hungarians on the one hand and North America on the other. The last two books reviewed are about unrelated themes. The penultimate item in the volume is an obituary of the author of the last book review in this section. This book review is probably the last of Mark Pittaway's many publications relating to Hungary and/or Hungarians.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In 2003 and 2004 we published two special volumes of our journal entitled *The United States and Hungary in the Twentieth Century Part I* and *Part II* (volumes 30 and 31 respectively). The 2003 volume contained articles by Tibor Frank, Judith Szapor, Kenneth McRobbie and others, while the 2004 volume featured papers by

Tibor Glant, Gergely Romsics, Kálmán Dreisziger, Stephen Beszedits and others. The combined bulk of the two volumes was over 300 pages.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter seven of my book, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), "Toward a Golden Age: The 1950s."