

# KOSSUTH'S EFFORT TO ENLIST AMERICA INTO THE HUNGARIAN CAUSE<sup>1</sup>

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Kossuth hoped that during his tour of the United States he would be able to persuade the American Government to intervene on behalf of the Hungarian cause. He was mistaken. Following his so-called "triumphal tour," he was forced to return to Europe as a bitter and disappointed man. Kossuth's disillusionment was not with American democracy. Rather, it was with his inability to persuade America's political leadership to part with the principle of nonintervention laid down by George Washington.

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Louis Kossuth's visit to the United States in 1851–1852 was perhaps the most momentous event in American-Hungarian relations in the course of the past century and a half. His impact was so extraordinary that it has reverberated ever since. And Kossuth's name has not been forgotten. He is being remembered and quoted even today; much more so than any other prominent Hungarian with American or international connections, including such widely-known personalities as Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Michael Munkácsy (1844–1900), Béla Bartók (1881–1945), Béla Lugosi (1882–1956), Imre Nagy (1896–1958), Cardinal Mindszenty (1892–1975), Zsazsa Gábor (b. 1917), George Soros (b. 1930), or Andy Grove (b. 1936).

As put by Gyula Szekfű (1877–1955), one of Hungary's greatest twentieth-century historians, "Kossuth alone did more for the popularization of Hungary and for arousing sympathy for the Hungarians than all the efforts of all the successive generations since."<sup>3</sup> This is undoubtedly an accurate assessment of Kossuth's place in Hungarian-American relations. In point of fact, Kossuth's brief presence in the United States impacted not only upon Hungary and the Hungarians, but also upon the whole of American society and politics. This was true even though – or perhaps because of the fact that – the period of his coming to America coincided with one of the most tumultuous periods in American history. It was the period

that foreshadowed the great Civil War, which pitted the anti-slavery North against the slave-owning South, and ultimately cost more American lives than all of America's other wars combined.

### **Kossuth's hold upon the American Mind**

Kossuth's presence in the United States was accompanied and followed by the publication of dozens of books, hundreds of pamphlets, thousands of articles and essays, as well as nearly two hundred poems written to him or about him.<sup>4</sup> The authors of many of these literary pieces included some of America's greatest intellectual figures, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1892), John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), Horace Greeley (1811–1872), James Russel Lowell (1819–1891), and Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).<sup>5</sup>

Kossuth's human magnetism, brilliant oratorical skills, and his very presence was so overpowering that millions of Americans fell under his spell. The name of Hungary's revolutionary "Governor-President" [*kormányzóelnök*] reverberated and resounded everywhere during the early 1850s, and his cult spread far and wide across the continent. Counties, cities, towns, streets, town squares, and even babies born during his American tour were named after him.<sup>6</sup> He even influenced American fashion during those days. The most visible manifestation of this Kossuth-fashion-craze was the appearance of the so-called "Kossuth-hat" (a tall black hat decorated with feather plumes in the front), the "Kossuth-jackets" (braided Hungarian nobleman's jackets), the "Kossuth-trousers" (Hungarian cavalry or hussar trousers), and even the "Kossuth-beard" which surrounded the individual's face in a horseshoe fashion.<sup>7</sup> The combination of these items, particularly as worn by Kossuth with his elegant noble demeanor, presented an overpowering spectacle to mid-nineteenth-century celebrity-hungry Americans.

Kossuth's influence continued for many years following his visit to the United States. As an example, barely a decade after his visit, the speech he had delivered to the Ohio Legislature in February 1852 had influenced President Lincoln in composing his now famous "Gettysburg Address" of 1863. Moreover, a century after his visit, and fifty years after his death, a World War II "liberty ship" was named after him.<sup>8</sup> Politicians and statesmen quoted Kossuth routinely on many topics, for many decades, and in many different connections. Even as recently as June 1999, when President Árpád Göncz of Hungary made his first official state visit to the United States, President Bill Clinton began his welcome speech with a quotation from one of Kossuth's orations that he had delivered a century and a

half ago.<sup>9</sup> But above and beyond this, Kossuth is the only Hungarian, whose name is generally known to most Americans, and who is represented in the United States by three life size standing statues, a life size bust, and about half a dozen bronze plaques.<sup>10</sup>

### **Kossuth's Love of America**

Kossuth grew to admire America and American democracy while studying the writings of such founding fathers as Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), George Washington (1732–1799), and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), and while reading the portrayals of such European connoisseurs of the American social and political scene as the French Marquis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) and the Hungarian Sándor Bölöni-Farkas (1790–1842). Kossuth was also familiar with the writings of such other well-known American authors as Washington Irving (1783–1859) and James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851), whose books were in his library.<sup>11</sup> To Kossuth, the young American republic across the Atlantic – at least as viewed through the prism of the above writings – represented the most ideal form of human existence. Consequently, following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Liberation (1848–1849) and his two years of exile in the Ottoman Empire (1849–1851), he naturally looked upon his upcoming visit to America with great anticipation. He hoped that during his seven to eight-month tour of the United States he would be able to persuade the American Government to end its policy of neutrality and intervene on behalf of the Hungarian cause. But Kossuth was badly mistaken. Following this so-called “triumphal tour” that reflected his extraordinary popularity among the masses – but also his inability to alter American foreign policy –, he was forced to return to Europe as a bitter and disappointed man.<sup>12</sup> Kossuth's disillusionment, however, was not with American democracy, which he continued to admire. Rather, it was with his inability to persuade America's political leadership to part with the principle of nonintervention laid down by George Washington in 1796 in his farewell address to the nation.

Kossuth's failure to achieve his political goals was not paralleled by the loss of his popularity. As shown above, the latter continued to shine for many years, as did Hungary's prestige. In point of fact, the image of Hungary and the Hungarians has never been as high and as lofty as in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Kossuth's name radiated with unparalleled brilliance and also reflected upon the fame of his nation.<sup>13</sup>

### Kossuth's Knowledge and Use of English

Kossuth was a man of great political dedication, unusual linguistic ability, and phenomenal oratorical skills, who had idealized American democracy already in his youth. His use of English was on such a high level and quality that he charmed and overpowered his audience, all of whom succumbed to his influence. This was true even for the greatest contemporary American orator, Daniel Webster (1782–1852), who also fell under Kossuth's spell, and was at a loss to divine and explain the secrets of Kossuth's oratorical ability. As described by the celebrated Hungarian actor, Gábor Egressy (1808–1866), who during his political exile became an anti-Kossuth secret informer for the Habsburg Imperial Government, Kossuth had a “supernaturally beautiful voice! Against his magic we have to tie ourselves to the mast like Ulysses, so that unwittingly we do not follow him.”<sup>14</sup>

During his tour of England and America, Kossuth often claimed that he had learned English while a political prisoner in the Castle of Buda (1837–1840), and did so solely with the help of William Shakespeare, whom he identified as “the single source of his English.”<sup>15</sup> This, however, is not quite true. Like many members of his class and generation, Kossuth had also studied and read English years before his imprisonment in 1837, which he also acknowledged in a letter to his mother.<sup>16</sup>

Shakespeare did have a major role in the development of Kossuth's English fluency, because the English Bard had become quite popular in Hungary already in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In point of fact, Kossuth himself had translated the first five scenes of *Macbeth* directly from English. (Most of the early translations came via German.)<sup>17</sup> But the English he spoke after his emergence to the limelight of international politics was not Shakespearian English, but rather the language of the Romantic Age. This has also been pointed out recently by Tibor Frank, who in his study on the governor's linguistic competence observed that “the English Kossuth spoke and wrote, its imagery, vocabulary, and style, was essentially Romantic in nature rather than Elizabethan.”<sup>18</sup> Kossuth's emphasis on Shakespeare as the sole source of his English fluency was the product of a conscious myth-making, with the intent of serving his political goals, or, as put by Frank, “to... win the goodwill of the English-speaking countries.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, “Kossuth retroactively reorganized his life-story, giving it a slightly mythological touch. He clearly understood that the source and circumstances of his knowledge of English would play a crucial role, and the gently rewritten version of his autobiography did in fact contribute to his success in putting Hungary on the political map of Europe.”<sup>20</sup> This was undoubtedly true, for whatever success Kossuth had achieved – even if of little immediate political significance – that success was largely the result of his oratorical skills delivered in the language of the highly respected English Bard.

### Kossuth and American Democracy

While in the United States, Kossuth had visited all of the major centers of American culture, learning and politics, as well as scores of minor settlements between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. Wherever he went he made speeches, hammering repeatedly on the need to enlist American support for the Hungarian cause. Altogether he delivered about 400 official addresses and many more impromptu speeches.<sup>21</sup> He delivered some of his longest and most memorable speeches on the East Coast between New York and Washington, where he also addressed the U.S. Congress. But he likewise made compelling speeches in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Indianapolis, St. Louis, New Orleans, as well as in numerous other southern and eastern cities. The most momentous among the latter was his speech delivered in Columbus, Ohio, on February 7, 1852. It was on that occasion when he uttered the oft-quoted sentence about the nature of democracy, which subsequently was borrowed in a slightly altered form by President Lincoln for his Gettysburg Address. Kossuth defined democracy as "*All for the people, and all by the people. Nothing about the people, without the people,*"<sup>22</sup> which appeared in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as "*government of the people, by the people, for the people.*"<sup>23</sup> The similarity between these two definitions of democracy has undoubtedly been recognized by others before us, for these nearly identical expressions are inscribed on commemorative plaque on one of the inner walls of Columbus City Hall,<sup>24</sup> as well as on the external wall of the Kossuth House in Washington, D.C.<sup>25</sup> Of course, these nearly identical definitions by these two great leaders contain views that have been part and parcel of the basic definition of American democracy ever since the late 18th century. They have certainly found expression in the spirit, if not in the exact words of the Constitution of the United States of America (1788).

Fifty of Kossuth's most important speeches have been incorporated into a work edited by Professor Francis W. Newman (1805–1897), the brother of Cardinal John Newman (1801–1890), with Kossuth's express approval. He published them with his own scholarly introduction in 1853.<sup>26</sup> Unavoidably, Kossuth often repeated himself, but at the same time he also introduced new elements into most of his speeches. He did this either in the way he phrased and rephrased his main ideas and political goals, or by introducing elements of local history into his speeches. Notwithstanding these repetitions, Kossuth himself regarded these fifty political addresses to have been so significant that he agreed and encouraged their publication in the above-mentioned separate volume.

In the Ohio capital Kossuth was received with great enthusiasm and much generosity by Governor Reuben Wood (1792–1864), Lieutenant Governor Joseph Medill (1823–1899), the members of the Ohio Legislature, as well as by the local chapter of the "Association of the Friends of Hungary." The latter was an organi-

zation which had branches in cities and towns throughout America, and which had been established even before Kossuth's arrival to the New World. In their enthusiasm for Kossuth, the members of the Ohio State Senate went so far as to pass a resolution which authorized the Governor of Ohio "to deliver to Louis Kossuth, constitutional Governor of Hungary, on loan, all the public arms and ammunitions of war belonging to the state ..., to be returned in good order upon the achievement of Hungarian Liberty".<sup>27</sup> This, of course, was a well-meaning, but rather naive act on the part of the Ohio Legislature, which could never have been implemented without the approval of the U.S. Government. Even the Ohio legislators realized their folly after Kossuth's departure, for subsequently they tabled this resolution and then conveniently forgot about it.

### **Kossuth and American Nonintervention**

At the time of his coming to the United States Kossuth may have been vaguely aware of America's noninterventionist sentiment inherited from the "Father of the Country," but he certainly was not aware of the depth of that sentiment. He was sure that he would be able to change this belief in favor of a new policy of intervention, particularly with the support of the newly emerging Young America Movement. "Young America was... an amorphous movement... identified with aggressive nationalism, manifest destiny, and sympathy for the European revolutions of 1848...."<sup>28</sup> The movement reached its climax at the time of Kossuth's visit to the United States, when George N. Sanders (1812–1873) of Kentucky<sup>29</sup> "formulated a program of southward expansion, aid to the republican elements in foreign countries, and free trade."<sup>30</sup> This was precisely what Kossuth needed and wanted. Thus, he established contacts with Young America even before coming to the United States. Then, upon his arrival he expanded these contacts into a close working relationship with the leaders of the movement, all of whom espoused anti-isolationist sentiments, supported America's rise to a great power position, and for the same reason advocated a policy of intervention, favored by Kossuth. The most prominent among them were Senator Lewis Cass (1782–1866) of Michigan, Senator Henry Foote (1804–1880) of Mississippi, and the French-born Senator Pierre Soulé (1801–1870) of Louisiana – the latter being not only an "advocate of American imperialism," but also "a strong protagonist of slavery."<sup>31</sup>

There were also others who sympathized with the policy of intervention, but they were generally more careful and less outspoken than the above. Moreover, they always viewed intervention from the vantage point of American foreign policy interests, and tended to disregard ethically and emotionally based arguments, which generally characterized Kossuth's speeches. Among the latter were President Zachary Taylor (1782–1850), who died unexpectedly on July 9, 1850, and Sena-

tor Stephen Arnold Douglas (1813–1861) from Illinois, known as the “little giant,” who in 1860 was Abraham Lincoln’s rival for the presidency of the United States.<sup>32</sup>

### **Triumph of Nonintervention**

Notwithstanding Kossuth’s tumultuous reception during his nearly eight months tour of the United States,<sup>33</sup> he was unable to nudge the American Government in the direction of intervention. This became evident already in January 1852, when he paid a visit to President Millard Fillmore (1800–1874), who left no doubt in Kossuth’s mind that no cause of any sort could make him break with the Washingtonian policy of nonintervention. When speaking to Kossuth, Fillmore basically pointed to his “State of the Union Message” delivered a few days earlier, where he asserted that “no individuals have the right to hazard the peace of the country, or to violate its laws upon vague notions of altering or reforming governments in other states. ... Friendly relations with all, but entangling alliances with none, has long been a maxim with us. Our true mission is not to propagate our opinions, or impose upon other countries our form of government by artifice or force; but to teach by example, and show by our success, moderation and justice, the blessings of self-government and the advantages of free institution.”<sup>34</sup>

Although initially more flexible on the idea of intervention, by the end of 1851 Daniel Webster was also of this opinion. Even before Kossuth’s arrival to the capital, Webster wrote to his friend Richard Milford Blatchford (1798–1875) that he would “treat him [Kossuth] with respect, but shall give him no encouragement that the established policy of the country will be from any degree departed from. ... If he should speak to me of the policy of intervention, I shall have ears more deaf than adders.”<sup>35</sup>

This view was generally shared by most Americans, and it gained even more currency when Kossuth began to question the Washingtonian policy of neutrality. When Kossuth undertook to criticize this policy – however slightly – it was viewed as an uncalled-for personal attack by a foreigner against the “father” of the American nation.

One of the typical examples of this new phenomenon was the attitude expressed by the Boston Unitarian clergyman, Rev. Francis Parkman, the father of the noted historian Francis Parkman (1823–1893), who, in November 1852, made the following statement about Kossuth’s efforts to undermine the Washingtonian principle of nonintervention: “No one respects the talents of Louis Kossuth more than I do. But if the Archangel Gabriel and his brother Michael were to quit their celestial homes and come to Boston, clothed in white robes and bearing palms in their hands, and should undertake to teach the doctrines of Washington’s Farewell Address – so help me heaven, not meaning to be profane, I should pluck them by

their robes and say to them, go back where you came from, praise God, and mind your own business.”<sup>36</sup>

Kossuth returned to Europe shattered and disappointed by the lack of American willingness to intervene into the affairs of Hungary and the Austrian Empire.<sup>37</sup> Like many others before and after him, he too was unable to crack America’s attachment to the policy of nonintervention that had dominated American thinking and American foreign policy for over a century, right up to World War I; and then also through much of the interwar years. Yet, his disappointment with American foreign policy never altered his admiration for American democracy, nor for American society – with the exception of the institution of slavery. Slavery was an institution that he could never fathom, and which was the second of the two major issues that had torpedoed his efforts in America.

When interviewed four decades later, at the age of eighty-eight, by James Creelman (1859–1915) of the *New York Herald*, he still held on to his belief in the greatness of American democracy. He declared that “he had lived to see all his idols shattered, all but the great republic across the Atlantic Ocean.”<sup>38</sup> And then he continued: “Your country is the one power that is steadily gaining strength. Your greatest danger is your wealth. When nations become rich they lose their energy and gradually drift away from their moral ideals. ... Yet, God forbid that harm should come to the United States, the hope of mankind in the future!”<sup>39</sup>

### **The Slavery Question in Pre-Civil War American Society**

In addition to Kossuth’s inability to break America’s attachment to the Washingtonian principle of neutrality and nonintervention, the other cause of Kossuth’s failure during his American tour was his inability to deal effectively with the slavery question. The anti-slavery forces tried to enlist him into their ranks, but Kossuth fought desperately to avoid being dragged into the quagmire of American domestic politics, which – he feared – could only hurt his cause.<sup>40</sup> His admiration for American democracy is amply demonstrated by his continued praise of the American political system and the American way of life throughout his stay in America.<sup>41</sup> His disdain for slavery, however, is couched in obtuse sentences. He feared that his remarks during those emotional antebellum times would turn half of the nation against him and thus hurt his hope for American support.

It is indicative of Kossuth’s powerful influence that his presence and views impacted even upon American domestic party politics. Following his arrival to America both political parties consciously sought his favors and his support. These included the Democratic Party, which, while saturated with the ideas of Jacksonian democracy, supported the institution of slavery; as well as the Whig Party,

which favored federalism, but opposed slavery. Kossuth's misfortune was that upon arrival to the United States he found himself right in the middle of this emotional controversy that was tearing the country apart, and taking it in the direction of a civil war.

The abolitionists, who viewed Kossuth as the "champion of human freedom," rightfully expected him to support their cause. But when this did not happen, when the "champion of liberty" declined to be dragged into the slavery controversy under the pretext of "nonintervention" – even though at the same time he advocated intervention on behalf of Hungary – many anti-slavery crusaders became disenchanted with him, and a number of them turned bitterly against him.

The most prominent among the latter was William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), the founding president of the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833), who virtually overnight turned from an ardent Kossuth-admirer into a vitriolic Kossuth-hater. According to this pioneer anti-slavery crusader, "the independence of Hungary alone absorbs his [Kossuth's] thoughts. ... He placed his selfish mission above the transcendent interest of the human race – subordinating American slavery to European political oppression."<sup>42</sup> In consequence of this decision – so Garrison claimed – Kossuth "means to be deaf, dumb, blind, in regard to it [slavery]!" Moreover, "to subserve his own purpose, and to secure the favor of a slaveholding and slave-breeding people, he skulks, he dodges, he plays fast and loose, he refuses to see a stain on the American character, any inconsistency in pretending to adore liberty and at the same time, multiplying human beings for the auction block and the slave shambles."<sup>43</sup>

Edmund Quincy, one of Garrison's major sympathizers and collaborators, also switched his views on Kossuth and defined the latter's goals in America as follows: "He came for men and for money, for loans and for bayonets, for an American legion under the Hungarian flag, for an American fleet sweeping the Baltic and thundering at the gates of St. Petersburg. The sympathy for which he asks is that uttered by the cannon's mouth and urged home at the point of bayonet. Resolutions either by mobs or of Congress are but so much foul breath, unless they stand for these things."<sup>44</sup> In other words, similarly to Garrison, Quincy also came to conclude that Kossuth had a one-track mind and only a single goal in life: the liberation of Hungary. They undoubtedly knew that he was sympathetic to the plight of the slaves, but they were also convinced that he was willing to sacrifice all basic human goals for the only goal that prompted him to visit the New World.

Having come to this conclusion, Garrison and his supporters took every chance to condemn Kossuth when the latter spoke commendingly about American society and praised American democracy. And because Hungary's ex-governor-president routinely characterized and applauded the United States as the homeland of freedom and democracy, the anti-slavery advocates invariably attacked him left and right. When Kossuth referred to the United States as "this free, great and

glorious country”<sup>45</sup> the anti-slavery crusaders countered by describing the same country as “the homeland of institutionalized slavery.” They generally drew parallels between the allegedly oppressive social and political systems of the the Habsburg Empire, and the slave-harboring society of the United States. They carried these parallels to a point where they compared Kossuth to an escaped slave, while at the same time calling Emperor Francis Joseph (r. 1848–1916) his former salve-master.<sup>46</sup>

Before Kossuth’s arrival to the United States, Garrison and his supporters were convinced that through his presence they would gain a powerful friend in their crusade against slavery. Thus they supplied him with a vast amount of anti-slavery propaganda material, and beseeched him to join their ranks in their struggle against slavery. Upon his arrival, however, when Kossuth began his unchanging praise of the United States, they inundated him with hundreds of letters and asked him to cease praising American society. Garrison himself went so far as to write a poem about slavery in America, in which he called upon Kossuth that in his capacity as “an apostle of human freedom” he should “take the slave’s part” and put his moral weight on the side of human liberty:

Say slavery is a stain upon our glory,  
 Accursed in Heaven, and by the earth abhorred;  
 Show that our soil with Negro blood is gory,  
 And certain are the judgments of the Lord;  
 So shall thy name immortal be in story,  
 And thy fidelity the world applaud.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding Garrison’s efforts, however, Kossuth declined to be drawn into the struggle against slavery, claiming that it was strictly an internal affair of the United States. In reality, having Hungary’s future in his eyesight, he tried to stay out of the slavery controversy simply because he did not wish to alienate the slaveholding interests, who may perhaps decide to support his call for a political and military intervention in Europe. Upon realizing Kossuth’s reluctance to support their cause, Garrison and the Anti-Slavery Society immediately switched trains and went on to condemn him and the whole Hungarian cause. They launched a virtual crusade against him, which at times degenerated to a series of vitriolic attacks. One of Garrison’s associates, for example, declared in reference into Kossuth that “I had rather have a great man, than the political liberation of twenty Hungarys.”<sup>48</sup>

Garrison himself went far beyond this point, launching attack after attack against the Hungarian statesman, referring to him by all sorts of derogatory adjectives. He called the former Hungarian governor-president “cowardly,” “slippery,” “selfish,” “deaf, dumb and blind,” “a criminal,” and he also claimed that Kossuth was “as demented as the renowned Don Quixote.”<sup>49</sup> He asserted that, similarly to his Spanish

predecessor, Kossuth was unable to differentiate between giant warriors and wind-mills. Moreover, his persistent praising of American society was similar to one going "into a notorious house of ill-fame, and praise its polluted inhabitants as the most virtuous of all flesh."<sup>50</sup> Garrison incorporated all of his accusations into a book-size "Letter to Louis Kossuth" in which he systematically refuted all of Kossuth's arguments concerning America as the land of liberty. He also characterized the former governor-president of Hungary as a double-faced hypocrite, who is willing to say and do virtually anything to curry favor with Americans, so as to gain their financial, political, and military support for the Hungarian cause.<sup>51</sup> Thereafter, Kossuth remained a perpetual target of Garrison's venomous attacks, who seized every opportunity to discredit the exiled Hungarian statesman and thus undercut his effort to gain American support for his national cause.

### Conclusions

Kossuth's attitude toward the slavery question in pre-Civil War America is perhaps understandable from the vantage point of an exiled statesman, whose primary goal was to liberate his own country. In retrospect, however, it appears to have been both blundering and unethical. Kossuth's questionable approach to the emotional problem of human slavery resulted in the loss of some of his moral credit, as well as the support of a significant segment of American society. Moreover, staying out of the slavery question did not really gain him any support from the South. The Southern slave-holders were fully aware that Kossuth's basic sentiments were against slavery, and that his lack of support of the anti-slavery campaign was simply a calculated political decision. Consequently, Kossuth never acquired any friends in the deep South, and his tour of the southern states brought him very little acclaim and even less expression of support. The lack of warm reception and support in the South could not really be counterbalanced by the visible (if empty) success of his tour in the northern states. True, he was continuously feted, celebrated, and paid homage to in the North, but most of these celebrations constituted only a flash in the pan, without the promise of meaningful political and financial support. As such, upon his return to Europe, Kossuth could only take with him the memory of romantic speeches and sonorous celebrations, along with a whole set of political accusations and recriminations, but without any hope of support by the United States.

In light of the above, in July 1852, Kossuth returned to Europe as a deeply disappointed man, and did so under the pseudonym of Mr. Alexander Smith. Notwithstanding the show of mass sympathy in the North, he was unable to budge the young American Republic from its path of neutrality and non-involvement. Moreover, by his neutral stand on the slavery question he lost some of his political pres-

tige and his personal credibility. It is a marvelous act of fate, that this loss of prestige turned out to be only a temporary phenomenon.

Kossuth's disappointment with the United States was very deep. This disappointment, however – as emphasized earlier – did not alter his respect for American democracy, which he retained throughout his long exile. In point of fact he was convinced even in his old age that “if the experiment of self-government does not succeed in the United States, it cannot be successful anywhere.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, outside the reprehensible institution of southern slavery (which was solved by the bloody Civil War a decade after Kossuth return to Europe) Kossuth's disappointment was basically with the American presidency, whose powers, in his view, were too broad and too comprehensive in the conduct of foreign affairs.<sup>53</sup> He was thoroughly convinced that his own failure in America was due not so much to George Washington's anti-interventionist views, but rather to the isolationist policies of President Millard Fillmore (r. 1850–1853).

A century and a half has passed since Kossuth's American tour. Since then, many hundreds of thousands of Hungarians have immigrated to the United States. Most were average people. But their ranks also contained many noted and prominent personalities, among them internationally known scientists, inventors, artists, statesmen, musicians, and scholars.<sup>54</sup> Yet, none of them can or could vie with Kossuth in popularity. Although deceased well over a century ago, to the average American it is still Kossuth who best represents Hungary and the Hungarians. He is still the Hungarian most quoted by statesmen and politicians, and whenever we hear Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, it is still Kossuth's words that ring in our ears. Kossuth's name and fame is still intimately intertwined with American democracy.

#### Notes

1. Since during the last few years I have published over half a dozen articles about Kossuth and his relationship to the United States, it is unavoidable that the current study should contain some duplications. Some of my most important relevant studies include: (1) “Kossuth amerikai ‘diadalútja’ 1851–1852-ben” [Kossuth's ‘Triumphant Tour’ of America in 1851–1852], *Debreceni Szemle* [Debrecen Review], New Series, 6/3 (1998): 331–339; (2) “Louis Kossuth's Words in Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address,” *Eurasian Studies Yearbook* 71 (1999): 27–32; (3) “Kossuth Lajos hatása az amerikai társadalomra és közgondolkodásra” [Louis Kossuth's Impact upon American Society and Mentality], *Valóság* [Reality] 42/9 (September 1999): 36–43; (4) “Kossuth és az amerikai demokrácia” [Kossuth and American Democracy], in *Emlékkönyv L. Nagy Zsuzsa 70. születésnapjára* [Memorial Volume on the Occasion of Zsuzsa L. Nagy's 70th Birthday], eds. János Angi and János Barta (Debrecen: Multiplex Media–Debrecen University Press, 2000), 173–182; (5) “Kossuth Lajos Amerikában 1851–1852-ben” [Louis Kossuth in American in 1851–1852], *Amerikai Magyar Népszava / Szabadság* [American Hungarian People's Voice / Liberty], 111/17 (May 11, 2001): 14–16; and (6) “Epilogue.

- Kossuth and Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” in *The Life of Governor Louis Kossuth, with his Public Speeches in the United States, and with a Brief History of the Hungarian War of Independence*. Illustrated by Handsome Engravings. By An Officer of the Hungarian Army (New York: Published at 128 Nassau Street, 1852. Reprinted in Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), 181–199.
2. In Hungarian I publish under the name “Várdy Béla.”
  3. Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfü, *Magyar történet* [Hungarian History], 5 vols. (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1943), V. 453.
  4. See Joseph Széplaki, *Louis Kossuth: “The Nation’s Guest”* (Ligonier, PA: Bethlen Press, Inc., 1976), 11. Széplaki lists over 1600 mostly contemporary publications that deal with Kossuth, among them 189 poems addressed to the Hungarian statesman. Kossuth’s unusual popularity is demonstrated, among others, by Reverend Edmund [Ödön] Vasváry’s (1888–1977) archival collection of Hungarica-Americana, which after his death ended up in his native city of Szeged, Hungary. About ten percent of the collection – 34 out of 436 boxes – deal with Kossuth and his relationship to America. Cf. András Csillag, “The Edmund Vasváry Collection,” *Hungarian Studies* 1/1 (1985): 123–130. Concerning Rev. Vasváry, see Steven Béla Várdy, “Reverend Edmund Vasváry: Personal Reminiscences about a Chronicler of the Hungarian–American Past,” *Eurasian Studies Yearbook* 71 (1999): 207–212; and Várdy Béla, “Vasváry Ödön, az amerikai-magyar múlt krónikása” [Edmund Vasváry, Chronicler of the American–Hungarian Past], *Vasváry Collection Newsletter* 19 (1998/1): 3–4.
  5. Greeley’s, Whittier’s, Emerson’s, and Lowell’s tributes to Kossuth are reprinted in Endre Sebestyén, *Kossuth. A Magyar Apostle of World Democracy* (Pittsburgh: Expert Printing Company, 1950), 207–218.
  6. Concerning this Kossuth-cult, in addition to Széplaki’s above-cited work, see Kende Géza, *Magyarok Amerikában. Az amerikai magyarság története* [Hungarians in America. The History of Hungarian Americans], 2 vols. (Cleveland: A Szabadság Kiadása, 1927), I, 77–115; István Gál, “Az amerikai Kossuth-kultusz” [American Kossuth Cult], in István Gál, *Magyarország, Anglia és Amerika* [Hungary, England, and Amerika] (Budapest: Officina, 1944), 187–194; Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America. A Study in Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848–1852* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 29–81; John H. Komlós, *Kossuth in America, 1851–1852* (Buffalo: East European Institute, State University of New York College at Buffalo, 1973), 75–94; and Sebestyén, *Kossuth*, 205–218.
  7. See Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 60–63.
  8. Béla Várdy, *Magyarok az újvilágban* [Hungarians in the New World] (Budapest: Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000), 384.
  9. The author and his wife, Dr. Agnes Huszár Várdy, were invited guests at this White House reception for President Göncz on June 8, 1999.
  10. These include the full standing Kossuth-statues of Cleveland (1902), New York City (1929), Algona, Kossuth County, Iowa (2001), and the Kossuth-bust in the U.S. Capitol (1990). Bronze plaques can be found in Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Columbus, St. Louis, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and perhaps a few other cities. Unfortunately, a recently published handbook that contains a list of Kossuth-statues in America, fails to mention the original one in Cleveland. See *Magyar Amerika. A tengerentúli magyarok mai élete történetekben és képekben* [Hungarian America. The Current Life of Overseas Hungarians in Stories and in Pictures], ed. László Tanka (Budapest: Médiamix Kiadó, 2002), 211.
  11. György Szabad, “Kossuth on the Political System of the United States of America,” in *Etudes Historiques Hongroises 1975* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), I, 510–511; and Tibor Frank, “Give me Shakespeare: Lajos Kossuth’s English as an Instrument of International Politics,” in Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making. Studies on Hungarian Connections to Britain*

- and America, 1848-1945* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999), 210–211; hereafter: Frank, “Kossuth’s English.”
12. On Kossuth’s tour of the United States, see Várdy, “Kossuth amerikai ‘diadalútja,’” 331–339.
  13. On the changing image of Hungarians in the United States, see Steven Béla Várdy, “Image and Self-Image among Hungarian-Americans since the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *East European Quarterly* 35/3 (September 2001): 309–342; and its two slightly different Hungarian versions: Béla Várdy, “A magyarság változó képe Amerikában az elmúlt másfél évszázadban” [Changing Image of the Hungarians in America during the Past Century and a Half], *Valóság* [Reality] 43/9 (September 2000): 70–89; and “A magyarságkép alakulása és jelenlegi állása az Egyesült Államokban” [The Development and Current Status of the Hungarian Image in the United States], in *A XL. Magyar Találkozó Krónikája* [Proceedings of the 40th Hungarian Congress], ed. Gyula Nádas (Cleveland, Ohio: Árpád Könyvkiadó Vállalat, 2001), 46–65.
  14. Gábor Egressy, as quoted in Andor M. Leffler, *The Kossuth Episode in America* (Ph.D. dissertation, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 1949), 95; and in Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 54–55.
  15. Frank, “Kossuth’s English,” 211.
  16. Kossuth’s letter to his mother, December 24, 1837, published in *Kossuth Lajos iratai, 1837. május – 1840. december* [Lajos Kossuth’s Papers, May 1837 – December 1840], vol. 7, ed. Gábor Pajkossy (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), 317; also quoted by Frank, “Kossuth’s English,” 210.
  17. The first to do so was Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831), who translated Hamlet from German in 1790. Cf. Miklós Szenczi, Tibor Szobotka, Anna Katona, *Az angol irodalom története* [The History of English Literature] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1972), 139.
  18. Frank, “Kossuth’s English,” 222.
  19. *Ibid.*, 223.
  20. *Ibid.*
  21. See Leffler, *The Kossuth Episode in America*, 31.
  22. See the article “Ohio Legislature,” *Ohio State Journal* (February 7, 1952). I would like to thank Mr. Béla Kovách of Columbus, Ohio, for sending me xeroxed copies of the *Journal*’s relevant pages. The manuscript version of Kossuth’s speech can be found in the Széchényi National Library, Budapest, Analekta 10467, which appeared in a printed form already in 1853. Cf. *Selected Speeches of Kossuth. Condensed and abridged with Kossuth’s express sanction*, ed. Francis W. Newman (London: Trübner & Co., 1853), 185. See also Széplaki, *Louis Kossuth. The Nation’s Guest*, 10; Sebestyén, *Kossuth*, 130; and Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 119.
  23. For Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” see *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–1955), VII, 23.
  24. Széplaki, *Louis Kossuth*, 11. This similarity has also been noted by György Szabad in his “Kossuth on the Political System of the United States of America,” 513–515.
  25. The author personally examined the plaque at the Kossuth House.
  26. Newman, *Selected Speeches of Kossuth*. The speeches delivered in Cleveland and Columbus respectively were printed in *Report of the Special Committee appointed by the Common Council of the City of New York to Make Arrangements for the Reception of Gov. Louis Kossuth, the Distinguished Hungarian Patriot*. (New York, 1852), 527–563. Many of the drafts of Kossuth’s speeches are deposited in the Hungarian National Archives, R 90. 28.
  27. Quoted in Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 119.
  28. Richard B. Morris, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 217.

29. George Nicholas Sanders of Kentucky was the editor-in-chief of the influential *The Democratic Review*, which became a fanatical herald of the policy of American expansionism and interventionism. See Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 116–120.
30. *Ibid.*, 217–218.
31. *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. IX. 406.
32. *Ibid.*, 18–27, 37–47, 112–116, 137–140.
33. Concerning the main stops on Kossuth's tour of the United States, see Joseph Széplaki, *Louis Kossuth*, 22–24.
34. *Congressional Globe*, 31st Congress, 1st Session, p. 15; quoted by Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 103.
35. Webster to Blatchford, December 30, 1851, in *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1903), XVIII, 501–502; also quoted by Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 100.
36. Quoted in Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *The Journal of Richard Henry Dana*, ed. Robert F. Lucid, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), II, 52; and Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 172.
37. Kossuth's lack of success in gaining American military and political support for the Hungarian cause is discussed by this author in his above cited study, "Kossuth amerikai 'diadalútja,'" 331–339.
38. James Creelman, *On the Great Highway. The Wanderings and Adventures of a Special Correspondent* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1901), 243.
39. *Ibid.*, 253.
40. On Kossuth and the slavery question, see Várdy, "Kossuth és az amerikai demokrácia," especially 178–180.
41. See Gyula Szekfű, "Az öreg Kossuth, 1867–1894" [Old Kossuth, 1867–1894], in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. Évfordulójára*, [Memorial Volume on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of Louis Kossuth's Birth], 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952), II, 341–433.
42. *The Liberator*, vol. 22 (1852), 138; quoted in William Lloyd Garrison, *The Story of His Life as Told by His Children*, 4 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1894), III, 340, 345. See also Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 143.
43. *The Liberator*, vol. 22, (1852) p. 203; quoted in John L. Thomas, *The Liberator: William Lloyd Garrison* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1963), 371. See also Komlós, *Kossuth in America*, 141.
44. Edmund Quincy's article in the December 18, 1851 issue of *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Cf. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 80.
45. This phenomenon was also noted by Frederick Douglass (1817–1895), a noted black publicist with close connections to William Lloyd Garrison. Cf. *The Liberator*, vol. 21 (December 12, 1851). Cf. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 72.
46. *Ibid.*, 71–72, 103–104.
47. Wendel Phillips Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805–1879*. 4 vols. (Boston, 1889), III, 346. See also Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 71.
48. William H. Furness to William Lloyd Garrison, 1851. december 30; reprinted in Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison*, vol. 3, p. 347. See also Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 78.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *The Liberator*, vol. 21, December 18, 1851. Cf. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 78.

51. William Lloyd Garrison, "Letter to Louis Kossuth concerning Freedom and Slavery in the U.S.," in *The Liberator*, January 9 and February 20, 1852. See also Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 76–81.
52. *On the Great Highway*, 253.
53. Concerning Kossuth's view of the power of the American presidency, see Szabad, "Kossuth and the Political System of the United States," 25–28.
54. Concerning Hungarian immigration to the United States see the following major works: Emil Lengyel, *Americans from Hungary* (Philadelphia–New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1948); Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States, 1880–1914* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982); Steven Béla Várdy, *The Hungarian-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985); Steven Béla Várdy and Agnes Huszár Várdy, *The Austro-Hungarian Mind: At Home and Abroad* (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1989); Albert Tezla, *The Hazardous Quest. Hungarian Immigrants in the United States, 1895–1920* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1993); Julianna Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, trans. Zora Ludwig (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000); and the already cited Várdy, *Magyarok az újvilágban*.