



The American Hungarian Federation

Serving the Community since 1906 - Fidelissimus ad Mortem

Remarks of Frank Koszorus, Jr., National President American Hungarian Federation

Reception on October 18, 2013 at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C.

Fifty-seven years ago Hungarians from all walks of life rose up against insurmountable odds to fight the brutal Soviet-installed Communist government. They demonstrated and fought for freedom, a multi-party democracy and independence. Many died, others were tortured and executed, while 200,000 fled their homeland.

Their enormous sacrifice seemed futile then but today it is universally recognized as having contributed to the ultimate demise of Soviet domination of Central and Eastern Europe and the restoration of constitutional democracy and independence in Hungary and the region.

The American Hungarian Federation is an organization founded in 1906 which strives to unify our community. We honor the heroes of 1956 today as we did during those fateful days when AHF activated its Hungarian Relief Program, raised over \$525,000 and, worked closely with the International Rescue Committee and others, to aid in the refugee resettlement effort.

Since then, AHF has been committed to keep the memory of 1956 alive. As we contemplate the promise of Hungary 1956, we are reminded that that promise must never be forgotten or abandoned, as the heroes of 1956 deserve nothing less.

That is why it is distressing to witness some abusing democratic ideals by putting politics before history and by questioning the Hungarian nation's commitment to democracy. Those who doubt the Hungarian people's love of liberty forget 1956 as well as other historical moments when Hungarians stood up for freedom and democracy.

One just needs to remember: the Golden Bull issued 7 years after the Magna Carta in 1222, which set forth the rights of all freemen; or the Diet of Torda in the 16th century which declared the equality of the Lutheran, Calvinist, Unitarian and Catholic denominations; or the Revolution of 1848 when Hungarians rose up against Hapsburg oppression with Lajos Kossuth, "champion of liberty," at the helm of this struggle; or July 1944 when a Hungarian armored division blocked the deportation of more than 200,000 Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary; or 1945 when despite Soviet occupation, Hungarians resoundingly rejected the Communist Party and elected the Smallholders Party.

If one can characterize a nation, there can be no doubt that Hungarians not only give lip service to the vaunted principles of democracy and national independence, but also, as their history so eloquently and repeatedly demonstrates, sacrifice life and treasure to achieve them.

Thank you for joining us to honor the heroes of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1956.