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**October 25, 2007 remarks by Bryan Dawson, Chairman of the Executive Committee**, at the American Hungarian Federation's Congressional Reception in honor of the Heroes of 1956 and in celebration of AHF's 100<sup>th</sup> year of Service to the Community at the Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

Hungarians have an insatiable thirst for freedom and adventure. Their love of democracy has manifested itself in countless battles and political, cultural, and social decisions. The nation that once elected kings, first codified freedom of religion, saved Christianity in Europe, and tore the Iron Curtain, would lose millions of its fighting men and women and come under the domination of Austrians, Germans, and Russians. But each of these occupying forces would soon contend again with a new wave of determined Freedom Fighters such as Rakoczi in 1703, Kossuth in 1848, and the Freedom Fighters of 1956 we commemorate today. The thirst for freedom and individual liberty would bring Hungarians and their talents to the shores of many nations and tie the histories of Hungary and the United States together inextricably from the very start.

The first known Hungarian in the Americas was Istvan Parmenius de Buda who was appointed as Chief Librarian at Oxford. He left for the new world as official recorder on Sir Humphrey Gilbert's voyage, and died in the shipwreck in August 1583 off the coast of Nova Scotia. AHF commissioned a bronze plaque on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The glorious cause of freedom and democracy in 1776 did not go unnoticed in Hungary where the Hungarian Hussar was a pivotal tool in European military tactics. One Hussar officer in particular, who fought for and against Frederick the Great, would offer his sword to the US, writing Benjamin Franklin, "Golden Freedom Cannot be Purchased with Yellow Gold." He closed his letter "Fidelissimus ad Mortem" or "Most Faithful unto Death," which serves as AHF's motto and symbolizes our virtues and loyalty to the United States. Michael Kovats de Fabricy would rise to the rank of Colonel Commandant and serve under his friend Gen. Casimir Pulaski, organizing and training the first US Cavalry. He died a hero's death in battle after his Pulaski Legion relieved a besieged Charleston, SC in 1779. He is immortalized at the Citadel.

Hungarians would serve this country in every war since. Hussars from the failed 1848 war of independence would come to the US with Louis Kossuth, the father of Hungarian Democracy whose bust, commissioned by the Federation in 1990, sits proudly in the US Capitol. These hussars and many regular fighting men joined the Union in the Civil War many rising to the ranks of general and receiving citations and the Congressional Medal of Honor. Again in WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq, Hungarian-Americans served and died with distinction, again earning citations and the Congressional Medal of Honor. Some of these men are buried at Arlington National Cemetery where AHF holds its annual Memorial Day Commemoration.

But dying for freedom is not the only way to contribute. The Hungarian genius in America can be seen in the development of the modern computer and binary code, Intel Corporation, Fox and Paramount Pictures, the Model T Ford, NASA's Moon Rover, Microsoft Office, and the Manhattan Project and the Hydrogen Bomb and much more.

Our success in this country made it incumbent on us to serve her interests and work toward ensuring the bells of freedom also rang in our ancestral homelands.

**The American Hungarian Federation®** (AHF), is a non-profit 501(c)(3), non-partisan, independent organization, founded in 1906 in Cleveland, Ohio. It was incorporated in 1907 and its headquarters were moved to Washington, DC. AHF is the oldest and largest Hungarian-American umbrella organization in the United States. It was established as an association of Hungarian societies, institutions and churches to "defend the interest of Americans of Hungarian origin in the United States." Some of the key founding organizations, such as the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America and the William Penn Association are here with us today.

Over the past 100 years, with the wars and tragedies that befell Hungary, AHF's mission broadened to include support of people of Hungarian descent on both sides of the Atlantic and in the successor states of the Carpathian Basin.

AHF's first major action was a "Statue Committee." In 1902 a movement started to build a Kossuth statue in Cleveland spearheaded by the "Szabadsag" newspaper and its editor Kohanyi Tihamer. Some 60,000 people attended the unveiling, but there were no representatives from Hungary. As a sign of Hungarian and American unity leaders conceived an idea to place a statue of George Washington in Budapest. Construction began on a site in Budapest's beautiful City Park (Város Liget). In 1906, several hundred American Hungarians traveled to Hungary for the unveiling led by AHF's first President, Kohanyi Tihamer.

In 1929, the American Hungarian Federation organized the 1st Hungarian American National Congress, a grand assembly of all Hungarian organizations in Buffalo, New York. AHF was recognized by the United States government as the official spokesman of Hungarian-Americans. AHF worked to extricate Hungary from the grips of Nazi Germany and then from Soviet oppression. It raised millions to aid the relief efforts after WWII, 1956, and recently, Hurricane Katrina.

Today AHF continues to support scholarships for outstanding students beyond the borders, educates decision makers and the public on key issues, ensures the memory of Hungarian contributions is preserved, and remains a watchdog on Human Rights for the Hungarian community and all peoples of Central and Eastern Europe.

In Kohanyi's appeal (Szozat) he wrote:

“Amerika egy millio magyarja, nemcsak hogy koveteljuk, de keresztul is vissuk azt, hogy Magyarorszag nepenek ugyanabban a szabadsagban, ugyanabban az igazsagban, ugyanabban a joletben legyen resze, mint a mely szabadsag, igazsag, es jolet abban az Amerikaban van amelynek lakosai, polgarai vagyunk.”

“We, America's 1 million Hungarians, not just demand, but will work to ensure that the people of Hungary may partake in the same freedom, the same justice, the same prosperity as we, citizens of America, partake.” He envisioned every Hungarian-American wearing the AHF pin.

Our work is not done.

Today, as we commemorate AHF's 100 years of service, we stand ready once again to help ensure our children's children of this great nation remember the sacrifices of their predecessors and the Spirit of Freedom brought with them. I am proud to unveil our plans for a National Memorial to the Heroes of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The “Spirit of 1956” by Gyuri Hollosy, here with us today, reminds us not only of the deaths of so many brave freedom fighters as they fought impossible odds, but of their bravery and noble cause, as they were carried by Angels in their faith and hope of a better future.

We ask for your support, we ask you to pray for and work for unity. Most vagy Soha!