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# THE HUNGARIAN STATE AND DIASPORIC INTERVENTION IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Hungarian State and Diasporic Intervention in the United States in the Early Twentieth Century**

Austria-Hungary's leaders were highly interventionist in their response to trans-Atlantic migration, eager to maintain loyalty among their diaspora in America. This article explores the very active role that the Austro-Hungarian government—especially the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office—played in overseeing migrant loyalty in the United States from 1902 until World War I, examining both its successes and the protests it inspired. Intervention followed migrants overseas: the government integrated itself into the migration bureaucracy and attempted to integrate the home government into migrants' American lives through the press, churches, and cultural events. Several of Austria-Hungary's efforts to maintain the loyalty of its migrating citizens backfired, sparking protest.

**KEYWORDS:** migration, Austria-Hungary, American Action, Pan-Slavism

## IZVLEČEK

### **Kraljevina Ogrska in diasporična intervencija v ZDA v zgodnjem 20. stoletju**

Avstro-ogrski voditelji so v odgovoru na čezatlantske migracije delovali zelo intervencijsko, prizadevali so si vzdrževati lojalnost svoje diaspore v Ameriki. Ta prispevek razkriva aktivno vlogo, ki jo je imela avstro-ogrška vlada – še posebej pa Urad ogrskega predsednika vlade – pri nadzoru lojalnosti migrantov v ZDA od leta 1902 do izbruha prve svetovne vojne. Raziskuje tako uspehe politike kot proteste, ki jih je ta povzročala. Intervencija je sledila čezmorskim selitvam – vlada je upravljala s selitveno birokracijo in si je prek tiska, cerkve in kulturnih dogodkov prizadevala za vključitev v življenje izseljencev. Več ukrepov Avstro-Ogrske za vzdrževanje lojalnosti je imelo ravno nasprotno učinke od želenih in je podžgalo proteste migrantov.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** migracije, Avstro-Ogrska, Ameriška akcija, panslavizem

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## INTRODUCTION

Austria-Hungary's leaders perceived mass migration as a crisis and were thus highly interventionist in their response to migration to America. The Austro-Hungarian government initially opposed emigration but subsequently decided to insert itself into the process to both restrict and shape migration in ways that might protect citizens while serving the needs of Austria and Hungary. Historian Tara Zahra has argued that policymakers "sought to control and redirect emigration for the good of both migrants and the state" by "transforming mass emigration into purposeful forms of 'colonization,'"—planting and nurturing settlements of citizens elsewhere—"and expanding social protections for citizens abroad, creating what amounted to new transnational welfare states" (Zahra, 2016). Furthermore, Austria-Hungary's intervention sought to keep migrants loyal to their home governments and quash the threat of competing nationalisms. This essay explores the very active role that the Habsburg government—especially the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office—played in ensuring migrant loyalty in the United States from 1902 until World War I. Alongside its successes, Austro-Hungarian state intervention in migrant affairs sparked substantial backlash.

Austro-Hungarian officials joined migrants in traveling overseas, putting people on the ground in the United States to watch and work on the government's behalf, and keeping tabs on migrants' American lives through the press, churches, and cultural events and institutions. Austria-Hungary operated way-houses for migrants in New York City, utilized a large and growing consular network on US soil, subsidized several immigrant newspapers and social organizations, sent religious figures to serve migrants' spiritual needs, engaged in cultural education and propaganda, advocated on behalf of its subjects in serious labor problems, and, most controversially, spied on migrants, particularly those whose ideas were perceived as a threat to the empire (Poznan, 2018).

Austria-Hungary's responses to emigration and its actions in the United States reveal some of the challenges of the empire's dualist structure in responding to an issue with both foreign (and therefore joint) and domestic (and therefore separate) implications. Although the Dual Monarchy shared a military and set joint foreign and economic policy, domestic affairs were handled through separate parliaments in Austria and in Hungary. Emigration was not simple to categorize as an exclusively foreign or domestic affair. The empire operated unified consulates in American cities. Still, emigration was also a domestic affair, in the depopulation of districts and counties, different official Austrian and Hungarian ports (Trieste and Fiume), and different internal needs for labor (Phelps, 2013; Steidl, 2020).

Hungarian politicians seem to have concerned themselves with emigration and migrants' lives abroad more actively at the outset of the twentieth century than Austria. As Hungarian-speakers from Hungary increasingly emigrated at the beginning of the twentieth century, following earlier migrations with a greater share of

Slovak- and Rusyn-speakers, Hungarian officials became concerned with maintaining the modest statistical majority, according to many counts, that Hungarian-speakers held within the Kingdom (Puskás, 1982). Hungary not only participated in joint Foreign Ministry initiatives but also intervened more in the lives of its migrants abroad through the Prime Minister's Office and other Hungarian ministries such as the Ministry of Religion, which did not require consensus with Austrian officials.

The Austro-Hungarian government used several strategies to address mass emigration, some of which seemed to or did contradict each other. To limit and control legal migration, Hungary, for its part, defined emigration laws, designated ports of embarkation, and provided a series of migrant services to facilitate the process. From there, the empire traveled across the Atlantic with migrants to support them in their lives abroad bureaucratically, religiously, and culturally, all the while attempting to navigate and avoid offending US governmental authorities. But Austria-Hungary's long reach across the Atlantic could just as easily be manipulative as supportive, especially to Slavic nationalists, and efforts to maintain the loyalty of the empire's citizens regularly backfired.

The controversy surrounding Hungary's transatlantic campaign for migrants' loyalty is encapsulated in a scathing 1906 remark from US Immigration Bureau inspector Marcus Braun, who had emigrated from there himself. He mockingly described the position of the Hungarian government as follows: "Let them gather in the American dollars, but let us continue our paternal [...] supervision. Let us prevent them from assimilating with the American people; [...] let us insist that they, instead of becoming Hungarian-Americans, remain American-Hungarians, let us edit for them their newspapers; let us teach them by our own teachers and preachers; let us continue our control over them. [...] The Government of Hungary," he concluded, "went about the accomplishment of these purposes with a vengeance" (Braun, 1906).

## EMIGRANT HOUSES

The Austro-Hungarian government joined other European governments in establishing quasi-governmental immigrant homes in the United States. Each had an official agent at Ellis Island to advise new arrivals. They offered subsidized food and lodging to migrants staying overnight in New York before continuing to their final destinations or, longer, as they sought permanent lodging and employment in the city. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry supported at least three homes with the stated purpose of preventing imperial citizens from being swindled. The curious division of these houses—one for German-speakers from the empire, a Hungarian Home for migrants of all nationalities and languages from the kingdom, and a "Polish" (Austrian Pole) house for Catholic Slavic-language-speakers broadly—shows how the relationship between loyalty, ethnicity, and religion was very much

in flux. The linguistic, territorial, and religious divisions among the homes show the Austro-Hungarian government's attempt to bureaucratically manage the contested nature of identity among Austro-Hungarians. The nationality politics being debated in the empire about language, race, and citizenship—regarding the rights of nations within states, as opposed to individuals—were also being played out across the Atlantic.

As quasi-governmental but officially US-based institutions, the emigrant houses also illustrate the power dynamics and profound disagreements between Austro-Hungarian officials and various American parties. The Foreign Ministry had to work through US-based boards to operate the homes. It sometimes disagreed with the American operators about who was to be served and at whose expense. US Immigration and Health Department officials also influenced the homes' histories, forcing their temporary closure and stranding migrants in the short term, but ultimately bettering conditions by demanding renovations for reauthorization. Operated by ethnic Americans, subsidized by Austria-Hungary, and overseen by US Immigration Service officials, the emigrant houses operated at the confluence of transnational interests and power.

The Leo House was charged in 1904 with overseeing "immigrants of the German tongue, without difference of race or religion, coming hither from the Austrian Empire." The home received a quarterly stipend of 1250 Austrian crowns to subsidize operating costs. Contracting with the pre-existing immigrant house placed certain restrictions on whom the home was willing to house in exchange for a governmental subsidy; it had previously operated as a German Catholic institution. The agreement with the Austrian Foreign Ministry dropped the religious affiliation. Still, when the home's rector, Urbam C. Nageleisen, was asked by the consul general whether the home would also accept "Italians and Rumanians, hailing from Austria," he replied that "the House is not sufficiently large and spacious enough to accommodate more than those of the German tongue." Nageleisen's letter explicitly excluding those of the "Latin race" exhibits the slippage between "race" and "tongue" (Nageleisen, 1904). But even a stipulation that migrants be German speakers would not make for a mono-ethnic clientele. Among its guests for March 1913, the Leo House's director listed Croats, Poles, Bohemians, and Rusyns, ostensibly all also German speakers.

The situation at the Hungarian House reflected the different priorities of both the Hungarian government and the home's American-based operators. Inaugurating a new institution rather than contracting with an existing one, the Hungarian Relief Society had more liberty in deciding who the home would serve. Dominated by ethnic Hungarians, the home nevertheless would house all migrants hailing from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, "without distinction of nationality" (von Nuber, 1910). The house opened in 1909 to much fanfare from the immigrant press in New York, among both Hungarian-language and German-language

papers.<sup>1</sup> Advertisements were printed in Budapest in Hungarian, German, Slovenian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, and Ruthenian, actively soliciting among all potential migrants (von Nuber, 1910). The Hungarian government aimed to simultaneously provide migrant services to the kingdom's subjects and limit minority subjects' potential ethnic separatism by offering services in a Hungarian orbit.

And yet, the Hungarian House still became a site of tensions. Alleged Slavic nationalists tried to have the Hungarian House investigated by US officials on at least two occasions in 1910. According to the home's president, Morris Cukor, false allegations were made against the home by a "pronounced Pan-Slav" with ties to the president of the Slavonic Home, an immigrant aid house not affiliated and in competition with those subsidized by the imperial Foreign Ministry (von Nuber, 1910). In the scramble to offer migrant services, the nationality politics of the Hungarian Kingdom were, to officials' dismay, being played out in New York.

The government-contracted houses did not have exclusive rights to migrants' business; several private institutions competed with them, even without the benefit of subsidies, to further national aims. "Self-identified Polish, Slovak, Czech, or Hungarian associations, homes, and cooperative societies increasingly [...] encouraged migrants to think of themselves as Polish Americans, Czech Americans, or Hungarian Americans, rather than as loyal subjects of the Austrian Kaiser," Zahra (2016) explains. Austrian Consul von Ploennies charged that these national homes were "founded precisely on the rejection of Austrian patriotism" (von Ploennies, 1911). The failure of the Leo House to accept all Austrian migrants further undermined Austria's ability to compete with ethnically oriented houses. Its unwillingness to accept Italian-speakers from the empire might route them to Italian houses operated by the Society for Protection of Italian Immigrants or the Italian Benevolent Institute. With the Italian government, like the Austro-Hungarian government, actively pursuing a close relationship with its migrants abroad, the possibility that Italian-speaking Austrian subjects would associate with an Italian institution could be threatening (Choate, 2008).

The emigrant houses were thus places of both ethnic coexistence and emerging contestation. Of the thousands of pages of archival material on the homes, the only mention of ethnic conflict is bureaucratic—the Slavonic Home's alleged sabotage attempt—rather than any discord or violence among migrants themselves. Transplanted subjects of the same crown, the peoples of the emigrant houses had more in common than their divergent paths in America and the new states formed after World War I suggest. Rather than a multiethnic anomaly, the transnational spaces of the emigrant houses in New York reflect the realities of a diverse empire and the increasingly globalized world accompanying mass transatlantic migration. Through sponsorship of the Emigrant Houses, the Austro-Hungarian government attempted

1 For example, *Szabadság*, Nov. 24, 1909; *Amerikai Magyar Népszava*, Nov. 22, 1909; *Sonntagsblatt der New-Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, Nov. 21, 1909; *New Yorker Revue*, Nov. 21, 1909; *Morgen-Journal*, Nov. 21, 1909.

to protect and channel migrants in their formative first days in America; after that, the task fell primarily to consuls and clergy.

With a series of consulates abroad, Austria-Hungary could coordinate complicated affairs of citizens in that country (Phelps, 2013). The number of Austro-Hungarian consulates in the United States to assist and oversee migrants mushroomed dramatically in the early twentieth century, performing numerous duties with both practical and ideological purposes. Alongside Washington, DC, New York, and Philadelphia, by World War I, the empire had operated consulates in Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, St. Paul, West Virginia's Charleston and Clarksburg, along with Pittsburgh, Hazelton, Uniontown, and Wilkes-Barre in Pennsylvania (Agstner, 2012). These consular services were important for migrant workers who intended to return home. Practically, consuls could advocate on behalf of Austro-Hungarian citizens in problems with citizenship, labor, and international exchange. Their areas of assistance varied from helping families locate one another to facilitating the payment of migrants' insurance benefits when they died in mining accidents to family members back home. The consuls did not take a particularly proactive role in ameliorating labor conditions, resolving strikes, or addressing employer abuse, but they *did* help migrants hold companies responsible for paying benefits. Consular offices also promoted imperial loyalty among migrants and surveilled anti-Habsburg or anti-Hungarian activity at the Foreign Ministry's instruction. Many aspects of the American Action program, described more fully below, were coordinated through consular employees, who collected reports from loyal ministers and sent articles from the American immigrant press hostile to the empire back to authorities in Vienna and Budapest. Even if migrants were largely unaware of consular offices' role in surveillance, they had other reasons to complain. In 1911, the Czech-American National Council asked Bohemian deputies serving in the imperial diet in Vienna to lobby for more Czech speakers among the Austro-Hungarian consular agents in the United States to better serve migrants there (The Cesko-Americka Tiskova Kancelar, 1912; The Third Year of Activity, 1912).

Austria-Hungary's bureaucrats aimed to become involved in every phase of migrants' transatlantic journeys, legislating the terms of legal exit, increasingly accessible on the ground in the United States, and encouraging migrants to return home. Austria-Hungary's bureaucratic presence in migration affairs was organized, decently funded, and committed to active intervention abroad. The emigrant houses—the first stop for many arriving migrants—set the tone for continued intervention throughout their time in America.



## MANAGING POLITICAL LOYALTY ON US SOIL: POLITICAL INTERVENTION AND THE AMERICAN ACTION

Austria-Hungary's intervention in migrants' American lives grew as the twentieth century progressed, sometimes in concert with the Foreign Ministry and consular service and, in other cases, outside it. Through this mix of interventions, Austria-Hungary subsidized needed migrant services for all subjects of the empire while simultaneously suppressing Slavic nationalisms at home and abroad. The "American Action" was one of at least three organized programs the Hungarian government pursued to deal with a growing crisis of loyalty to the Kingdom (Benkart, 1983). The Hungarian government's sincere interest in the welfare of its migrants can be viewed as tainted by assimilationist aims. The American Action program, which operated through the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, was the most active at attempting to maintain migrant loyalty abroad through the political press, churches, and cultural events and institutions.

The main goals of the American Action were to bolster Hungarian identity abroad to encourage return-migration of Hungarians and to assure that Slavic return migrants were not openly antagonistic to Hungarian political leadership and did not bring oppositional ideas back to Europe. These goals would quickly come into conflict. Attempts to strengthen the Hungarianness of migrants living in the United States antagonized leaders of various Slavic movements and offered Slavic nationalists opportunities to publicize their grievances before the American press and public. This only further confirmed Austria-Hungary's perception of the need to combat Pan-Slavism and Slavic national projects in America. The American Action addressed migrant Hungarian-, Slovak, and Rusyn-speakers in somewhat distinct campaigns, subdivided further by religious denomination, with targeted efforts and programming (Benkart, 1983).

Although much of the work of the Action could be conducted through the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, foreign financial transactions could not, bringing the joint Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry into the program's administration and into migrant services more broadly to pay expenditures out of Foreign Ministry accounts. The Foreign Ministry was on the same page as the architects of the American Action regarding the press in particular; subsidizing organs of the immigrant press was among their favored investments in managing migrant loyalty abroad.

By offering financial support to newspapers, awarded first and foremost for "patriotism" and fidelity to the empire, the Austro-Hungarian government could assure a patriotic message and that the right kind of information would be passed on to its subjects. One Slovak-language newspaper, the *Slobodni Orel*, justified the continuation of its government subsidy by explaining that it sent free copies of the paper to heavily Pan-Slav areas to try to sway the readership back to imperial loyalty. In another case, when World War I was well underway and the stakes high, the

Foreign Ministry offered 20,000 crowns in start-up costs and a 4,000-crown annual subsidy for a pro-monarchy newspaper to circulate among American South Slavs (Letter to Ottokar Czernin, 1915). Austria-Hungary's support of the immigrant press emphasized the centrality of information, influence, and patriotism in its intervention in the United States.

Hungarian nationalists identified churches as crucial sites of nation-building in the United States as a cornerstone of many migrants' social lives; Austro-Hungarian governmental concern about imperial loyalty and the threat of Pan-Slavic nationalism in America peaked in regard to Slavic newspapermen and clergy. Officials feared Hungary's migrants could be politically compromised through otherwise holy religious observance. As early as 1884, the *Budapesti Hírlap* reported on the political danger of Hungary's Slavic-language speakers associating with other US-based Slavs and called on the government to intervene. "Hungarian Slavs . . . are forced to listen to the homilies of other denominations and Czech Pan-Slav missionaries." Thus, they lamented, "the Slovak brothers in America fall entirely into the hands of Polish and Czech Pan-Slav priests and stuffed with these ideas they return to the homeland" (*Budapesti Hírlap*, 1884).

Officials working on the American Action used churches and the clergy as their primary conduits of intervention. The Prime Minister's Office files contain an elaborate table of Catholic priests serving congregations of migrants from Hungary, featuring their name, nationality, national conduct or attitude, congregation, seminary, diocese served in Austria-Hungary, whether they had ever been fired, whether they promoted an Eastern European diocese in America, etc. The columns on nationality and national conduct illustrate the full range of government diagnoses of Pan-Slavism, from "Slovak Angry panslav" to "very suspicious" to "Hungarian-Slovak loyal," with additional notes to denote the level of threat over whether or not they "scribble" in the press and evidence of alcoholism. A report from Alexander von Nuber, the consul in Pittsburgh, categorized Slovak priests serving in the US into groups: those under Father Januscsek of Scranton, who had appointed a large number of young Pan-Slav clergy in America; and those under Fathers Jankola and Stass, who founded a Catholic newspaper in which Hungary and Hungarians were attacked in articles (von Nuber, 1902).

Austria-Hungary had limited influence over how new American congregations chose their ministers. Still, the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction and homeland religious authorities tried to intervene, using allies among the loyal clergy. The Braddock, Pennsylvania, parish priest Béla Kazinczy came to the Habsburg consulate in Pittsburgh in April 1902 and asked consul Alexander von Nuber to send patriotic Slovak-speaking priests who could also speak Hungarian to Charleroi and Duquesne, PA, which had started their own congregations. "From a Hungarian cultural perspective, and the state's interest," Kazinczy told von Nuber, "it would be important that a good Hungarian-feeling Slovak-speaking roman catholic priest would end up in these two communities," lest "the leadership of these new communities falls into

the hands of a Czech, Moravian, or Slovak Pan-Slav priest" (Kazinczy, 1902). Von Nuber agreed; the Hungarian government worked through the Reformed Church of Hungary and through the Catholic Archbishop of Esztergom to place ministers and priests loyal to the monarchy in new and vacated American clerical posts. This activity created an international contest over empty pulpits that brought Austria-Hungary into greater contact and sometimes conflict with the Vatican, American Catholic officials, and American Protestant denominations, which all saw the same immigrant churches as fruitful mission fields for themselves.

The most tangible outcome of the American Action was Hungary's subsidizing of Hungarian churches, particularly Reformed churches. The localized funding of Calvinist congregations could make their finances uncertain. The Hungarian government made the salaries of American migrant clergy livable by supplementing their local church paycheck with a government stipend and subsidizing an education back in Hungary for clergymen's sons. So vital were these supplemental salaries that the clergy fell into dire financial straits when World War I prevented them from receiving their stipends (Kuthy, 1918). The greatest ecclesiastical expense was the Hungarian government's refinancing of Hungarian-American church loans through Budapest's General Credit Bank. Churches founded before 1905 often had mortgages with American banks, facilitated by American Reformed or Presbyterian mission projects; many congregations later formally joined the Reformed Church of Hungary and also took advantage of mortgage refinancing. The Ministry of Religion was aware that financial support was the only real way to entice churches away from American denominations to pursue union with the mother church, offering a few hundred dollars in outright grants for building improvements alongside the thousands in loans (Benkart, 1983). Bringing emigrant churches under the umbrella of the Reformed Church of Hungary enabled homeland religious leaders to assure that patriotic candidates served as ministers. Hungarian authorities considered the massive costs of taking on these loans well worth the national and spiritual benefits of union and the potential benefit of thwarting Slavic ecclesiastical separatism.

The Hungarian government's meddling efforts did not go unopposed by Slavic nationalists. In 1902, a group of Slovak and other Slavic priests serving in America published a secret message from an officer at the Ministry of Religion, Ferenc Komlóssy, to the Archbishop of Esztergom, the head of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church. It detailed the steps the Church might take to assure the loyalty to the Hungarian state of minority priests serving in the United States. How Slovak- and Ruthenian-American priests came to possess a copy of Komlóssy's letter is unclear. Still, it quickly became the central document in a Slovak-American propaganda war and Hungarian attempts at damage control. The priests published it in two pamphlets, *Hungary Exposed* and *Memorial Presented by the Roman Catholic Priests of Slovak Nationality*, addressed specifically to the Cardinal Archbishop and Bishops of the United States. *Hungary Exposed* illustrates the backlash against the American Action and how America had become a new front in the elite nationality

politics of the Hungarian kingdom. The pamphlets raise several questions pertinent to Austria-Hungary's interventions abroad more generally: Was there an effective and unobtrusive way to maintain the loyalty of imperial subjects on US soil? Whose responsibility was it to oversee the best interests of migrants coming from Hungary: clergy, the Vatican, American Catholic officials, or Austro-Hungarian officials? What role, if any, would American public opinion play?

Speaking from the government's perspective, Komlóssy justified keeping Slovak- and Rusin-speakers from the Kingdom now in America "under surveillance in the interest of their spiritual guidance," a statement that reveals both the benevolence and chauvinism in Hungary's migrant welfare philosophy (*Hungary Exposed*, 1903). The Vatican seemed to agree to the necessity of serving migrants abroad; the Hungarian government had already made arrangements with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to appoint an Apostolic Delegate from Hungary to Washington DC to oversee emigrants (von Nuber, 1903). "This great aggregate of humanity in a strange land," Komlóssy explained in *Hungary Exposed*, "is for the most part in the hands of the priests, owing to the profoundly religious spirit of the Slovaks. [...] This great moral factor, however," he lamented, "is unfortunately wielded against us." Only seven Roman Catholic parishes were presided over by patriotic priests, he complained, "while the Slovak and Bohemian priests of Pan-Slavic sympathies, hailing from the Western Highlands lead the other 35" (*Hungary Exposed*, 1903). He explained that the predominance of Western Slovak priests in American congregations was pushing Slovaks closer to Czechs and other Slavs and away from Hungary. He complained of "schismatic bishops" who lured Ruthenian-Americans into joining the Greek Catholic denomination. Migrants, Komlóssy reasoned, "may on their return spread erroneous views among their co-religionists at home." Komlóssy offered two solutions: the government should "prohibit the emigration of [...] hostile spirited priests," and the bishop should send only "well-meaning priests speaking the eastern Slovak dialect" to fill vacancies and a new post, including a list of parishes where patriotic priests might be sent in the future. Priests who were loyal to Hungary should report on Pan-Slavic activity and the conduct of their less trustworthy and even traitorous colleagues (*Hungary Exposed*, 1903).

The protesting priests' most scathing charges in *Hungary Exposed* and the Memorial called the leaked Hungarian report "highly pernicious," featuring accusations of "espionage," "coercion," "intimidation," and, most damningly, "discouraging [immigrants] from American citizenship." The intended secrecy of the document was cast as evidence of "plotting" and "scheming." They highlighted the threat that Hungarian surveillance and intervention posed to American sovereignty. Komlóssy's suggestions, they explained, "would seriously interfere with the rights and privileges of ecclesiastical authorities" in America. "From the time they land at our seaports," the priests assured American audiences, "our Slovak people recognize one country only—that country is the Republic of the United States." Komlóssy's order, they charged, "retards the natural process of Americanization among our Slovak and

Ruthenian fellow countrymen" (Hungary Exposed, 1903; Memorial, 1902). The prefaces to the pamphlets also reveal the tension between the authors' appeal to American sensibilities about immigrant assimilation and their obvious discontent at Hungarian policies. They charged that Komlóssy's interest in the religious welfare of Eastern Slovaks was insincere. "Under the guise of the spiritual necessities of the faithful, it really aims at the political tutelage of the Slovaks and Ruthenians of the Greek rite in the United States. 'Well-meaning priests' does not mean pious, good and efficient priests [...] if he preaches to his people in Slovak and instructs them by means of their native language, in which after all they can best commune with their God, he is doomed to fail" (Memorial, 1902).

The Hungarian government's grievance was not against the use of Slovak itself, as the pamphlet authors charged, but the correlation between language groups and Pan-Slavic views. Indeed, Komlóssy's letter called for *more* Slovak-speaking priests and nuns to serve Slovak-American congregations. The language problem for Hungarian officials was framed—intentionally—as a matter of "dialect." Congregations of Eastern Slovaks in America needed priests who spoke the Eastern dialect, which would conveniently shelter those congregations from priests who spoke the Western Slovak dialect or Czech and were more likely to hold Pan-Slavic or Slovak nationalist views (Hungary Exposed, 1903; Maxwell, 2009). In the wake of the publication of Hungary Exposed, a government communiqué lamented that, before US-bound emigration began, Pan-Slavism had been unknown in the northeastern counties of Hungary, where the eastern Slovak dialect was spoken. The allegedly Pan-Slav Western Slovak priests serving in America now comprised an expansive network of aid organizations seeking to "ply" the people with wide-circulating Slavic-American newspapers, and even, he suggested, *pálinka* [distilled brandy], leading Eastern Slovaks astray. He stated, "the returning Eastern Slovaks take the dangerous seedling [of Pan-Slavism] to heretofore immune soil." According to Hungarian officials, the "Roman Catholic Priests of Slovak Nationality" who wrote to American bishops were not all "Slovak." Among the twenty-nine signatories, they identified seven as Czech and one each as Moravian, Polish, and German; sixteen as Western Slovaks and only two Eastern Slovaks (Memorial, 1902). The sizable number labeled "Czech" and the variety of "Slavs" made it easy to call the dissident priests Pan-Slavic. But what Czech, Western Slovak, Eastern Slovak, Pan-Slav, Magyar, Hungarian, and American all meant in 1903 is not clear-cut. Indeed, the Hungarian government relied on this multiplicity of meaning, intent on convincing Slovak-speakers at home and abroad that Slovak language use or identification and Hungarian loyalty were not mutually exclusive.

The American newspapers that covered the conflict over the leaked Hungarian memo and the ensuing pamphlets reported very differently about the dispute. The *Washington Post* largely took the Slovak- and Ruthenian-American accusations against the Hungarian government at face value, quoting heavily from the pamphlet and offering few additional details. The article headline, "Priest Exposes Plot," echoed

the priests' language in calling Hungarian actions a "scheme." According to the *Post*, the most severe charge was the Budapest government's efforts to "Prevent the Americanization of Slovaks and Ruthenians" (Priest Exposes Plot, 1903). The headlines, however, were more critical than the articles. The *Boston Evening Transcript's* coverage was more restrained. The mildly condemnatory title of "Hungary Active Here ... Tries to Retain Hold on Slavonians and Ruthenians" was quickly followed by more amenable subheadings: "No Objection to Their Becoming Citizens, Seeks Loyalty Only of Those Likely to Return." The *Transcript* relied on Joseph Horvath, editor of the Hungarian-American newspaper *Szabadság*, for additional insights. For him, the defection of Hungarian Greek Catholic churches in America to US branches of the Russian Orthodox church was less a matter of political Pan-Slavism, as the Hungarian government feared, than an expedient practice in linguistically mixed migrant congregations and the lure of Russian financial support. Horvath's reframing put the emphasis not on the invasive actions of the Hungarian state but on their concerns over emigrants likely to return to the empire. "The purpose of this edict was not to make of Hungarians in this country less loyal citizens of America," he assured American readers, "[...] only to avoid sowing the seed of disloyalty among those liable to go back" (Hungary Active Here, 1903). But *Szabadság* was by no means free of propaganda; the paper received subsidies from the Hungarian government and regularly denounced Pan-Slavic activity. Horvath could surely make Hungary's intervention seem innocuous if he wanted to. In a recurring theme of the American Action, it is questionable whether the backlash made the homeland government's efforts worthwhile.

## CULTURAL ACTIONS AND BACKLASH

The American Action and Austria-Hungary's long arm in the United States consistently employed cultural propaganda. Communities of migrants from Austria-Hungary hosted visiting dignitaries, and some groups received banners and statues from organizations in the mother country. Events surrounding these items and people featured prominent cultural symbolism, from the traditional Hungarian goulash and *Dobos* cake served at a visiting journalist's farewell supper to the concerts of Austrian music held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair. And yet, these cultural celebrations also became flashpoints for national protest. Alternating jubilation and backlash met much of Austria-Hungary's cultural propaganda, best seen in the arrival of a ceremonial banner in 1902 and visits by Count Albert Apponyi, Hungarian Minister of Education, in 1904 and 1911. The events of his visit might knit the Hungarian-speaking community in America together. At the same time, it became an ideal opportunity for Slovak-speakers to protest his policies back home and his presence in the United States.



In 1902, the Hungarian Nationality League, an organization in Hungary, sent a decorative flag to the United States “For the Hungarian Americans” (Kende, 1927); it was the first major event to bring large numbers of Hungarian-Americans together from different regions of the United States as a coherent immigrant community and with an explicit symbol of the mother country. The celebrations planned for the arrival of the flag and its tour of various Hungarian-American societies successfully nurtured public expressions of Hungarian-ness abroad, in the spirit (if not the jurisdiction) of the American Action program. The flag also illustrates the ways that migration heightened the national consciousness not only of emigrants but also of those who stayed behind: it was a gift from a Hungarian association at home to their compatriots in America.

The dual meaning of “Hungarian”—one of ethnicity and one of citizenship—was enormously significant in the reception of this gift. According to Tihámér Kohányi, then editor of *Szabadság*,

The flag that they are sending refers to the “American Hungarians,” all of us, who were born in Hungary. The Slovak, the Croat, the Romanian, who believes in the sanctity of this flag, should not believe that those who are planning this event or those who only speak Hungarian want to, with this flag, distance those who do not speak Hungarian so, but are the Hungarian homeland’s citizens (Kohányi in Kende, 1927).

Kohányi was perhaps naive, perhaps disingenuous in calling for the participation of all with “true patriotic feeling” (Kohányi in Kende, 1927). The imagery and culture of the event were decidedly Hungarian in the narrow sense: a hundred young women dressed in red, white, and green; a Rákóczi march for the procession music; and speeches in Hungarian and English, not in any other language. The delivery of a flag, so often a symbol of sovereignty, became a point of critique. The series of receptions brought together American Magyars but provoked American Slavic nationalists. Slavic opposition accomplished little in terms of prompting American governmental opposition to the flag or the Hungarian government. Still, the sudden appearance of Hungarian symbolism in the United States galvanized more American Slavs into becoming immigrant nation-builders. Increasingly segregated linguistically in North America, the empire’s former subjects were diverging politically as well.

Apponyi’s opponents—primarily Slovak-speakers and, according to one source, Hungarian-speaking socialists—were quick to get their own perspective into major New York newspapers and to President Roosevelt, but to little avail. Anthony S. Ambrose, president of the National Slavonic Society of the United States, informed the State Department of the flag’s tour and alleged that it was a gift paid for “by official representatives” of the Hungarian government and aimed to prevent migrants’ “absorption into the great body of the American people” (Hale, 1902; *More About that Hungarian Flag*, 1902). Ambrose’s letter failed to elicit objections

from Washington beyond ensuring that a duty would be paid on the shipment. The *Springfield Republican* concluded that “the most jealous patriotic scrutiny fails to detect a menace to American institutions in this banner of the Hungarian people.” Referring to it as a “banner” rather than a “flag,” a verbal distinction non-existent in Hungarian, lessened its association with sovereignty (More About that Hungarian Flag, 1902). The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office insisted to the State Department that “the Hungarian National League which [...] carried out this idea has been actuated in doing so by patriotic, and not political, motives.” “No blame can be attached to anyone,” a Foreign Ministry official reasoned, “who exhorts his countrymen, even when living in a foreign land, to be faithful to their native home” (Mérey, 1902). The State Department briefly looked into the details of the case, noting that the German Emperor had bestowed a similar gift on German singing groups in Chicago and turned to other matters (That Hungarian Flag, 1902). But Slovak-Americans had cooperated in protesting Hungarian incursions abroad, a practice they would find a reason to repeat.

Hungarian Count Albert Apponyi’s American tours in 1904 and 1912 prompted a similar set of reactions: jubilant Hungarian celebrations, Slavic protests, and no opposition from the American government. The mixed reactions to Apponyi’s visit again illustrate the contradictory outcomes of Austria-Hungary’s intervention abroad. A prominent Hungarian aristocracy and government member came to US soil to nurture ties between the mother country and the Hungarian communities abroad. But Apponyi’s tour became a flashpoint for Slavic nationalists to protest Apponyi’s chauvinism and the policies he had enacted. Apponyi was the namesake of Hungarian education laws known as the *Lex Apponyi*, which had prompted the closing of several Slavic-language schools. The backlash to Apponyi’s 1912 visit, in particular, reveals how the American Action failed to assure imperial loyalty beyond Hungarian speakers and even contributed to the sharpening of tensions between Slavic nation-builders and the Hungarian state.

The primary purposes of Apponyi’s visits to the United States were to lecture at Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference and several universities and to nurture Hungary’s ties with the US government. Apponyi met with Theodore Roosevelt during his visits and spoke before Congress in 1904. Western politicians credited him with keeping the peace in Austria-Hungary’s fragile dualist compromise, overlooking his chauvinism on minority policy. Apponyi’s tours fit neatly with the American Action’s goal of promoting Hungarian identity abroad, not only because of American respect for him but, like the traveling banner, creating cultural events that brought together the Hungarian-speaking community across the northeast and Midwest.

Slavic protests during Apponyi’s visit in 1912 were particularly notable (as well as troubling to Hungarian officials) because American Slovaks were joined by Czechs and Poles, groups hardly affected by the *Lex Apponyi*. Czech paper *Denní Hlasatel* reported that “the harassing of Count Apponyi, the archenemy of the Slovak people” was the Czech-American Press Office’s “outstanding achievement” of the



year, noting that it “succeeded in minimizing the ill effects of the Count’s visit to this country” (*The Cesko-Americka Tiskova Kancelar*, 1912; *The Third Year of Activity*, 1912). Indeed, the Washington Festival Committee rescinded Apponyi’s invitation to lecture after threats that protesters would “ruin” the event. Apponyi charged that “a systematic Czech campaign [...] [to] make our Slovak emigrants, at least politically, into Czechs” was responsible. While organizers feared massive Slavic protests at Apponyi’s lectures in Chicago, they were uneventful. The “terrorism,” as Apponyi dramatically phrased it, came later, in the newspaper coverage of the event: “malevolent lies” of “uproar and wild disorder” at the lecture in the Chicago papers, even though the only altercation at the lecture itself, Apponyi claimed, was one hostile question from Hungarian-speaking socialists blasting Apponyi’s lack of support for expanding the franchise (Apponyi, 1935). Furthering the propaganda effort, the Slovak National Committee reprinted critiques of Apponyi by western intellectuals like R.W. Seton-Watson, purposefully using “non-Slavs” as the “witnesses to truth” to convince international audiences of Apponyi’s unwarranted reputation as an “Angel of Peace” (Slovak National Committee, 1911). Opposition to Apponyi’s 1912 visit set the stage for Slavic nation-building actions in response to opportunities in the context of World War I.

## CONCLUSION

Austria-Hungary’s transatlantic reach to maintain migrant loyalty in America included many successes in promoting migrants’ community and church life, particularly for the Hungarian government in regard to Hungarian speakers. It may have bolstered the imperial loyalty of some migrants at the individual level but failed to keep the empire’s national projects from developing rapidly overseas. The empire’s migrant Slavs increasingly embraced conceptions of the nation that operated outside the bounds of imperial loyalty. Many increasingly viewed Hungary as an oppressor, including migrants for whom national oppression played no part in their emigration. Austria-Hungary’s long arm across the Atlantic provided vital services to early twentieth-century migrants, but many chafed at the empire’s cultural propaganda. When Marcus Braun himself interviewed Prime Minister Tisza about Hungary’s emigration intervention and suggested that the American Action’s distribution of patriotic literature, flag tour, and church work created “friction among the various nationalities” coming to the United States from Hungary, Tisza replied, “Why, we have to do something to protect ourselves against Pan-Slavistic disturbances constantly going on and tolerated in the United States” (Tisza in Frank, 1999). The goals of Austria-Hungary’s intervention—to keep migrants loyal to the homeland and mitigate the effects of competing nationalisms overseas—worked against each other.

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## POVZETEK

### KRALJEVINA OGRSKA IN DIASPORIČNA INTERVENCIJA V ZDA V ZGODNJEM 20. STOLETJU

Kristina E. POZNAN

Voditelji Avstro-Ogrske so množične migracije dojemali kot krizo in so se na čezatlantske migracije odzvali zelo intervencionistično, pri čemer so si zelo, zdi se, da včasih celo obupano prizadevali, da bi ohranili zvestobo migrantov v Ameriki Avstro-Ogrskemu cesarstvu. Avstroogrška vlada je emigracijam najprej nasprotovala, nato pa se je odločila, da se vplete v migracijski proces, da bi tako omejevala in usmerjala migracije na takšne načine, da bi teoretično štela državljane, obenem pa še vedno služila potrebam Avstrije in Madžarske. Delovanje države pri na področju migracijskih vprašanj in ohranjanja zvestobe migrantov je bilo agresivno, zlasti kar zadeva nacionalno politiko: vlada je skušala ohraniti zvestobo migrantov do svojih domačih oblasti in nevtralizirati grožnjo konkurenčnih nacionalizmov v tujini. Članek raziskuje zelo aktivno vlogo, ki jo je imela avstroogrška vlada – zlasti urad madžarskega predsednika vlade – pri nadzoru nad zvestobo migrantov v Združenih državah Amerike od leta 1902 do 1. svetovne vojne, ter pri tem obravnava tako njene uspehe kot tudi proteste, ki jih je vzbudila. Vlada je pri svojem delovanju sledila migrantom v tujino: na več ravneh se je integrirala v migracijske birokratske postopke in v ZDA na teren poslala ljudi, ki so opazovali in delali v njenem imenu, ter je poskušala s pomočjo tiska, cerkev ter kulturnih dogodkov in institucij integrirati domačo državo v ameriška življenja migrantov. Avstro-Ogrska je v New Yorku upravljala prehodna bivališča za migrante, uporabljala je obsežno in vse večjo konzularno mrežo v ZDA, subvencionirala številne priseljske časopise in družbene organizacije, pošiljala verske uslužbenke za zadovoljevanje duhovnih potreb priseljencev, pošiljala na obiske visoke predstavnike ter, kar je najbolj sporno, vohunila za migranti, zlasti za tistimi, katerih ideje je smatrala kot grožnjo cesarstvu. Pri tem ni šlo zgolj za simbolna dejanja, ampak tudi za finančno pomoč, vključno s subvencijami medijem in cerkvam. Avstro-ogrška vlada je na zvestobo migrantov v ZDA vseskozi poskušala vplivati na konkretne načine, s katerimi bi se še vedno izognila diplomatskim konfliktom z ameriškimi uradniki. Številna prizadevanja Avstro-Ogrske, da bi ohranila zvestobo državljanov cesarstvu, so se nazadnje izkazala za neuspešna. To velja predvsem za pobude, kot so bili programi American Action, katerih namen je bil krepiti madžarsko identiteto v diaspori ter omejiti vse močnejša slovanska nacionalna gibanja v tujini. Poskusi prvega so redno sprožali proteste, povezani s slednjim.