



STATEMENT  
International Relations Committee  
Frank Koszorus, Jr., Chair  
August 28, 2007

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### **Hungarian Ambassador Bids Farewell to Washington: Thanks “Hungarian Community” for Support**

In a statement posted on the Hungarian Embassy’s website on August 20, 2007, Hungarian Ambassador Andras Simonyi bade farewell to Washington, D.C. In addition to government officials and personalities, Simonyi expressed his appreciation to the “Hungarian community who have [sic] embraced us, supported us, and rooted for us” and highlighted several individuals.

The Ambassador overstated the case. There have been few Hungarian-American individuals or organizations that fell into the category of uncritical supporters. The American Hungarian Federation has always acted with courtesy toward the ambassador, as his office represents Hungary. However, given certain developments and policies by the government, the Federation has expressed misgivings. For instance, the Federation expressed its deep concern over the excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators last October 23 and questioned the commitment of the Hungarian government to protect the Hungarian minorities living in the Carpathian Basin. It can be hoped that other Hungarian American organizations will join the Federation in expressing these types of concerns.

Regrettably missing from the ambassador’s statement was any reference to the meaning and significance of St. Stephen’s Day (August 20) – the most important national holiday for Hungarians. King Stephen, the Apostolic King, was the founder of the Hungarian kingdom who established a new and independent state that became a leading Central European power for centuries. King Stephen converted his people to Western (Latin) Christianity, thereby aligning Hungary with the West – Rome instead of Byzantium.

The American Hungarian Federation unequivocally supports good relations between the United States and Hungary; the strengthening of democratic institutions throughout Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary; the development of vibrant civil societies in the region; respect for the rule of law; and the promotion of human and minority rights, including the right of autonomy for national minorities, such as the historical Hungarian communities living in states neighboring today’s Hungary. These are the values the Federation “embraces and supports.” Indeed, the Federation, an independent and time-honored voice of the community since 1906, is unique among Hungarian American organizations, as it *publicly* speaks out (along with a few others) when appropriate on all of these topics.

The Federation also hopes that Amb. Simonyi’s successor will listen to the opinions of a broad cross-section of the Hungarian American community, even those opinions that are critical of certain governmental policies and expressed out of concern for the values noted above. The Federation further hopes that the new ambassador will actively, openly and vigorously promote and champion these values, thereby serving the interests of both Hungary and the United States, facilitating better trans-Atlantic relations, advancing regional stability and security and promoting genuine democracy.