



The American Hungarian Federation

FOUNDED 1906

GOV. LOUIS KOSSUTH -- HON. DON RITTER (Extension of Remarks - March 21, 1990)

[Page: E759]

HON. DON RITTER
in the House of Representatives
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 1990

- Mr. RITTER. Mr. Speaker, March 15, 1990, the United States accepted the gift of the American Hungarian Federation, a bust statute of Gov. Louis Kossuth, the legendary Hungarian freedom fighter and statesman of 1848 in the form of a solemn ceremony led by Representative **Tom Lantos** with the participation of the congressional leadership and the administration.
- Afterward the American Hungarian Federation sponsored a gala dinner at the Rayburn House Office Building at which I served as the main speaker. President Matyas Szuros of Hungary was also present at both the ceremony and the dinner. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the American Hungarian Federation for a work well done in connection with the Kossuth statute.

Ladies and Gentlemen: As the son of a father born in Hungary, it is a distinct pleasure for me to address this gathering on Hungarian National Independence Day, especially as we celebrate the permanent placement of the bust of Governing President Louis Kossuth in the United States Capitol.

Indeed, there is an organic connection between Louis Kossuth and March 15, 1848--the July 4 of the Hungarian nation. Without the work of Kossuth during the Metternich era which landed him in jail as a young journalist, and without the accomplishments of the Era of Reform between 1825-48, there would have been no rising of the Hungarian youth on March 15, no overthrow of the feudal, absolutist regime, and no establishment of Hungarian democracy.

During his lifetime, Kossuth was one of the foremost revolutionary democrats in Europe. Despite his commitment to the Hungarian nation, he remained a European; a freedom fighter who sympathized with Germans, Italians, and other nations in their yearnings for freedom and democracy; a man who was respected and loved by Mazzini and the German democrats as well.

Yet Kossuth loved his nation first. His oratory, his sincerity, his idealism and patriotism, caused the Hungarian nation to follow him first to victory, then to the bitter end following the Tsarist intervention. The contemporary song stated it well: 'If Kossuth calls again, we all have to go to replace those fallen.'

The Fight for Freedom between March 15, 1848, and August 1849, constituted one of the golden pages of Hungarian history. Incredible heroism stopped the military might of the Hapsburg Empire, and created a democratic Hungary in which the nobility voluntarily surrendered their privileges, the serfs were emancipated, and a government responsible to a parliament was called into being.

Throughout their history, the love of freedom is a typical Hungarian trait. Liberation campaigns were led by Prince Francis Rakoczy II between 1704 and 1711. And again, the blood of Hungarian youth was shed profusely in the dark days of October and November, 1956, when the nation rose as one against Soviet occupation and the Communist dictatorship. It is a wonderful irony that as I am speaking here, Soviet troops are finally withdrawing from Hungary. With free elections only 10 days away, a new day of democracy is dawning in Hungary. These are exciting days in Hungary, despite the economic hardships. A nation is being reborn. Out

of the bonds of a 40-year-old tyranny, Hungary is resuming its rightful place in Europe, from which it was separated by Soviet Communist fiat. As we welcome these developments, we must remember the legacy of Kossuth to the people of Hungary, and to the world.

What were the basic tenets of Kossuth's philosophy? First, belief in the freedom of the individual as the keystone of all democracy; and the faith that the individual rather than the monarch or the state should be governing the realm. Without democracy, there can be no guaranteed individual freedom; without individual freedom, there can be no national unity. This brings us to Kossuth's second tenet: the national self-determination of peoples. In this, Kossuth pre-dated President Wilson by many decades. He spoke out for the national self-determination of all peoples; and only because he believed in it could he espouse, without reservation, the national self-determination of the Hungarian people. He was no chauvinist; he respected the freedom of all nations, and worked with the Italian and German democrats to create Italian and German unity, sending emissaries to the German Parliament as it was writing the German Constitution at St. Paul's Cathedral, and to the leaders of the many Italian city states struggling to become one.

It is interesting to note that today, we are witnessing new efforts to reunite the divided people of the German nation, also kept from unity by Soviet Communist fiat. History repeats itself. Kossuth, both during his short-lived reign in his exile, promoted the cooperation of the peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe. He knew the pressures put on the Hungarian people by the Austrian Hapsburg power and the imperialist Russian power of Tsar Alexander II. He knew that without cooperation between the peoples of the region, either Teutonic or Russian imperialism would wrest control of their destinies away from them.

The geopolitical situation has changed only a little since then. But events have placed an onerous burden on the Hungarian nation. As a result of the Trianon and Paris Peace Treaties, one-third of all Hungarians live in the neighboring states as minorities, especially in Rumania, which harbors 2.5 million Hungarians, mostly in Transylvania. Without a just resolution of the problems of these national minorities, the region will remain a hotbed of ethnic conflicts, an easy prey for outside powers to dominate.

We in the United States are aware of the problems. We have denounced the chauvinistic-communist measures of the Ceausescu regime for many years. Here I must praise your Federation and Dr. Z. Michael Szaz, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee, for the fine work in Congress on the issue. We're glad that that repressive period has come to an end. It is a particular pleasure to have here with us the Reverend Laszlo Tokes from Temesvar, whose eviction and arrest sparked the revolution against Ceausescu in Rumania by Hungarians, Rumanians, Germans and Serbs alike. He is a shining example of total commitment to human and religious rights--even amid persecution and brutality. We hope that the new Rumanian government will use his tremendous prestige and goodwill for a reconciliation between the two peoples rather than to give away to renewed nationalist passions which are not far from the surface.

Finally, let us ask ourselves: what is Louis Kossuth's message for us today? For Americans living in a bountiful land of freedom and democracy, for Hungarian-Americans who partake in this freedom and prosperity, yet here the anguished cries of our former fellow countrymen for freedom, justice, and economic progress.

I believe Kossuth's famous words that a world cannot live half-free and half-slave must be echoing in our ears. We must promote democracy, freedom and justice in Hungary, and in all countries of Central and Southeast Europe, not only with words, but by technical and managerial aid, investments, and--only were it can be effectively applied--financial assistance.

We must remember that unless we find a just solution to the problem of national minorities we can never establish a lasting peace in the region. Freedom and democracy mean tolerance and the respect for national self-determination. It is on these principles that we hope to establish a new world order in the wake of the decline of communism and dictatorship. And it is to these principles that I am pledging my support--and to you and the Hungarian people everywhere.



The American Hungarian Federation

FOUNDED 1906

Media Contact and Additional Information (Sajtókapcsolatok és egyéb információ)

In English: Bryan Dawson-Szilagyi, Vice President
Tel: (703) 979-8281

Magyarul: Dr. Paul J. Szilágyi, AMSZ Intéző Bizottság elnöke
Tel: (305) 919-7159

The American Hungarian Federation
ATTN: Atilla Kocsis
809 National Press Bldg
Washington, DC 20045
(202) 737-0127 tel
(202) 737-8406 fax

About AHF:

The American Hungarian Federation (AHF), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 1906 in Cleveland, Ohio. AHF's Motto, "Faithful Unto Death," was taken from a letter written by former Hussar Officer Mihaly Kovats de Fabricy to Benjamin Franklin. Kovats, known as the Father of the US Cavalry, offered his sword in service to the United States and died in battle against the British in Charleston, S.C. in 1779. Just as Kovats' life and service are celebrated annually by Military Cadets at the Citadel, the motto reflects AHF virtues, and historically and inextricably ties Hungarians and Americans together while symbolizing Hungarians' contributions and sacrifices to America's beginnings. Among the oldest ethnic organizations in the US, AHF was established as an association of Hungarian societies, institutions and churches to "defend the interest of Americans of Hungarian origin in the United States."

All are encouraged to join. Tax-deductible donations are also welcome. Join and contribute through our website or mail. See www.americanhungarianfederation.org

Az AMSZ-ről:

Az Amerikai Magyar Szövetség (AMSZ) egy 501(c)(3) cikkelyű altruista szervezet. A Szövetséget 1906-ban alapították az ohioi Clevelandben. Az AMSZ jeligéje: „Híven a halálig”. Ez a jelige Fabricy Kováts Mihály huszárezeresnek a Benjamin Franklinhoz írt leveléből származik. Kováts, akit az Amerikai Lovaskatonaság atyjaként ismernek, amerikai huszártiszt volt, és 1779-ben a dél-karolinai Charleston védelmében esett el a britek elleni csatában. Fabricy Kovátsról évente megemlékeznek a charlestoni Citadel Katonai Intézet hadapródjai. Az általa kovácsolt jelige az AMSZ erényeit is tükrözi, történelmileg megbonthatatlanul összeköti az amerikaiakat és a magyarokat, azt jelképezi, ahogyan a magyarok hozzájárultak Amerika történetéhez. Az 1906-ban alapított Amerikai Magyar Szövetség az Egyesült Államok egyik legrégebbi etnikai szervezete. Az AMSZ a magyar egyesületek, intézmények és egyházak szövetségéként jött létre abból a célból, hogy „az USA-ban védje a magyar származású amerikaiak érdekeit”.