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Education in the Mother Tongue: The Perpetuation of Ethnic Consciousness among Hungarian-Americans, 1890–1920

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A century ago, Hungarian immigrants to the United States could send their children to Catholic elementary schools in Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio, and South Bend, Indiana, where they were taught for a part of the school-day *in* Hungarian. The schools established in these cities by Hungarian communities prove the parents' ambition, but they primarily fulfilled the requirements of Church authorities. The American Catholic Church laid stress on the founding of Catholic parochial schools by its parishes — especially after the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884.[1] The parishioners were strictly ordered by their bishops to open schools soon after the establishment of a church. The intent was to fortify the institutions of the Catholic Church, which was in a minority in the United States, and to spread the education based on Catholic values in opposition to the predominantly Protestant public schools.

The Church could not deal consistently with the question of the "new immigrants" and their place in the education system. The "liberal" bishops wished to save the Catholic faith and morals through Americanizing the immigrants, while the "conservatives" believed that accelerating the natural speed of the immigrants' assimilation process could be dangerous, and were more tolerant toward the idea of education in native languages. The German Catholics viewed the parish schools as a channel for transmitting the language and the culture in addition to being the means of furthering religious education. Czech and Polish immigrants also built their school network in a similar spirit.[2] The small groups which joined the immigration wave later intended to do the same but lacked the financial resources. In any case by the time of their arrival in large numbers,

both American society and the whole immigration process had changed totally.

The First Hungarian Schools in America

This was especially true in the case of Hungarian (Magyar) immigrants who, amongst other peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, came in large numbers only in the first decade of the 20th century.[3] The short period of time at their disposal, about two decades before World War I, was just one explanation for the underdeveloped state of their educational structure. Similarly, the relatively small number of Hungarian immigrants is only one of the arguments in explaining their relatively feeble efforts to keep the native language alive.

The three parish schools mentioned above represent a very early stage of the Hungarian-American educational system. The first was opened in Cleveland (1893) in a single-story building with wooden walls with a single class and a teacher. It would be expanded during the next couple of years, and in 1900 more than 350 students were taught in a two-story brick building. In Toledo and South Bend the schools were consecrated together with the churches in 1899 and 1900 respectively. The language of instruction was *English* in all the three schools, with Hungarian reading, writing, and history being taught. usually an hour a day, by the parish priests.[4] In addition to the slow structural development, the Hungarian immigrants' schools also suffered from a lack of support from the congregations. In South Bend a debate started three years after the opening of the schools mainly because of the extra costs that the language instruction for immigrant children entailed.[5]

In Bridgeport, Connecticut, another kind of school was tried out. A day school was opened during the summer vacation of 1897. In it, Hungarian geography, history, writing, reading, and religious courses were taught in Hungarian for a couple of weeks. At the end of the session, the examinations were open to the public. The experiment was so successful that the congregation started to collect money to establish a permanent Hungarian school. The school was started and the Hungarian Government sent the textbooks for the first four grades. Yet the experiment failed, and the school was closed in 1899. From that time on only summer schools provided an opportunity for learning in Hungarian. Such schools were then organized by the Reformed congregations of Cleveland and South

Norwalk, Connecticut. During the school year just the religious education was offered in Hungarian, in the Sunday schools.[6]

The development progressed in one of two ways: 1) establishing parochial schools that always intended to teach subjects in Hungarian, or 2) organizing regular Saturday or Sunday and summer courses. Hungarian (Hungarian-English) day schools paralleling the public schools could not be maintained permanently even though they were deemed to be feasible both by immigrant community leaders and the government back in Hungary. The *Szabadság* (Liberty), a daily Hungarian-language newspaper in Cleveland, pressed the Hungarian Government to support the establishment of Hungarian schools independent of the Church because, as the editor put it, "the Hungarians [here] are not and will not be able to establish and maintain such schools."[7]

The Attitude of the Hungarian Government

In the beginning the Hungarian Government supported the establishment of Hungarian day schools (though religious ones only) after the program known as "American Action" started in 1903 to support the emigrants. What the Hungarian authorities wanted to achieve through their "Action" was to help the migrants to return to their homeland.[8] In order to do this — as the plan, presented to His Majesty the Emperor-King Francis-Joseph, stipulated — "we need to keep the national consciousness awake which most surely can be done by ecclesiastical organization, the setting up of schools, and the supporting of the patriotic newspapers."[9] A lack of schools teaching in Hungarian would keep many of the parents from coming home because of the children's questionable future, the plan stated. As the support was understood in the plan, the Hungarian communities that were willing to provide the salary of the English teacher prescribed by American legislation would be provided with a Hungarian teacher sent to America *and* paid by the Hungarian Government. The already established practice of the Hungarian state-financed elementary schools in Bukovina, Rumania, and in Croatia was to be transplanted into the totally different American environment. Thus, theoretically, the Hungarian authorities stood for the concept of the nationality schools teaching in the mother tongue. They were ready to accept the idea that half the subjects, mainly those "indifferent... from the national viewpoint," should be taught in English.[10] In short, the Hungarian Government

intended to set up Hungarian schools in the United States similar to the ones existing in Hungary at that time.

The Schools of the Protestant Congregations

As a first step of the "American Action" program, in 1904 the Reformed Church of Hungary sent one of its officials, Count Dégenfeld, to the United States to survey the Hungarian Protestant congregations there.[11] Dégenfeld found hardly anything encouraging about the education of the children of Hungarian immigrants. He visited twenty congregations. Most of these had religious instruction for the members of the second generation, but only one of them had a modest-sized Hungarian day school — this was in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.[12]

Dégenfeld's suggestion that congregations should sponsor Magyar day schools in the United States, was received with little enthusiasm. While ten of the congregations he visited decided to join the Reformed Church of Hungary, only those in Cleveland, Bridgeport, and New York seemed to be willing to establish regular Magyar day schools. Furthermore, only the one in Bridgeport offered to pay the minimal teachers' allowance ($250 a year) to a Hungarian-speaking teacher, but promised nothing to the English teachers at all who would had to be hired by the school also.

What was behind this indifferent attitude? In his report Dégenfeld listed most of the reasons, though he did not analyze them. He considered the question of the schools to be one of the most important, and he was convinced that "ordinary Hungarian ecclesiastical schools should be set up even at major financial cost."[13] The relative weakness and poverty of the churches was a great problem. Seven congregations had no church buildings of their own, thus these could not have schools either — classes were often held in church basements in those days. In many cases the members of the congregation did not live near the church, but were spread out over a large area. Furthermore, the size of many immigrant congregations fluctuated greatly as their members kept relocating to distant places in search of employment. All these factors contributed to these churches' financial troubles, in Dégenfeld's opinion.

The issue of the schools was also complicated in some places by the presence of bilingual Slovak members in the otherwise Hungarian Protestant congregations. (This problem was even more true of the

Catholic parishes.) And, in some cases, not even the Hungarian members of the congregations believed that Magyar instruction was all that important. "Unfortunately," reported Dégenfeld, "I also heard such opinion even in the Pittsburgh presbytery, that Hungarian teaching was unnecessary and that English was the only useful language in America."[14]

Parents had some interest in the question of the teaching of their children in the mother tongue in school. Those parents who came to America to work temporarily and then to return to Hungary wanted their children to have a Hungarian education lest they would feel as strangers once they returned home. At the same time the intention to return was coupled with the urge to save money. As a result these parents preferred to send their children to the public schools that were free than to the church-operated schools which charged tuition fees. These parents were satisfied with a limited amount of Hungarian instruction for their offspring during the vacation periods. Those parents who did not want to return to Hungary saw quite clearly that their children had to learn English in order to be successful in American society. The easiest way to learn English was certainly by attending the public schools.

At that time, the General Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary did not see how serious these problems were. The preparations to open "Hungarian" schools in America's Magyar settlements were continued even though the next delegate sent from Hungary to the United States, László Bede, clearly pointed out that the lack knowledge of English posed a danger for the children's future.[15] One of the main tasks of Bede was to find a solution for Hungarian-America's "school problem." In his report on his mission Bede claimed that "the result of setting up schools and the conditions of setting up more, do not meet our requirements partly because of the financial conditions of the Church and partly because of certain restrictive State laws on education."[16]

According to Bede's information, only English-language schools were legal in Connecticut. Schools teaching in a foreign language were legal in Pennsylvania if half of the subjects were taught in English. Such schools were also legal in the states of New York and New Jersey, but English teaching was also compulsory there as well. Based on similar legislation and the circumstances of the Hungarian congregations, Bede thought the establishment of schools with daily instruction in Hungarian to be possible in the New York City, Passaic, and Phoenixville parishes. In his opinion the earlier plans had to be changed, and Hungarian reading, writing, history, and geography should be taught parallel with the com-

pulsory subjects, but only after regular school hours or during holidays. He believed that one reason to do so was that children "preferred to be in public schools to learn ordinary subjects." With half the children's instruction accomplished in the public schools, the cost of their overall education would be lower.[17]

In spite of all this, in September, 1907 the Hungarian authorities opened the Magyar day schools they had been planning in New York City and in Passaic. In Bridgeport they chose the evening and holiday version, because of Connecticut's laws. The Hungarian Government specified that instruction in these schools should be in Hungarian only, that all children should be accepted regardless of their religious affiliation, that no tuition fee should be charged, and that books and school supplies had to be provided to them free as well. The teachers' salary was conditional on there being at least fifty students and the teacher had to double as the cantor of the parish as well.[18]

Unfortunately for the advocates of these schools, the results were disappointing. In New York City the school functioned only for one year because of the limited interest shown in it by parents. In Passaic, the teacher had a quarrel with the congregation at the end of the first school-year and teaching ended.[19] The representative of the Synod had to report: "minority schools do not have a future in the United States, we can only try schools on Saturdays, Sundays, and on holidays."[20] Within these schools and under appropriate leadership "we can teach Hungarian children to write, read, and count and we can also bring a vague picture of their homeland to their minds and hearts but there can be no doubt about the fact that the emigrants' children born in the United States, and their grandchildren even more, will be totally Americans who will not return to Hungary for good."[21] Hungarian-American clergymen were also aware that parents who knew no English preferred to send their children to schools where they could learn English in order to help their parents in their quest to learn basic English.[22]

At about this time the Hungarian Government received information about negative experiences of two Hungarian Greek-Rite Catholic elementary schools. A parochial school teaching in English and Hungarian had been started in Cleveland even before the launching of the "American Action" in 1903. Similar education had started in South Lorain, Ohio in the fall of 1906. Members of the parishes of these places, "day labourers in factories," had applied many times for a teacher for the school they had built "without any support, amidst very hard working conditions."[23] The

Government in Budapest sent a qualified Hungarian teacher, the necessary books, and school equipment to each place. The Hungarian authorities made it clear that they expected children of other religions to be admitted to these schools as well. Unfortunately they soon learned that the priests of the local Roman Catholic parishes and the pastors of the Reformed Church congregations did not allow the children under their supervision to go to the Greek Catholic schools.

In times of economic hardship, most Hungarian-American parents did not want and often could not pay the tuition required by the church schools. Others preferred to send their children to public schools because they were not taught proper English in the Hungarian school. (A father took his daughter out of school because she could not understand the butcher's bill that was written in English.) Counsellor Lajos Ambrózy, who visited Hungarian settlements on behalf of the Hungarian Government, wrote: "Children become Americans in their feelings and emotions in spite of their perfectly spoken Hungarian."[24] On the basis of Ambrózy's and other similar experiences, the Hungarian Government closed the Greek Catholic schools of Cleveland and South Lorain and recalled their teachers.

The Hungarian newspapers in the United States protested this action. They accused "official Hungary" of not caring about the Hungarian emigrants.[25] Ambrózy's astute observations show clearly that the expectations of the Hungarian Government could not be attained by the Magyar day schools in the United States. The Budapest authorities wanted to establish institutions that served their interests and would have prevented the assimilation of Hungarian immigrants in the United States. When these aims could not be realized, they lowered their requirements and came up with new guidelines. The new scheme matched better the modest aims of Bede, and it also tried to use the meagre financial resources more efficiently.

Mother Tongue Education Outside Regular Schooldays

The real solution lay in organizing weekend and summer schools. After the failure of the experiments with day schools, the Hungarian Government urged the Hungarian-American churches to introduce this form of education. The congregations were advised to include appropriate classroom space in their plans for church buildings. Teaching became the

ministers' task and the money for the teachers' salary was stopped, except in Cleveland.[26] Even though this form of education was not developed at all at that time, the Hungarian official decision accepted the local Hungarian-American practice and made it compulsory. In 1907 only five of the sixteen congregations affiliated with the Reformed Church of Hungary had Sunday schools and only six of them organized courses during school holidays (Saturdays or during the summer) with almost 300 students.[27] By 1911, when the Synod's decree was introduced, the situation had improved. In that year there were 20 affiliated congregations and 12 had vacation schools — with a total of 677 students. By 1915 the number of students had increased to 2300.[28]

We should also mention congregations affiliated with the American Churches. Some of these also had schools where classes were taught in Hungarian. In Lorain, Ohio, for example, there had been a Hungarian school for more than a hundred children every summer since 1905. The small Presbyterian community in Wharton, Ohio introduced summer school in 1907. Some wealthy "non-joiner" congregations could afford qualified teachers from Hungary. One of them was the Bridgeport congregation that was affiliated with the Reformed Church of the United States. Here Lajos Ambrózy found 250 students, while there were only 25–30 students in a school of the congregation affiliated with the mother Church in Hungary. Both schools held classes three times a week, in the evenings and on Saturday, and they used books from Hungary.[29]

The Hungarian Government developed a uniform program for the summer schools. It prescribed the curriculum and provided pedagogical guidelines. Subjects of the summer schools were to be: *Hungarian language* (speaking and listening practice, reading, writing, grammar), *History of the Hungarian Nation*, *The Constitution*, *Geography of Hungary*, *Singing* (folk songs, patriotic songs, and religious songs). The program was based on textbooks for elementary schools that were used in Hungary. These books were supplied to the Hungarian-American summer schools by the Hungarian Government through the Synod. In addition, the local deans were required to supervise the summer schools regularly. The purpose of this program was similar to the earlier program of Hungarian day-schools: to make sure that the children of Hungarian immigrants became familiar with the Magyar language and the country of their parents, so that their ignorance of these would not to keep the parents from going home.[30]

Teaching was a big burden for the pastors, especially in the bigger congregations where they often had more than 100 children to deal with. They were not paid for the teaching but those who achieved significant results were given some small bonus. Many of the ministers had their wives and children help them with the teaching. Many of the congregations had to pay a local teacher as well, who usually did not have the proper qualifications. The largest school of the Reformed congregations was in Cleveland, with around 300 students in attendance. As an unusual exception, this school and its a nursery-school had two teachers paid by the Government of Hungary.[31]

Seeing the difficulties experienced by some congregations, the Hungarian authorities sent assistant pastors to the larger communities, for example to Detroit, where a day nursery-school was opened in 1911. The Government supplied all the equipment for the nursery-school (just as in Cleveland).[32] Besides the summer school and the nursery-school, the local church in Detroit opened a regular day school in Magyar and English in 1914 without any homeland assistance. But financial troubles split the congregation, and the pastor, who had been keen on the school, had to resign his position. However, the school was maintained even by his successor, though with reduced ambitions. The Reformed congregation in Detroit had *daily* Hungarian instruction even in the 1930s, held after the regular school day.[33]

The Hungarian program, the requirements, and the books of the Hungarian elementary schools, established very high standards for the Hungarian-American students and teachers. Not everyone was pleased by the situation. Sándor Kalassay, the dean of the Western Classis of the Hungarian Reformed Church in America, claimed that a program should have been set up which better fit the local circumstances. In his opinion the Hungarian schools in the United States needed special textbooks.[34] On the whole, however, financial help from the mother Church in Hungary affected very positively the education of the second generation in America. If the First World War had not intervened, the help from Hungary could have continued. Local efforts and aid from the mother country could have been coordinated more effectively and the quest for the preservation of the Hungarian-American communities' ethnic heritage could have continued with better results throughout the interwar decades.

The rivalry between the congregations belonging to the Reformed Church of Hungary and those affiliated with the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of the United States, the so-called "affiliation war", had

some beneficial impact on the development of the schools belonging to the Protestant churches. On the whole, however, denominational divisions within Hungarian-American communities were a source of weakness for the Magyar ethnic group in America. The rivalry among the various denominations extended to the issue of the establishment of schools. The Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States also financed their Hungarian congregations' schools. Except for the teachers' salary, the Presbyterians maintained a Hungarian day school in New York City, in Harlem, and a nursery-school in Cleveland and in Detroit for a couple of years.[35] These congregations could not count on Hungarian support because of their affiliation with the American Churches rather than the Hungarian. Once the bishop of Debrecen, Hungary, sent a large number of textbooks (1,300 pounds) to these "non-joiners," which made the members of the congregations affiliated with the Hungarian Church protest profusely. They hardly had grounds to complain, since each affiliated congregation had received a library of 100–150 volumes of textbooks as well as great many Protestant religious publications from Hungary.[36]

Mother Tongue Education in the Catholic Parishes

Most of the emigrants from Hungary to the United States (about 60%) were Catholic. Despite this numerical strength, Magyar Catholic parishes were organized more slowly than the Protestant congregations. The Hungarian establishment and Hungary's R.C. church authorities began paying real attention to the emigrant Catholics' problems only after 1910. Before then they proceeded with much caution. Starting with the "American Action", only priests reliable from the "patriotic viewpoint" were slated to be sent to serve Hungarian immigrants in the United States. This cautious approach came from the desire of not getting involved in any conflicts with the American Catholic Church, and from a respect for the hierarchical structure of the Church. Another problem was a shortage of priests in Hungary.[37]

Catholic Hungarians in the United States repeatedly appealed to church authorities in Hungary for help with the education of their children. The parish priest in Trenton, New Jersey, applied for financial support for a Hungarian parochial school as early as 1904. "There are not going to be Hungarian speaking people here in 20 years," he wrote,

"because socialism and English schools will turn our people away from their homeland."[38] The first convention of Hungarian Catholics in the United States suggested to the Hungarian Government that schools should be set up in every parish where more than 60 Catholic students could be found. The parish priest in McKeesport wanted to "import" nuns from Hungary as early as 1903, but he could only realize this plan in 1912. In the meanwhile he started a summer school which then functioned every year and managed to get free textbooks from Hungary. The parishioners themselves paid the cantor-teacher's allowance.[39]

We can also learn from the sources that Hungarian instruction was not considered very important everywhere. According to a report, Károly Bőhm, the most respected Hungarian Catholic priest in the United States, was himself a "great opponent" of it. In his parochial school ten English-speaking nuns taught 650 students in 1906 but "no one teaches the children to read in Hungarian." Only a few parents dared to send their children in secret to the Greek Catholic Hungarian parochial school which also existed in the same community.[40]

In most cases, Hungarian-American Catholics had to establish their schools themselves. Their chances for success greatly depended on the local bishops' attitudes, the financial state of the local churches and the ethnic composition of the parishes. The situation was illustrated by the experiences of two parishes. The already mentioned Catholic school in South Bend would have liked to employ a teacher sent and paid from Hungary. According to the Hungarian authorities the teacher's salary could be paid from Hungary only if at least half of the courses were taught in Hungarian. The parish priest, lacking the permission of his bishop, could not meet this condition, and he could not employ the teacher. Characteristically the parish intended to invite a teacher who spoke Hungarian, Slovak, and German.[41] In contrast, the Szent László (St. Ladislaus) Roman Catholic congregation in New Brunswick could maintain a four-grade Hungarian day school with episcopal permission and without any assistance from the homeland, between 1907 and 1914. Teaching took place in the basement of the church, in very modest circumstances. The morning courses were held in Hungarian and matched the education in Hungary. In the afternoon a qualified American teacher taught in the English language. This arrangement lasted for seven years. It clearly benefitted the community from the religious, ethnic, and national points of view.

Unfortunately, the social problems that caused the failure of the day schools of the Protestant congregations were not absent in the case of the Catholic parishes either. One of the priests who served the Szent László parish later explained: "The all-Hungarian school became a disadvantage for the future of our young people. They were left behind in the field of American education, the necessary elite were not reared and if they were, we lost them." It is also a fact that many of the children in the parish attended the public schools. On the basis of these experiences a six-room school was built where education went according to the standard of the American public schools. Teaching was not in Hungarian. Furthermore, only the Magyar language was taught during certain hours to the students. The ethnic-national education of the second generation was carried out only in the totally Hungarian nursery-school, in the supplementary courses of the elementary school, in religious classes, and in the cultural activities outside of school hours. The nuns that came from Hungary played an important role in the later type of activities.[42]

Two significant developments took place in connection with the Catholic schools before World War I: 1) the Hungarian Government donated a of lots of books to almost all of the Hungarian parishes; 2) two of the Hungarian orders of nuns started to work in the United States. Both were inspired by the intention to extend the "American Action" program to Catholics as well. The Government could not ignore the Catholics' demands any more. The paucity of priests became more and more serious as time passed. As a result of the Hungarian Government's support for the Reformed (and even certain Slovak and Ruthenian) congregations, discontent arose amongst the Catholics. Not surprisingly new appeals for help were addressed to the Government. Expanding the Catholic branch of the "American Action" program was made easier by the discovery that a Catholic organization in Hungary independent of the Government, the St. Ladislaus Society, was willing to assume a role in helping America's Hungarian parishes. The Society's involvement also had the advantage of not giving the American Catholic hierarchy an excuse to protest official Hungarian "intervention" in the affairs of the Catholic Church in the United States.[43]

In time the Government in Budapest extended the program designed for the schools of the Reformed congregations to the Catholics as well. The original syllabus of the summer schools was not to be changed except at points where it was required according to the Roman and Greek Catholic canons, in the religious and singing courses. The Government

also promised to send textbooks to the parishes participating in the program and to reward the parish priests involved.[44]

The delegate of the St. Ladislaus Society who toured the schools found thirty-seven active Hungarian Catholic parishes. Nine of them had day schools but the Hungarian language did not play an important role in any of them — except in the above-mentioned New Brunswick parish. Eleven parishes had schools where some courses were taught in Hungarian in addition to the religious instruction. In five parishes only the religious education was conducted in Hungarian. The rest did not have any kind of Hungarian teaching. In the summer of 1913, vacation-time day schools existed only in Perth Amboy and South Norwalk. That year there were only two other Hungarian summer schools — and neither lasted for more than three of four days.[45]

The homeland authorities just managed to respond to the first requests of the Catholic parishes for textbooks when World War I broke out. The 17 boxes of textbooks provided by the Hungarian Government (in the value of 10,000 Crowns) arrived at their destination on August 27, 1914. The shipment consisted of textbooks for religious education, for the six-year elementary school, and handbooks for methodology. The shipment was distributed among thirty-two congregations, including those that did not have a Hungarian parish priest. This significant donation of books was meant to form the basis of the Hungarian Catholic summer schools. The program could not be continued the next year because of the war.[46]

Education in the Mother Tongue in the Era of World War I

Just as aid from the mother country became cut off by the war, teaching in the mother tongue became more popular among Hungarian Americans. This is indicated by the fact that in 1918 two Hungarian textbooks were published in America. They were the first of their kind. Sándor Kalassay, the dean of the Western Classis, edited a textbook for summer schools under the authority of the Hungarian Reformed Church of America. The *Magyar Bányászlap* (Hungarian Miners' Journal) published its spelling-book at the same time; it was intended to meet the educational needs of the Hungarian immigrants who lived out of the reach of the major Hungarian centres.[47]

One of the serious problems of the parochial schools — and also of the whole program of passing on the knowledge of Hungarian language

and culture to the children of immigrants — was the paucity of teachers. Because the Hungarian "school-network" was organized very late in America, just before World War I broke out, Hungarian teaching orders could not establish chapters in the United States. The applications of South Bend and South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for members of one or another of such orders were rejected. In the fall of 1912, however, Kálmán Kováts, the parish priest of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, did succeed in bringing to America four sisters of the religious order the Daughters of the Divine Redeemer. Their travel expenses were covered by the St. Ladislaus Society, in agreement with the Hungarian Government.

The McKeesport parish did not have a parochial school at that time so the Hungarian sisters started to teach religion, reading, and writing in eighteen different places, visiting one after another the parishioners who lived scattered around this industrial town. The children usually studied two hours a week for ten months in this peripatetic school. Sometimes the classes were held in a rented room, sometime at private houses "in a kitchen." The sisters also travelled far away to teach elsewhere as well. There was no Catholic church in Daisytown, Pennsylvania, at all, but the congregation had a brass band to greet their first Hungarian teacher. The McKeesport parish's weekly publication reported annually on the exams that were taken usually by as many as 400–500 students. These reports considered the aim of teaching Hungarian (which was "opposed by everyone here" as the priest wrote in 1915) to be the strengthening the students' national consciousness. The weekly's editors hoped that, as a result of the parish's educational efforts, Hungarians of the next generation would no longer by called "Hunkys" and that it would become evident that the "future of our nation is not yet lost in America."[48]

The president of the St. Ladislaus Society informed the Government in December 1912 that another order of sisters in Budapest, the *Daughters of Divine Charity* was also willing to send nuns to teach in the United States. The sisters who were sent had a very hard start. Some of the parishes could not provide support for their work, and the local ecclesiastical authorities also hindered them from realizing their plans. According to one of the sources, "The bishop who invited them [later] sent a message without any explanation that there was no need for them." The essence of the controversy can not be detected from the contemporary reports, but it is a fact that in the beginning these nuns could not work in the Hungarian parochial schools. Nor could the church authorities find accommodation for them. There was only a home for young women

— opened with the permission of the archbishop of New York. The idea of placing the nuns in a home for destitute people was naturally not applauded by officials in Hungary. The Hungarians shared the blame for this situation since their Government had failed to provide for the expenses of the nuns for the first few years of their stay in the United States.[49]

The sisters started to teach Hungarian independently of the parish schools. They opened a Hungarian weekend school in New York City. In Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and vicinity they tried the peripatetic teaching method that had been introduced around McKeesport. Thanks to the bishop of Trenton, New Jersey, they were finally allowed to teach in three of the Hungarian parish schools, in Trenton, New Brunswick, and Perth Amboy. By they years had been lost. In the meantime other Hungarian parishes began showing an increasing interest in their work. Ten more sisters managed go to get the United States before the outbreak of World War I. They even established a convent of their own — for which they received modest financial support from the Hungarian Government. The order opened a "mother house" on Staten Island, at Arrocher, New York. They accepted local, Hungarian-American applicants. The house's "graduates" managed to receive the necessary American teachers' qualifications so they could gradually take over teaching in Hungarian-America's Catholic schools in the 1920s. Fifteen Catholic elementary schools functioned in the Hungarian centres of the United States in 1924. The nuns of the two Hungarian orders established in the new homeland just before and during the war were teaching in ten of them. They were also helping in the cultural and social activities of six other parishes.[50]

World War I severed the connection between America's Hungarian immigrants and their homeland. Catholic Hungarian education was to be dismantled during the war. Many of the parishes, lacking any kind of support from the home authorities, could not maintain their schools, religious and social organizations. And the conditions for running the schools that survived the war changed sharply after the conflict was over.

The 1920s started a new chapter in the immigrants' lives in which the state of their Hungarian schools was rather disappointing — at least at the beginning of the decade. The Czech, Lithuanian, and Slovak Catholics, not to mention the Poles, maintained parochial schools in larger numbers. Usually the subjects which were to impart the non-English native culture to the children of their immigrants played a proportionally larger role in the syllabi of their schools.[51] The situation in respect to the Hungarians was somewhat happier if we include the Hungarian-American

Protestant congregations and the large network of their summer schools. In the post-1920 years, just as in the preceding decades, the chance to establish financially strong Hungarian parishes, which could also maintain more significant educational institutions, continued to be lessened by the religious division of the Hungarians and the conflicts about affiliation within the congregations of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

Conclusions

From that 1890s to the First World War, Hungarian immigrants to the United States made real sacrifices to save their language and culture, and to pass them on to the next generation. In this struggle for culture maintenance the help they received from the mother country was a plus rather than a detrimental factor.

The historical evidence reveals that the Hungarians could not copy the "German model" of education that had exited in the German communities of America before World War I. Under the "German model" we understand those schools for immigrant children which taught *in* the newcomers' mother tongue. After World War I the new situation, the end of free immigration and the increase of "Americanizing" pressure, did not favour such ambitions. Starting with the early 1920s, the restrictive American Acts of Education ultimately made it impossible that courses for passing on the ethnic languages and cultural traditions should play a significant role within the official curriculum.[52]

From the turn of the century on, as we have seen, both the Hungarians in the United States and the Hungarian Government would have liked to realize the "German model" for Hungarian-Americans because of practical reasons. They thought that the educational system transplanted to the New World from the mother country could ensure that the emigrants could return home at any time without experiencing difficulties of adjustment to life and society there. The attempts to establish schools on the "German model" failed.

Next came the efforts to achieve the more modest aim of establishing weekend and summer schools in which some attempt would be made to pass on the immigrant heritage to the second generation. The motive for introducing this type of education was the same: to facilitate the emigrants' return to the mother country and their adjustment there.

The reason why the home authorities had high expectations in regard to the return of emigrants was the fact that most of the Hungarian "immigrants" to America were really sojourners who planned to return to their native lands after making some money in the United States. The school's existence probably did little to encourage Hungarian immigrants to return to the old country. Some Hungarian-Americans did go back to Hungary but many of those who did, did not stay long. After a while they decided to re-emigrate to the United States, this time with the intention of staying there.

While the schools did not fulfil the expectations of Hungary's authorities, they also created some problems for Hungarian Americans. They sapped their very meagre financial resources. They also tended in some cases to hinder the immigrants' adjustment to American society, especially if they interfered with their students' acquisition of the English language. The fact was that, for both the immigrants and especially the second generation, the English language was essential, especially for climbing the social ladder.

For some parents, however, the learning of the mother tongue gained a great deal of emotional significance. The more the knowledge the mother tongue was threatened by the practical value of the "rival" language (i.e. English), the greater importance was assigned to it by some parents.[53] This fact motivated the Hungarian-American leaders to make more and more strenuous efforts to maintain their native culture and language. They did not even try to prove the practical usefulness of learning the parents' language to the second generation. In their view, the emotional, symbolic meaning of education in the mother tongue was enough to justify their efforts to maintain their Hungarian school programs.

NOTES

[1] Robert D. Cross, "Origins of the Catholic Parochial Schools in America," *The American Benedictine Review*, 16 (1965): 194–209; Richard M. Linkh, *American Catholicism and European immigrants* (Staten Island, NY, 1975), 1–17, 110–120; James W. Sanders, *Education of an urban minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1833–1965*, (New York, 1977); John A. Leahy, "Parochial education," in *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, ed. by David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski (Bloomington, 1987), 755–6.

[2] Linkh, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–17, 110–120; Hieronim Kubiak, *The Polish National Catholic Church in the United States of America from 1897–1980: its social conditioning and social function* (Krakow, 1982), 76–81; Andrzej Brożek,

Polish Americans: 1854–1939 (Warsaw, 1985), 147–152; Dolors Lipták, *Immingrants and their church* (New York–London, 1989), 131–141. For similar efforts made by Lutherans see Walter Beck, *Lutheran elementary schools in the United States* (St. Louis, MO, 1939).

[3] Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States (1880–1914)* (Budapest, 1982), 14–33.

[4] "Magyar egyházak és iskolák," in Tihamér Kohányi, *Az amerikai magyarság múltja, jelene és jövője* (Cleveland, 1901), 25–31; St. Elizabeth's Church. Cleveland, Ohio, *Golden Jubilee 1892–1942* (Cleveland, 1942) np; *A Toledoi Szent István Hitközség jubileuma 1899–1924* (Toledo, 1924), 141–2.

[5] *Amerikai Nemzetőr*, September 29, 1897; "Magyar egyházak és iskolák," 1901, p. 20; Sándor Kalassay, *Az amerikai magyar reformátusok története 1890–1904* (Pittsburgh, Pa. 1937), 119.

[6] *Amerikai Nemzetőr*, September 29, 1897; "Magyar egyházak és iskolák," 1901. p. 20; Kalassay, *Az amerikai*, p. 119.

[7] "Magyar egyházak és iskolák," 1901.

[8] For more details on the "American Action," see Puskás, *From Hungary*, pp. 192–201; Paula K. Benkart, "The Hungarian Government, the American Magyar Churches, and Immigrant Ties to the Homeland, 1903–1917," *Church History*, 52, 3 (1983): 312–21; *"Valahol túl meseországban..." Az amerikás magyarok 1895–1920*, ed. by Albert Tezla (Budapest, 1987), Vol. 2. pp. 260–346.

[9] *Ibid.* Cf. Gábor G. Kemény, *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában* (Budapest, 1964), Vol. 3, pp. 230–36. On the state of the Hungarian-American press of the times see Bela Vassady, "Hungarian-American Mutual Aid Associations and their 'Official' Newspapers: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 19, 1–2 (spring–fall, 1992): 7–27.

[10] *Ibid.* Also, Kemény, *Iratok...* Vol. 3, pp. 230–6.

[11] Count József Dégenfeld's report: Országos Levéltár, K 26 (Hungarian National Archives, Record Group 26, The centrally registered documents of the Prime Minister's Office [hereafter NAH RG 26]) 1905–XIX–146. Part I. (2686–1904). Cf. Aladar Komjathy, "The Hungarian Reformed Church of America. The effort to preserve a denominational heritage," Ph. D. diss. (Theological Seminary, Princeton, 1962), pp. 70–96.

[12] Dégenfeld saw only 27 pupils in three classes. Instruction was held in a tiny, wet, dark basement. The General Synod subsidized the small "school" for a couple of years, but the financial help was soon put an end. See *"Valahol túl meseországban..."*, Vol. 2. pp. 236–254, NAH RG 26–1905–XIX–146. (4440 – 1905).

[13] Count József Dégenfeld's report: NAH RG 26–1905–XIX–146. Part I. (2686–1904).

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Géza Antal's final report of his American tour, Pápa, May 7, 1906. Zsinati Levéltár (Archives of the General Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary, American Affairs; Budapest [hereafter ZsL]) Box 114. 342A/1906.

[16] Report of delegate László Bede to Baron Dezső Bánffy, the president of the General Synod, New York, February 26, 1907. ZsL Box 117. 89/1907; Similar information was got from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: NAH RG 26–1910–XXIII/C–279 (1903–4870).

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Instructions done to László Bede for his second American tour, Budapest, September 1, 1907. ZsL Box 120. 451A/1907, Box 119. 291A/1907. NAH RG 26–1913–XXI–386 (1913–3855). Cf. note 31.

[19] *Almanach of the American Hungarian Reformed Church*, ed. Zoltán Kuthy (New York, 1909), pp. 36–37; Zoltán Kuthy, "A New Yorki Első Magyar Református Egyház története," *A magyarországi református egyház amerikai egyházmegyéjének naptára*, ed. Zoltán Kuthy (New York, 1911), 87–121. (p. 111); Passaic: ZsL Box 119. 234/1907, Box 125. 5507/1909. In Passic a portion of the congregation insisted on a Magyar day school. They even threatened the General Synod with secession if they were not sent a new teacher. The plan of the Hungarian government, however, could not be implemented.

[20] Report of László Bede's second tour, October 9, 1908. ZsL Box 123. 5469/1908.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Letter of Zoltán Kuthy, dean of the Eastern Classis to the General Synod, October 9, 1908. ZsL Box 132. 5574/1908; cf. Kuthy, *op. cit.*

[23] NAH RG 26–1910–XXIII/C–279.

[24] Ambrózy's report: *"Valahol túl meseországban..."*, Vol 2. pp. 391–395.

[25] *Ibid*; NAH RG 26–1910–XXIII/C–279; *Szabadság*, September 2, 1909. Cf. *Magyar Napilap*, July 9, and September 11, 1909. The Greek-Rite Catholic church of Passaic, Bridgeport and Ashtabula wanted establish similar parochial schools but the government did not approve the plans.

[26] The Prime Minister's statement of May 12, 1910. ZsL Box 132. 5200/1910. With the help of loans received from Hungary ministers were influenced to build rooms for teaching in the churches. For Cleveland, see note 24.

[27] Bede's statistical report, ZsL Box 123. 5622/1908. For Sunday schools see Leslie A. Kalassay, "The educational and religious history of the Hungarian Reformed Church in the United States," Ph. D. diss. (University of Pittsburgh, 1939), pp. 83–91.

[28] NAH RG 26–1916–XXII–1739 (1913–6316). The number of children in schools follows as 929 in 1913 (only in schools of the Western Classis), 1706 in 1913, 1917 in 1914, 2297 in 1915. See NAH RG 26–1915–XXI–1610,

1916–XXV/a–2. The number of children in summer schools of churches affiliated with American denominations cannot be exactly determined. In 1915 the *Amerikai Magyar Református Lapja* reported 603 pupils in nine schools, but there were more summer schools.

[29] *Amerikai Magyar Református Lapja*, February 7, 1914. (Jubilee Issue 1899–1914), p. 13. and 23; "*Valahol túl meseországban...*", Vol. 1, pp. 385–386; ZsL Box 123. 4034/1908.

[30] NAH RG 26–1913–XXI–386 (1911–2321). *Az amerikai magyar református iskolák tanításterve* (Budapest, 1913).

[31] Minutes, General Synod of the Western Classis, 1915. ZsL Box 136. 6386/1915. Sándor Tóth, "Visszaemlékezés az ötven esztendő munkájára," *Református Lapja*, LIX (June 15, 1959), pp. 9–12.

[32] NAH RG 26–1913–XXI–386 (1913–1788, 1913–4615), ZsL Box 134. 4637/1913. Assistant pastors served in New York, Perth Amboy, Bridgeport (cf. note 8.) and Pittsburgh. For nursery-schools, see NAH RG 26–1914–XXII–2605.

[33] NAH RG 26–1915–XXI–3388, 1917–XXI–701; István Borsos, "Az amerikai egyházi élet mélységeiből II," in *A magyarországi református egyház amerikai keleti és nyugati egyházmegyéjének naptára* (New York, 1913), 134–145; *A detroiti református egyházközség husz éves története 1904–1924*, ed. Mihály Tóth (Detroit, 1925), *Detroiti Ujság*, November 25, 1932.

[34] Minutes, General Synod of the Western Classis, 1914. ZsL Box 136. 7505/1914.

[35] *Amerikai Magyar Református Lapja*, February 7, 1914 (Jubilee Issue, 1899–1914), p. 11; For Cleveland, see *ibid.* December 5, 1914. pp. 1–2. (A Saturday school and a reading circle were also initiated.), for Detroit, see ZsL Box 134. 16/2, 4241/1914.

[36] *Szabadság*, May 31, 1913. Cf. *A Magyarországi Református Egyház Amerikai Keleti Egyházmegyéje közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve*. Philadelphia, Pa. 1913. junius 16. (New York, 1913), pp. 8–10.

[37] Puskás, *From Hungary*, pp. 182–201; also Julianna Puskás, *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide: One Hundred Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, transl. Zora Ludwig (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, Ellis Island series, 2000), 214f; "*Valahol túl meseországban...*", Vol 2, pp. 269–89; Árpád L. Várdy, "A kivándorlásról," *Katholikus Szemle*, 24 (1910): 359–80. Catholic writers usually lay the blame on the government for the shortcomings. See e.g. Béla Bangha, *Amerikai missziós körutam* (Budapest, 1923), 18–19. But the American bishops' insufficient knowledge of the immigrants' ethnic background is also referred to. István Csernitzky, "Amerika római katolikus magyarság," *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* (April 17, 1924), [Hungarian-American Section], pp. 9–11.

[38] NAH RG 26–1910–XXIII/C–279 (1904–1939).

[39] *Magyarok Vasárnapja*, January 7, 1908; "A mi iskolánk," *Magyarok Csillaga*, September 4, 1903. Cf. NAH RG 26–1910–XXIII/C–279 (1903–4870, 1905–5187, 1909–3672), for summer school see *Magyar Zászló*, June 20, 1907.

[40] Report of the apostolic delegate, Andor Hodobay. NAH RG 26–1910-XXIII/C–279 (1906–269).

[41] NAH RG 26–1909–XXII–1952 (1905–1773). This decision also influenced the conflicts of the parishioners mentioned bellow.

[42] *Souvenir Book of the 35th Anniversary of the St. Ladislaus R.C. Church and the Silver Jubilee of the St. Ladislaus School* (New Brunswick, NJ. 1939), np.; István Török, *Katolikus magyarok Észak-Amerikában* (Youngstown, OH. 1978), 217; Boneventura Peéri, *Daughters of Divine Charity in the United States 1913–1923. Tenth annual anniversary report* (New York, 1924), 59–63.

[43] NAH RG 26–1915–XXII–3727. First, the St. Ladislaus Society, established in 1861, dealt with the ethnic Hungarians of Romania. As an outcome of a change of the by-laws in 1908 it extended its activities to all Hungarians living abroad. See József Szemes, *A Szent László Társulat története 1861–1941* (Veszprém, 1942), 64–74, cf. Várady, *op. cit.*

[44] NAH RG 26–1916–XXII–1739 (1913–3831, 6316).

[45] NAH RG 26–1916–XXII–1739 (1913–6316). Report made by Rev. Vilmos Biskoroványi, Hungarian pastor of New York's harbour.

[46] NAH RG 26–1916–XXII–1739 (1914–3404, 8268, 1915–1672).

[47] Alexander Kalassay, *ABC és olvasókönyv* (Pittsburgh, 1918), cited by Louis Kalassay, *op. cit.*; *Magyar Bányászlap*, April 18, 1918; Győző Drózdy, *Amerika* (Budapest, 1924), 98.

[48] NAH RG 26–1915–XXII–3727 (1912–3025, 5604); *Magyar Katolikus Zászló*, October 20, 1912. pp. 2–3, July 2, 1914. pp. 214–6, June 24, 1915. pp. 192–3; *Az Isteni Megváltó Leányai amerikai tartományának jubileumi emlékkönyve a rend átágazásának 25-ik évfordulója alkalmára* (Elizabeth, Pa., 1937), 63–71.

[49] NAH RG 26–1915–XXII–3727 (1912–7508, 1913–5331, 8004); Csernitzky, *op. cit.*

[50] NAH RG 26–1915–XXII–3727 (1914–2262, 4113, 1915–3727); Peéri, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 51–63; Stepen F. Chernitzky, "Our Hungarian Catholics," *Catholic Builders of the Nation*, ed. by C. E. McGuire (Boston, 1923), Vol. 2, pp. 84–100.

[51] Linkh, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–15. In 1912 parochial schools were maintained by 72.7% of the Polish, 57.4% of the Czech, 44.7% of the Slovak, 29.1% of the Lithuanian churches, but only 21.5% of the Italian churches. *Ibid.*, on the basis of Table 3. The same figure for the Hungarians is 24.3%.

[52] Zoltán Fejős, "Az anyanyelvi oktatástól az etnikus kultúra átörökítéséig (Magyar iskolaügy Amerikában 1890 és 1940 között)," *Magyarságkutatás. A Magyarságkutató Intézet Évkönyve* 1990–1991 (Budapest, 1991), 7–40.

[53] Cf. Hermann Bausinger: "Kulturelle Identität – Schlagwort und Wirklichkeit," in *Ausländer – Inländer. Arbeitsmigration und kulturelle Identität*, Hrsg. Hermann Bausinger (Tübingen, 1987), 141–159, especially p. 148.