

## Hungarians in America

(Janos von Neuman)

The brilliant Hungarian born mathematician, member of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University, about whom we will talk later at greater length, is supposed to have defined a Hungarian as a person who "can enter a revolving door behind you, and come out in front."

If we carry this illogical assumption to its logical conclusion, we should be able to assert that Hungarians have been to America, before America was discovered.

Well, if we try hard enough, a case can be made for such an assertion. — As a historian, I have to tell you that the evidence is not entirely convincing, but then why ruin a good story by insisting on undisputable facts.

Without taking away anything from the accomplishment of Christopher Columbus of Genoa, we do know that the first Europeans to visit the New World were the Vikings under the leadership of ~~the~~ Leif Erikson [son of Eric the "Red"].

According to the story recorded in the Lives of the Norse kings [by Snorri Sturluson] Leif and his companions visited lands which were probably Labrador and Newfoundland, and sailed further south. — One evening, a member of the crew was missing. He was according to the Scandinavian sources from the South Country, "small in stature and ugly" but "dexterous in all feats" his name was Tyrker. A search party was organized, and they soon found Tyrker, who seemed very merry, in other words "high". Leif Erikson spoke to him "Why art thou so late, and why didst thou leave thy comrades?"

According to the Viking source, Tyrker rolled his eyes, frowned and "babbled in Turkish", which was uncomprehensible by his companions. Seeing that he was not communicating, Tyrker then spoke in Norse saying: "Wines and grapes I have found, I come from a land in which wines and grapes are abundant". Leif Erikson called the place Vinland.

Who was Tyrker? He is called a Turk by the Vikings but is that correct? - 9th, 10th, 11th century Greek or Byzantine sources invariably refer to the Hungarians as Turks - Turkoï - While the Hungarians in the time of Leif lived in an area rich with mines and grapes, the Turks did not. The fact that Tyrker was short and ugly certainly does not help us to determine his ethnic origins. Did a Hungarian emerge from the revolving door 500 yrs before Columbus? We ~~will~~ never know for certain. (Tyrker, by the way, is also claimed by Germans, several Slavic nations and even Rumanians)

Let me assure you that my subsequent account of Hungarians in America will be based on far sounder historical scholarship.

In order to understand the causes behind the appearance of various groups of Hungarians in the New World, it is important to know what was happening in the Old World. Thus a thumb-nail sketch of Hungarian history <sup>since 1500</sup> to show the connection of events in Europe and America.

The independence of the kingdom of Hungary came to an abrupt end when the Ottoman Turks invaded and defeated the Hungarians [king at the Battle of Mohacs] in 1526. The Austrian Hapsburgs inherited the crown, while the

Turks occupied most of the kingdom, including its capital Buda. The nation was divided into Austrian controlled + Turkish controlled regions and the inhabitants were further divided as the result of the Reformation into Protestants + Catholics. The Turks will finally be expelled by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century but Hapsburg absolutism descended upon the land and oppression was everywhere. As the result of the success of the American <sup>and French</sup> Revolutions and the influence of the Enlightenment, a new spirit of political freedom swept over Hungary in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and culminated in the War of Independence of 1848-49. Under the leadership of Lajos (Louis) Kossuth the Hungarians defeated the Hapsburgs, established an independent state, which the U.S. was ready to recognize diplomatically. Defeated, the Austrian Emperor called upon the Russian Czar for help, who invaded Hungary, crushed the armies of Kossuth and extinguished freedom. In 1867 a compromise was reached with Austria resulting in the creation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a multi <sup>ethnic</sup> national state, which lasted until the End of WWI, a conflict in which Hungary was on the losing side. The treaty imposed on the country was a disaster, not only did Hungary lose immense amount of territory but of 15,000,000 ethnic Hungarians 1/3 became minority populations in the surrounding countries, esp. Ruman. Czechosl. and Yugosl. WWII brought renewed disasters. Forced into the war, Hungary was invaded by both the Germans and the Russians, suffering staggering losses of lives + property. Still worse was the Communist government which was imposed upon the nation by Russian guns. You all know

of the brave but vain effort of the Hungarians to re-assert their freedom in 1956, to be crushed once more by Russian tanks. Independence and liberty finally came in 1989 when the Communist system collapsed and the Iron Curtain finally fell. — This, then, is the background against which we should see the coming of Hungarians to the New World.

The first historically verifiable Hungarian <sup>(in America)</sup> <sup>(poet?)</sup> was a classic scholar Stephen Parmenius of Buda who participated in Sir Humphrey Gilbert's expedition to Newfoundland. Parmenius was born of Protestant parents at Buda, studied at an English university and was appointed official chronicler of the expedition. On August 29, 1583 the ship carrying Parmenius was lost in a violent storm. — This was the not very auspicious beginning of Hungarian ties to America.

The next visitor with a Hungarian connection was Capt. John Smith (of Pocahontas fame), the founder of Jamestown in Virginia (1607). Before coming to the New World, Smith had traveled through Hungary and Transylvania 1604-1603, where, because of his military exploits against the Turks he was raised into the ranks of the Hungarian nobility.

In the two centuries that followed Parmenius' tragic adventure in Newfoundland, few Hungarians appear to have had the desire to see the New World.\* The next visitors were Jesuit priests. The missionary János Rátkay explored the south west region, which became part of the U.S. years later, and his confrere Pál Bertalanjii wrote a detailed description of New England, Canada as well as the S. Eastern part of the continent. He was obviously expressing religious

[ There were no Hungarian stowaways on the Maryflower ]

prejudice when he referred to Boston as a "Calvinist humbug."

The events of the American Revolutionary War were followed with considerable interest in Hungary. A professor of the Royal Academy in Buda wrote to Benjamin Franklin saying "all the leaders of your new Republic are viewed by the Hungarians as angels sent by Heaven to guide and to comfort the human race"

Not only was there sympathy for the American cause, but action as well. Several Hungarians joined the colonial armies to fight the British. The best known among these was Colonel Mihály (Michael) Kováts, who became Master of Exercises in the famous Pulaski Legion, which was America's first hussar <sup>or cavalry</sup> regiment. The Pulaski Legion fought a number of successful engagements against the British, including the Battle of Charleston (S.C.) on May 11-12, 1779. Kováts who is described in contemporary records as "a Hungarian by birth," and an officer of great merit and experience, died on the first day of the battle. [Memorials]

Memorials

to this Hungarian officer who fell fighting for American liberty can be seen in New York, N.Y. and at the Citadel in S.C. A number of cavalry officers of Hungarian origin also fought in the ranks of the French auxiliary forces who came to assist America in its war with Britain.

After the success of the Am. Revol., Hungarian interest in the New Republic became even more intense. This is particularly true after the publication of some travelogues composed by Hungarians who had written about their adventures in the New World in the 1830s + 1840s.

The most significant of these travel accounts were by Sándor Bölönyi-Farkas, entitled Journey to North America, published in 1834, describing the author's experiences during a visit to the N.E. United States, and a similarly titled volumes by Agoston Haraszthy, published in 1844 and widely read in Hungary.

Bölönyi-Farkas was greatly impressed by what he saw in America. He covered 2,450 miles, saw the U.S. as the "inspiring beacon to the oppressed". He likened the cultured city of Philadelphia to Classical Rome. He visited Washington D.C. and was amazed when invited to meet President Jackson.

"In came Mr. Jackson" writes the author "a tall, gray, friendly oldster, wearing a black business suit, without any badge of office" Bölönyi-Farkas saw in this the true working of democracy. - Probably most interesting are his remarks on ~~the~~ education. "If Americans do not like to pay taxes," he observed "they readily tax themselves to support their schools?" Also impressive was the fact that every town, no matter how small, had a public library. For the book-minded Hungarian visitor, America was a Utopia.

The other great travel account by Agoston Haraszthy, published in two volumes is equally laudatory. He idealized the virtues of Americans, spoke in glowing terms about the workings of democracy: "Nothing daunts the American and no impediment can halt him in carrying out his plans. His boundless energy and self-assurance characterize the American above all other nationalities."

He was impressed by the efficiency he <sup>saw</sup> ~~saw~~, commencing

that the American reads his paper while having his breakfast, so as to not waste time. - Everything is done with speed. efficiency, "State legislatures, courts, and Congress.. dispatch their business with great speed" - How we have regressed!

Other observations of Hraszti are clearly inaccurate. Example: Although he found beauty to be more evanescent in America than in Europe and found American women attractive only between 16 and 25. - Clearly erroneous observation.

Hraszty was so impressed with this country that he returned to Hungary, gathered together his wife and children, and came back here as a settler. He founded a settlement in Wisconsin (Sauk City), operated a steamboat on the Mississippi, built a restaurant (served gulyas?), established a school. Twice he was elected Vice President of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

A restless spirit, Augustin Hraszti moved with his family to California. In the Sonoma county he founded Szep'taj = Sp. Buena Vista. Working on a foundation of wine growing going back to 18th cent. Frenchman, Hraszti revitalized the wine industry, imported 200,000 vine cuttings including the most important European varieties, among them the famous Tokaj grapes of his native land. From Sonoma county the wine industry spread to Napa and Alameda Counties. Due largely to Hraszti's initiative, California became <sup>and still is</sup> the nation's premier wine producing region. He was named California State Commissioner of Viticulture and in 1862 published a valuable treatise on the art of raising grapes and making wine.

Herczti was even elected to the California legislature but gambled away his fortune, and eventually moved his family to Nicaragua, where he died under mysterious circumstances.

The pioneering books of Bólini Farkas and of Herczti did much to arouse interest among a large number of literate Hungarians. [toward the United States].

In the meantime a political earthquake shook Europe in 1848. Revolutions against the existing order broke out all over the continent, including Hungary. The Hungarian Revolution was viewed with great sympathy in America and had enthusiastic public support:

The Hon. Abraham Lincoln, Repr. from Springfield, Illinois, presented a resolution to Congress on Sept. 12, 1849 which read as follows:

"Resolved, that in their present glorious struggle for liberty, the Hungarians command our highest admiration and have our warmest sympathy.

Resolved, that they have our most ardent prayers for their speedy triumph and final success.

Resolved, that the govern. of the U.S. should acknowledge the independence of Hungary as a nation of free men.

As we saw, the Revolution of 1848 was crushed by the troops of the Russian Czar who came to the assistance of the Austrian Emperor. <sup>in 1849</sup> Freedom had to wait. - Kossuth, with a bounty on his head, fled to Turkey, <sup>(then to England)</sup> hoping to arouse public opinion for a resumption of the struggle for liberty. Aware of the strong popular sentiment in the U.S.



for the Hungarian cause, Kossuth came to America in 1851. His welcome was tumultuous. According to the Diplomatic Historian Thomas Bailey, "No foreign visitor, since Lafayette's triumphal tour, had received such an ovation". When his boat landed on Dec. 5, 1851, he was received with 31 gun salute cannon shots (for each of the States comprising the Union).

The Mayor of the city of N.Y. welcomed Kossuth as "the spokesman of Hungarian independence, champion of human progress, representative of the freedom of the world."

That afternoon about 300,000 people hailed him as he rode up Broadway.

After N.Y. came a triumphal march across much of the United States. His itinerary included Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington (a disappointing meeting with Pres. Fillmore, who showed complete ignorance of Hungary and her cause), then on to: Annapolis, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, Springfield, O. Dayton, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, St. Louis, New Orleans, Mobile, Montgomery, then back to Buffalo, Syracuse Albany and New York City.

America fell in love with Kossuth, a great orator, who had learned English while in Austrian prison, teaching the language to himself by reading Shakespeare and the King James version of the Bible. There was a veritable "Kossuth Craze" in the land. Books, pamphlets, editorials lauded him, streets squares, cities, counties were named after him. To this day Iowa has a Kossuth county, there is a Kossuth in Pennsylv. in Ohio, and Mississippi. There are <sup>still</sup> many Kossuth Streets, Kossuth Avenues. One enthusiastic gentleman named

his child Eljen Kossuth Willcox (Long Live Kossuth) —

Although popular sentiment was clearly sympathetic to Kossuth and the Hungarian cause, the U.S. government refused to depart from its principle of non intervention, treated the former Governor of Hungary with utmost respect but in the words of Sec. of State Daniel Webster, "gave him no encouragement."

In light of the above, Kossuth left America on July 14, 1852 much disappointed. He failed to achieve his goal of securing immediate U.S. help for the cause of Hungarian independence and also had to realize that such support would not be forthcoming in the future.

When Kossuth returned to Europe, many of the Hungarian exiles who had accompanied him to America, also left, but others stayed behind to make their fortunes in this strange and fascinating land. Several thousand of these became part of the American scene, [others are remembered by historians. Among these "Kossuth emigrés" was László Ujházi who founded the city of New Buda in Iowa, another Nicholas Fejerváry established a Hungarian colony in Davenport, where the city park still preserves his name.]

The most remarkable member of this group was Janos Xántus (Only Hung. I know whose name begins with an X). He had served as a lieutenant in the army of Kossuth, escaped to England after the defeat of Hungary in the War of Independence. He arrived in America with 7 dollars in his pocket in 1850, and began his career on this continent by digging ditches. He recorded his American in two fascinating but not very reliable books. [experiences]

He got a job on a surveyor team which established where rail lines were to be laid from the Mid-West to California, was paid \$2 a day for his efforts.

While a surveyor he had many adventures. One one occasion Xantus was introduced to a Seminole chief as an overseas visitor compelled to flee his home because he had been robbed of his country. Thereupon the Indian chief remarked that the Hungarian officer was his bosom friend, because he too, had been robbed of his land. As a token of his abiding friendship for Xantus, the chief offered him a pair of slippers and his daughter. Our Hungarian thanked him warmly, accepted the slippers, took a look at the daughter, and asked for time to think it over.

Xantus was on a <sup>Misciscoppa</sup> riverboat when it blew up during a race near Natchez; for a while he was appointed professor of Latin, Greek and Spanish at the Univ. of New Orleans. Restless as always he applied for a post as a member of the U.S. Survey Expedition, commissioned to explore the Kansas territory, with headquarters at Fort Riley, Texas. He studied the flora and fauna of the region, sent back thousands of mounted and dissected animal and plant specimens to the Smithsonian Institution, and to the Hung. National Museum. Xantus' fame spread, he was received in Washington by Pres. Buchanan in 1857. They discussed exploration and Kossuth. - The United States Dept. of Interior appointed him a member of the Pacific Coast Survey and he made his way to California. He again collected plant + animal life and wrote an entertaining account of his explorations <sup>entitled</sup> Journey in the Southern Parts of California.

This rather strange book gives excellent descriptions of S. California as well as the Calif. Peninsula - Baja Calif. but also tries to answer such frivolous questions as: 1. What effect do crinolin skirts have on bears and wolves. or 2. How can you obtain Strasbourg pate or Genoa sardines in San Diego? - Yet Xantus did make a reputation for himself in Southern California and the Peninsula. - Years later, John Steinbeck and a friend were on the southern tip of the Baja California at Cape San Lucas. He describes what happened: "Speaking to the manager of the cannery at the Cape, we remarked on what a great man Xantus had been. The manager responded 'Oh, he was even better than that.' Pointing to three little Indian children he said: 'these are Xantus' great-grandchildren' and he continued 'In the town there is a large family of Xantuses, and a few miles back in the hills, you will find a whole <sup>tribe</sup> of them!" [We honor this man for all of his activities. He at least was one who did proliferate in all directions.] So <sup>much for</sup> Steinbeck Xantus returned to Hungary, came back to America, was named U.S. consul in Manzanillo, Mexico, returned once more to Hungary and died in Pest, an obscure man.

It is estimated that at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War there were only about 4,000 Hungarians in the U.S. Of this about 800 served ~~served~~ in the Union Army, among these about 100 officers, usually former members of the Hungarian Army during the War for Indep. Because of the fine training and war experience of the Hungarian officers they achieved ~~achievement~~ in the Union Army.

This officer corps ultimately included two major generals, 5 brigadier generals, 15 colonels + lieutenant colonels, [13 majors, 12 captains, 21 dozens of lieutenants.]

21 dozens of lesser officers.

The two major Generals were Julius H. Stahel (formerly Gyula Számvald) who received the Congressional Medal of Honor and is buried at Arlington, and Major General Alex. (Santor) Asboth, who was General Fremont's chief of staff and ended his life as United States ambassador to Argentina.

As refugees from oppression, it is not surprising that the Hungarian immigrants who had been veterans of the War of Independence in 1848 would offer their services to the Union in the course of the Civil War. Only one Hungarian officer, with the rank of Colonel fought on the side of the Confederacy - but by 1863 even he became disenchanted and returned to Europe.

Most Hungarians who reached the shores of America up to the 1860s and 1870s were either travelers, adventurers or political immigrants. True there were a few who came for economic reasons even then, but their numbers were rather insignificant. Thus, as late as the 1870s, the Hungarian-American communities scattered throughout this land, consisted almost exclusively of the political emigrants of the Revolution of 1848-49, and their [native-born] descendants.

Then came the great tidal wave which swept literally millions into the United States between 1880-1914. Among these were about 1.7 million who were Hungarian citizens.

The great Hungarian emigration during the 3 1/2 decades between 1880 and 1914 was a phenomenon that was not unique. [Those of you, who have been attending these dinners and lectures have heard] <sup>we know,</sup> (about the experiences of a number of central and eastern European ethnic groups, who arrived in the New World during this same period, were generally of the same social class, faced the similar problems of adjustment in an often hostile environment. If you arrived in New York in 1907, it made very little difference whether you were Polish, Ukrainian, Slovak, Croatian, Serbian, Rumanian, Montenegrin or Hungarian. In other words there is no "unique" Slovak, Croatian or Hungarian experience. [The pattern is generally very similar, and most of you are by now quite familiar with it. I will, therefore, try to paint a picture in broad outlines.]

As stated above, prior to 1914 about 1.7 million Hungarian citizens immigrated to this country. But this number is deceiving. Since the Hungarian kingdom prior to 1918 was a multi-national state, many Hungarian citizens were ethnically and linguistically non-Magyars. Thus Hung. citizenship did not necessarily mean that the immigrant arriving in Ellis Island was a "real Hungarian". Most recent studies have put the number of ethnic Magyars among the 1.7 million somewhere around 650-750,000 people. If we add to this the approximately 200,000 Magyars who came to the United States between 1914 and now, then we have a total Magyar immigration of 850-950,000 individuals.

The overwhelming majority of these immigrants were motivated by economic considerations, not political. Furthermore, over 80% were of peasant stock, the rest usually fell into the category of unskilled industrial workers and day laborers. Educated people, especially professionals with university degrees were a very small minority.

If we look at gender divisions we find that there was a male preponderance. In the first few years the number of women is negligible, between the turn of the century and 1913 the average is 69% males to 31% females but the percentage was growing in favor of the women as we approach World War I. By 1913 women contributed 52% to 48% men. The low number of women, especially between 1880 and 1905 is indicative of an extremely important factor, namely that the majority of Hungarians who came to the New World looked upon their immigration as a temporary solution. More specifically, it was a search for work by able bodied men, who had every intention to return to their homeland and to their families as soon as this was economically feasible.

Closely connected with the originally temporary nature of Hungarian immigration to the U.S. was the age bracket of the new arrivals. They were young: 24% below age 20; 73% between 20 and 50 years old, only 2.6% above age 50. The overwhelming majority are therefore of working age [category], and are unencumbered by families, elderly parents, small children or non-working dependents.

Although predominantly of peasant or working class background, the Hungarian immigrants had a remarkably high literacy rate, i.e. 88.6%. [knew how to read]. In light of the above there is much to be said for the view that, while driven primarily by poverty and economic necessity, the immigrants of the pre-1914 period did not necessarily represent the most forsaken or the most underprivileged segment of Hungary's lower classes. It was not the lazy, shiftless, dispirited people who came to America, [but] just the opposite: those who were ambitious, more adventurous and obviously bright. The fact that they left their homeland was an obvious loss to Hungary, that they came and eventually stayed in America, has been the good fortune of this country. - They came and worked and sweated and helped to build the industrial might of the United States.

As we have seen, by far the greatest number of the Hungarian immigrants of the pre-W.W.I were peasants [or near peasants] yet very few of them continued agricultural labor in this country. Rather they settled mainly in the industrial centers of the North East and Mid-West. According to 1920 statistics the major concentration of Magyar immigrants were located in the following areas. About 78,000 lived in NY state, [with about 65,000 in N.Y. City]. Next, in size was Ohio with 73,000 with 30,000 in Cleveland, the rest mainly in the Akron, Zanesville, Youngstown, Toledo areas. Pennsylvania followed with 71,000 [of which 26,000 were in the Pittsburgh region, about 12,000 in Philadelphia]. New Jersey had 40,000 Hungarians [mostly in Perth Amboy, Newark, Passaic, New Brunswick and Trenton].



34,000 settled in Illinois, [of which 26,000 lived in Chicago], 22,000 in Michigan, [over half of them in Detroit]; 20,000 in Connecticut. [mostly in Bridgeport, Hartford and South Norwalk] Indiana attracted some 12,000 Hungarians, concentrated mainly in S. Bend, Gary and East Chicago. There were about 10,000 in Wisconsin [with half living in Milwaukee]; about the same number in Missouri of which 2/3 resided in St. Louis. West Virginia had 6,200 Hungarians, [almost all of them living in Pocahontas]. In 1920 there were 5,200 in California, of which some 1,700 lived in the Los Angeles area, about 1,400 in San Francisco. The rest of the Magyar population was scattered throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that the geographical distribution has not changed much in the decades following this census. Only in the 1960's was there a gradual shift from the N.E. largely to Florida and California. Those who went to Fl. were mainly the elderly, those who went West, were young and well educated, sought high paying jobs in the Golden State.

While it is true that America was the "Land of Opportunity" and provided some economic advancement, the streets were not paved with gold. The new immigrants were forced to work and live under the most miserable conditions. They also had to face the realities of a society that barely tolerated them. To be a "hunkie" was not an easy lot. The coal field and steel mills were extremely dangerous places to work, the injury and fatality rate was high. Yet they worked with great diligence: They scraped and scrounged, saved every possible dollar and counted the days when they

had amassed enough money to return to the Old country to buy 20-30 acres of land and settle down to raise a family, surrounded by the familiar world which they loved. Not being interested in staying, the majority of the pre WWI immigrants did not seek to acquire American citizenship. It is also true that tens of thousands did in fact return to Europe prior to 1914. — Those who stayed here did not buy houses but usually lived in boarding houses.

But this impermanence did eventually change. The fact that the number of immigrant women increased dramatically before WWI clearly shows that many family units were being established, most of these would have stayed under any circumstances. What made most Hungarian immigrants stay in the US permanently was the Great War, and the peace settlement following it. As the result of the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the drastic reduction of Hungary's size, many immigrants found that if they returned to Europe their former homes would be part of a new state, they were to become a minority in an often hostile country. Conditions in Hungary proper were also uncertain, both politically and economically. So they stayed and became slowly Americans.

Instead of living in boarding houses they began buying homes, built churches, established newspapers, fraternal mutual aid societies, clubs, orphanages, schools etc... The outside world was still hostile, so they tried to recreate in their ethnic enclave a miniature Hungarian world in America. Above all they adhered to their faith, Catholic and Protestant [ alike ] and built their churches to be able to pray to God.

in their native tongue. [In Youngstown, this meant the building of two Reformed or Presbyterian churches, this and the smaller congregation just a few blocks up on Mahoning, two Catholic Churches, St. Stephen <sup>of this</sup> on Wilson and Our Lady <sup>of this</sup> on the West Side and one Byzantine Rite <sup>Worship</sup>, St. George.]

Following World War I the number of immigrants was drastically reduced as a result of Congressional legislation which tried to stem the flow of non-Western Europeans to our shores. But Hungarians continued to come. In the 1920s [30s] large numbers of women came to join their husbands and fiancées. In the inter-war period, because of economic and political factors, many educated professionals made their way to America and enriched our society with their talents. [More about them <sup>shortly</sup> in a ~~minute~~ minute.]

Following WW II, another immigrant wave reached these shores, people who had to flee their homeland as the result of the Soviet occupation of Hungary. They came to America under the Displaced Persons Act, ~~were often re-~~ferred to as D.P. [This is the group to which my parents belonged] Several dozen D.P. families settled in Youngstown, a very large number in Cleveland.] Most of these immigrants were middle class, professional people with a very strong desire to succeed and to see their children advance. \* Then <sup>(the Hungarian Revolution of</sup> came 1956, that glorious but

tragic event which captured the attention and sympathy of the world. When Russian tanks crushed the Revolution, 200,000 people left Hungary, a large number were admitted into the U.S. [several hundred came to Yo. I remember, as a Freshman at Y.U., sitting in this hall as the mayor and council welcomed the new arrivals to our community.] Most of these were young, ambitious men + women who adjusted to American life quickly.

That is where I found my lovely wife.

In the last three decades immigration from Hungary has decreased to a trickle. Until the end of the 1980s, people who were persecuted for religious or political reasons in Hungary, sought political refuge in the West, often migrated to America. [At the Refugee Resettlement Home next door, we have tried to make their transition to American life easier. We have also helped many ethnic Hungarians who fled persecution, mainly in Ceausescu Communist Romania, and sought refuge in America.]

With the fall of Communism and the elimination of the Iron Curtain there is no appreciable flow of Hungarian immigrants [to America]. It is estimated that there are about 750,000 Americans of Hungarian ethnic background living in the U.S. today. - This is not a large number when compared to other immigrant groups. These Hungarian-Americans have been a valuable asset to our nation. They are remarkably law abiding, hard working and ambitious, and have contributed to this land both with the sweat of their brows, as well as with the multitude of <sup>their</sup> talents.

Let me cite some examples:

Two pioneers of the American film industry were Hungarian born, Adolf Zukor and William Fox. It was Zukor who produced the first full length American made film, The Prisoner of Zenda. Fox established the Fox Film Corporation and was able to bring the products of Hollywood to the masses. Zukor, Fox, Michael Curtis (Kertesz Mihaly) Pasternak, Korda, all Hungarian born giants of the [American] film industry became American institutions without most Americans realizing that they were

NO

\* He established Paramount Studios

(According to one tradition)

Americans only by choice, not birth. So pervasive was the Hungarian influence in Hollywood that some of the studios had signs saying: "In this studio it is not enough to be a Hungarian." Most people do not know that the epitome of the cool sophisticated Englishman Leslie Howard was Hungarian. So is Tony Curtis (alias Bernie Schwartz) Everybody knows the embodiment of Evil, Bela Lugosi as being Hungarian, as well as that monument to the art of plastic surgery, Zsa Zsa Gabor. This obviously only scratches the surface. It is interesting to contemplate, however, that the American image, as projected by Hollywood world wide, was <sup>largely</sup> the product of the fertile minds of Hungarian immigrants.

early 20th

One of the most influential newspapermen of the 19th century, Joseph Pulitzer was born in Mako Hungary and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16. Upon his death in 1911 he left 2 million dollars to Columbia University to establish a school graduate of journalism and to award the prize for American literature.

Hungarians have contributed immense amount of talent to the musical life of America. A few years ago almost all the major symphony orchestras of this country were conducted by men of Hungarian origins. Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia, Fritz Reiner, at Cincinnati, then Pittsburgh finally in Chicago, where he was soon succeeded by another Hungarian George Solti. Antal Dorati conducted the Detroit Symphony, at Minneapolis and the National Symphony in Wash. In nearby Cleveland, George Szell, whose father

was Hung. mother Slavik conducted for many years, to be succeeded by Istvan Kertesz who died tragically at a very early age. The present conductor Christoph von Dohnanyi is half Hungarian, his father Ernest was a great conductor-composer who fled Hungary after WW II and taught music at Ft. State. Christoph's mother is German. One of the great figures of 20th cent. music Bela Bartok fled war-torn Europe and settled in New York where he died in 1945 after having composed his great Concerto for Orchestra in America. — This again is just the tip of the iceberg, with countless other talented violinists, pianist, singers, to numerous to mention.

And finally let me turn to an area where Hungarian talent has produced an extraordinary group of colorful characters, namely mathematics and the sciences.

One of the greatest mathematical minds of all time belonged to János von Neuman, known as Johnny to his friends. He graduated from a Lutheran High School in Budapest, (which produced 3 Nobel Prize winners) and received his PhD from the Univ. of Bp. by submitting a 1 page dissertation. It is told of him that at the age of six he could joke with his father in Classical Greek. After teaching at some German Universities, he came to America, where he joined Einstein at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. In 1945 he published a paper in which he laid out the five key components of the modern computer. He participated in the Manhattan project to build the atom bomb, his work influenced the design of Missiles. He

was subsequently appointed member of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. - A man with a photographic memory, he could recite pages from books he read years ago, remembered a multitude of off-color limericks, but could never find his glasses, often called his secretary from distant towns, wanting to know why he was there, what was he supposed to do. He loved attractive women, gave superb parties and wrecked about one automobile a year. Yet his intellect was so sharp his involment in secret atomic and missile projects so deep that when he was dying of bone cancer at Walter Reed Hosp. at the age of 54, special guards were posted at his door to prevent information he might reveal in his immense pain from falling into the wrong hands.

Von Neuman was not the only Hungarian involved in the development of the atomic bomb. Leo Szilard, Eugene Wigner and Edward Teller were even more vitally connected in the project. Seeing the rise of Nazi power in Germany, Leo Szilard was the first to consider that the U.S. should try to pre-empt the Germans in the application of atomic energy in warfare. At the instigation of these Hungarian scientists, Albert Einstein wrote his historic letter in 1939 to F.D.R. suggesting the formation of the Manhattan Project to produce the atomic bomb. Teller, Wigner and Szilard constituted, with the Italian Enrico Fermi, the core of the group which conducted the experiments. Note: our bomb was developed, they all opposed its use <sup>in Japan</sup>

Wigner was the graduate of the same Lutheran High School in Bp. that produced von Neuman, turned to theoretical physics came to Princeton in the 1930s.

Wigner eventually won the Nobel Prize in Physics and is 90 yrs old today.

Edward Teller, also a Budapest graduate, came to the US in 1935, taught at Univ. of Chicago later became associated with the Livermore laboratories in California.

He is usually referred to as the Father of the H-Bomb <sup>and looks like a Martian</sup>

The most colorful member of this group was Leo Szilard, A recently published biography calls Szilard a "bizzare Hungarian" and "one of the great minds of our time, or any time"; but at the same time the Rodney Dangerfield of 20th century physics. A rather unstructured and lazy man, Szilard sat for hours in his bathtub, thinking great thoughts. Many of his random ideas were picked up and perfected by others, including Fermi. He was a great theorist who could not add simple numbers, had trouble tying his shoe laces.\* Here is a man who patented the design of the linear accelerator and the cyclotron, who developed the idea of atomic fission setting of a chain reaction while waiting for a traffic light in London.

\*[Why worry about numbers when his neighbors were Einstein and von Neuman, be concerned about experiments when Enrico Fermi was just around the corner.]

Some of Szilard's ideas were clearly off the wall. He developed a scheme for speeding hair cuts by electrifying barber's chairs, so that the customer's hair would stand on end and could be easily mowed. Also suggested weaving iron thread into women's stockings, which were then held up by magnets sewn into undergarments. - Being somewhat klutzi and unacquainted with women's things Szilard did not know quarters



Another Hungarian scientist who had a decisive influence on American science and technology was Theodore von Kármán. Educated at the Techn. Univ. of Budapest he achieved world fame in the area of aerodynamics. He immigrated to the U.S. became professor at Cal. Tech. and had a leading role in the development of the B-36, B-47, B-52 airplanes as well as the Atlas, Titan and Minuteman rockets. He also made unique contributions to the theory of elasticity and strength of materials.

About two decades ago, there were 5 Nobel Prize winners <sup>(teaching)</sup> at American Universities. ① Albert Szent-Györgyi, the discoverer of Vitamin C; ② George von Békésy of Harvard in medicine; Prof. Wigner, in physics; George von Hevesy, Nobel laureate in chemistry; and Denis Gabor who won the prize in physics for his invention of holography. This again is just the tip of the iceberg. Thousands of Hungarian scientists, scholars, ~~researchers~~ hold positions at American Universities and research institutes. For a nation of only 10 million this is an impressive record by any standard.

Let me conclude with an anecdote: Leo Szilard and the Great Italian physicist Enrico Fermi were talking one day. Fermi firmly believed that there had to be other earth-like planets that developed superintelligent beings. These superintelligent beings would then explore other parts of the universe, including our planet. Fermi concluded "They should have arrived here by now, so where are they?" To which Szilard replied with an impish wink: "They are among us, but they call themselves Hungarians."