Torn between Two Nations – Aspects of Loyalty in the case of Hungarian Immigrants in the United States in 1917–1919[*]

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Introduction

Immigration from the territory of Austria-Hungary in the United States had been at its peak in the decade before World War One. Approximately 1.5 million Hungarians were living in the US in the years preceding the Great War – some of whom were temporary immigrant labor, but the majority was seeking permanent stay or even citizenship.[1] When the war broke out, thousands of Hungarians indicated their intention to travel home and enlist in the Hungarian army, other tens of thousands stayed in the US but attempted to help by sending money or supplies to the troops fighting in the frontlines. Soon, questions started to arise about where the loyalty of these 'hyphenated'[2] immigrants' lied.

After the US entered the war in April, 1917, immigrants from Austria-Hungary were categorized as 'enemy aliens' under the Selective Service Act. However, roughly 3000 of them ended up serving in the American Military.[3] Although Hungarian communities were not targeted with xenophobic attacks as much as their German counterparts, but they definitely faced atrocities for being 'enemy aliens'.

This paper aims to look into some of the ways Hungarian immigrants experienced the war, and provide an overview of the author's extensive research based on a variety of primary and secondary resource material from both Hungarian and American archives and libraries. The wide-range social and military historical investigation is aimed at various aspects of the immigrant experience during the war, including exploring how Hungarian communities were affected by war propaganda conducted by both the American and the Austro-Hungarian governments, revealing how Hungarian-Americans discussed news from the frontlines, and to what extent did Hungarian immigrants share the burden of the American war effort. Some of the questions to be answered are: How did they react to certain events? How did they see the role of Austria and Germany in the war? What did they think about the Hungarian, and the American involvement in the Great War? For whom were

[*] The author's research is supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 ("Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University").

[1] Puskás, *Ties,* 21.

[2] Immigrants with multiple national identities such as Italian-Americans or Hungarian-Americans were often referred to as "hyphenated Americans" at the time, even by President Woodrow Wilson himself. See Vought, *The Bully Pulpit,* 94–120.

[3] Vida, *Hungarian Americans,* 311.

they "rooting"? As part of the research, this paper incorporates some of the results based on two main source groups: primary source records from American archives, and contemporary, predominantly American newspaper articles. Additionally, relevant works of secondary literature and other publications are also explored and utilized.

Hungarian Communities and the Great War – A Historical Perspective

Life was made hard for Hungarian Americans by the outbreak of the First World War. Although the United States managed to secure its neutrality during the first years of the war, the debts of the Entente, the protracted war efforts, and the ongoing atrocities conducted by German espionage and the unrestricted submarine warfare drifted the country further towards belligerence. Even while neutral, the US sold most of its military products to Entente powers. The factories manufacturing these products employed numerous Hungarian immigrants and guest workers. The Austro-Hungarian Government announced via the Hungarian-American press that any Hungarian citizen working in American ordnance factories commits treason and should be subject to prosecution upon returning home, with a possible 10 to 20 years prison sentence or even with capital punishment.[4] The situation was accurately described by a Hungarian factory worker in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

> *"For weeks now the Austrians working here have been troubled by reports scattered broadcast that if they did not stop making shells for the allies, they would be put in prison and, in some cases, be executed as traitors if ever they dared return to their country!"*[5]

Owing to the threats made by the Austro-Hungarian Government, many Hungarians living in the US filed their applications for citizenship.[6] This, of course, did not mean that they were unsympathetic to the cause of their homeland. There were several ways of helping those still at home. Hungarian-American civil societies, aid organizations, and fraternal insurance associations did a lot of work to make it possible for immigrants to help the war efforts of the Old Country: they organized charity events and other fundraisers, and used the collected money to purchase medical equipment, which they then sent to the Hungarian regiments fighting on the fronts via the Red Cross. Immigrants also had several opportunities to buy Hungarian war bonds, which seemed rather peculiar given the fact that many Hungarians purchased American war bonds as well. Besides material aid, they considered spiritual support equally important. They organized regular mass prayers in Hungarian churches where they prayed for military victories of Hungarian regiments, the wellbeing of the soldiers, and the persistence of those in the hinterland. These acts of patriotism towards their original home country raised eyebrows among their American coworkers, neighbors, and other acquaintances, and understandably so.

Incidents such as the infamous Dumba affair did not help their situation. The Dumba affair was a major scandal in the fall of 1915, involving Konstantin Theodore Dumba,

[4] See Szántó, *Magyarok Amerikában.*
[5] *The Day Book*, September 14, 1915.
[6] Szántó, *Magyarok Amerikában*, 63.

Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to the United States. In a letter he had sent to his government, Dumba admitted to being part of a scheme that attempted to use strikes and sabotage by immigrant workers to keep American companies from fulfilling their contracts with Allied states.[7] In the documents found by the British Royal Navy, ambassador Dumba had proposed a plan to "disorganize the manufacture of munitions of war" in the United States. As a part of this scheme, Dumba also suggested funding a number of foreign-language newspapers published in America to influence Hungarian laborers. The Wilson administration deemed this scheme a particularly dangerous attempt to take advantage of the heterogeneous population of the USA.[8] This infamous affair shed an ill light at Hungarian Americans, who, according to newspapers of the time, sought to dissociate themselves from Dumba. But other Austro-Hungarian nationals jumped at the opportunity to take advantage of the situation and use Dumba's case to express their loyalty to America. The Slovaks for example, did not hesitate to send letters to major newspapers, deeming Austria-Hungary an oppressive state and denouncing the activities of Ambassador Dumba.[9] But also, Hungarians showcased relief when the ambassador was recalled, both Hungarian and Austrian immigrants living in the city of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for example, were celebrating together in the streets.[10]

There were other incidents apart from the Dumba case, that could cast shadows over the peaceful coexistence of Hungarian immigrants and Americans. In a similar event, American Secret Service agents seized several documents (mostly correspondence) from German and Austro-Hungarian officials, that all proved schemes aimed at sabotaging American factories and shipyards. These plots included, apart from the "usual" plans to buy American newspapers and publish propaganda, bribery of politicians, starting of strikes, and the most dangerous ones, committing acts of industrial sabotage.

In this political environment, one can only imagine how hard it could be for Hungarian immigrants to balance between allegiances to "the Old Country and the New". One way to see how these communities thought about the war is to review the contemporary Hungarian-American press. In this part of the research, the author reviewed two major Hungarian-language newspapers (Hungarian American People's Voice, the largest daily, and Hungarian Courier, the largest weekly), and several minor, regional ones from the time period of the war.[11] The findings of this research will be subject to another full academic paper. Here, due to the understandable restrictions, I will only present some of the findings.

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[7] Puskás, *Ties,* 180.

[8] MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes,* 18.

[9] *New York Tribune,* (NY) September 16, 1915; or *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer,* (CT) September 20, 1915.

[10] *The Day Book* (IL), September 14, 1915.

[11] As part of the research, the following newspapers were inspected: *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* (1914–1919), *Magyar Híradó* (1917–1919), *Amerikai Magyar Reformátusok Lapja* (1914–1916), *Johnstowni Híradó* (1914–1919), *Magyar Hírnök* (1915), *Magyar Világ* (1914–1919), *Verhovayak Lapja* (1918). Based on these, an overall picture could be drawn about the wartime communication of the Hungarian-American press, but it cannot be stated that it reflects the opinion of the complete Hungarian immigrant community in America. I would like to thank Eszter Rakita for all the help she provided in processing the vast amount of written material.

After the announcement of the American belligerence, the Hungarian-American press rushed to calm its reader base and assure them that their freedom and possessions were not threatened by the federal government. Several papers posted public service announcements stating "no foreigners living in the United States should fear for their personal freedom as long as they behave according to the laws of the country."[12]

The majority of the Hungarian-American press reviewed in this research showed a rather ambiguous approach to the war. This ambiguity manifested in supporting the Hungarian regiments of the Austro-Hungarian army, while also being supportive of the American troops after the summer of 1917. Most of the articles reporting on the war mention the Hungarian armies that fought against Serbia, Russia, France, and after 1915, Italy, in a positive context, cheering for their wins and mourning over their losses. These texts show that the Hungarian community in America never lost its patriotic feelings for their homeland. But that does not mean they were not loyal to their new home, the United States. When America entered the war in April, 1917, Hungarian-Americans' loyalty faced a dire conflict: the US took the side of the Entente, and although Washington did not officially declare war on Austria-Hungary until December 7, 1917, it was crystal clear that the armies of the two countries were going to meet on the battlefield sooner than later. Be that as it may, the Hungarian-American press did not hesitate to support the American cause in the war from the first time Wilson announced the belligerence. The continuous investigation into the Hungarian language newspapers published in the US during the war showed no articles that spoke against, or criticized to any extent, the actions of the federal government so far. A frequently appearing opinion was a support for a Hungarian independence movement seeking the bisection of Austria-Hungary, blaming the whole war on Emperors Franz Joseph and Wilhelm II, and regularly citing Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza's memorandum on July 1, 1914, in which he strongly opposed the ultimatum sent to Serbia, which eventually led to the outbreak of the World War. Tisza's opinion was used as evidence to the Hungarian unwillingness to enter the war, and to prove that independence from Austria was necessary. At the same time, President Wilson was usually portrayed as a potential patron of Hungarian independence.

Most frequently used phrases used to describe troops	
Hungarian soldiers	***American soldiers***
"our boys"	"our people"
"glorious"	"our men"
"brave"	"brave"
"gallant"	"heroic"
"honorable"	"unstoppable"

Figure 1: Most frequently used phrases collected from Hungarian-American newspapers

[12] *Amerikai Magyar Népszava (American Hungarian People's Voice),* April 6, 1917.

As the table shows, they discussed both the Hungarian and the American soldiers with praises. They considered both armies their own, as they used the first person plural possessive pronoun "our" in both cases, very frequently. Also, both armies were portrayed as gallant, brave warriors who lay down their lives every day to battle tyranny and to champion freedom and independence – a fight that Hungarians and Americans both knew very well from their history. "Unstoppable" and "undefeatable" were words associated with the American army, but not the Hungarian one, and their usage became even more recurring as the war progressed and the Entente powers came closer to victory. The word "brave" appeared very frequently in connection with both armies. Reports on Hungarian regiments clashing with American troops are usually missing from the examined newspapers despite the fact that the AEF fought Austria-Hungary on both the Western and, to a smaller extent at the end of the war, the Italian Front.[13]

The opinion articles in every publication have something in common: they all agree that the common enemy of both Hungarians and Americans were Germany and Austria. Most of these newspapers deemed the war pointless, and blamed Germany and Austria for forcing Hungary (or more specifically, the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary) to fight in this pointless war. The overall opinion was that Hungary was a victim of German imperialism, and the Pan-German plans were "watered with Hungarian blood". So it seems more than obvious from their point of view to support the American troops to defeat Germany and Austria, so Hungary may be freed from her ties to the Austrian Emperor.

Hungarian Immigrants in the Draft Registration of 1917

Another interesting aspect of the Hungarian immigrant experience during the war is the 1917 draft registration. This part of the research focuses on the data from the Draft Registration Cards filled out by Hungarian immigrant men between the age of 18 and 45. Some historical background should be provided to see how this record group was created and how Hungarian "enemy aliens" became involved.

The US entry to the First World War brought about something that a lot of Americans did not support: compulsory military service. This was a real threat a lot of immigrants experienced in their countries of origin – some of whom chose immigration to the United States specifically to avoid being conscripted. To be able to successfully register all eligible men and create a large standing army, the Selective Service Act was issued in May, 1917. The act gave power to the federal government to draft recruits into the army, it defined who the subjects of draft registration were, how many were needed, and every other measure of the organization of the new army. The Selective Service System took into account the European (namely, French and German) military experiences of World War One. Accordingly, the goal was to avoid problems like labor shortage in the factories and on the fields, which caused serious economic problems in European countries, so they were made to withdraw troops of high combat value from the fronts to replace labor force. To prevent

[13] On the Italian Front, only one American regiment, the 332th Infantry Regiment was deployed. For more on this see Dalessandro, *Lions*.

problems like that, the Selective Service System was designed to have a fair quota system to divide registrants reasonably.[14]

Eventually, a total of 23,908,576 men were registered according to the Selective Service System. According to Nancy Gentile Ford, less than 10 percent of them, 2,758,542 men were drafted into the armed forces, which took up 67% of the 3,500,000 men in military service during the First World War.[15] There are slightly different figures in the Encyclopedia of War & American Society, edited by Peter Karsten. According to the Encyclopedia, the strength of the American Army grew from the 1916 headcount of 179,376 men to 3,685,000 during the 18 months of the American participation in the war. Of that, 2,810,296 men were drafted through the Selective Service System.[16]

After reviewing international law, immigrants were categorized into four major groups by the Selective Service Act. The groups were: diplomatic, declarant, non-declarant, and enemy aliens. Alien diplomats were exempted from the draft since technically they were not residents of the United States. Declarant aliens included immigrants who had filed their first papers of intention to become American citizens. These people were waiting to fulfill their five years of residency to complete the naturalization process. Declarant immigrants from friendly and allied nations were made eligible for the draft. The main idea was that they received the benefits of their newly adopted country, so, therefore, they should share the nation's burdens. Non-declarant aliens were those who did not file papers to sign their declaration to become American citizens. This group was made transitory, and could not be drafted due to their temporary status. The goal was to protect American citizens living in other countries under temporary resident status, so they would not be subjects for drafting into foreign armies. The category of enemy aliens included both declarant and non-declarant immigrants from enemy nations. By the report of a provost marshal general, enemy aliens were considered to be unfit to serve since they would be put in a position of potentially fighting against their own countrymen. Hungarian immigrants were, by definition, automatically considered enemy aliens, which made it possible to them to avoid being drafted by simply claiming exemption based on their enemy alien status.

The enemy alien category was without doubt the most interesting because it included various ranges of people who desired to join the American army for various reasons. The most frequent, and most obvious reason was that they wanted to fight the oppressors of their homelands. This included many Poles, Czechs, Serbs, Slovaks, etc. whose homelands were in German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, or Turkish territories. These men usually left their countries due to the oppression they had to suffer, and when the United States entered the war, they saw an opportunity to fight back and try to free their homelands from under the rule of European monarchs. By this line of thought, Hungarians could be considered one of the oppressors since they were one of the ruling nations in Austria-Hungary, while having restricted rights for other nations of minority such as Slovakians, Croatians, Romanians, etc. This is only partly true, of course, the situation was more complicated than that. Many of the patriotic Hungarians were not satisfied with the situation of Hungary and neither did they forgot the devastating retaliation for the 1848–1849 War of Independence by Franz Joseph. Many Hungarians considered it unacceptable to "shake the bloody hands" of

[14] Ford, *Americans All!,* 52.
[15] Ibid. 51–52.
[16] Karsten (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, 774.

the emperor who "issued the murder of so many" of their fellow countrymen. A great many of those who left the country and immigrated to the USA were thinking that way.

As a result, many Hungarians wanted to register to the draft as volunteers, or already volunteered before 1917. But according to the Selective Service Act, they too were considered enemy aliens. The case was resolved by an extension to the Act, which ruled that enemy aliens could not be forced to fight in the war but, after background check, they were eligible for the draft if they wished so. Those who were already serving in the American army as professional soldiers, were given the opportunity to file for honorable discharge if they felt their loyalty conflicted by the American belligerence.[17]

The Selective Service System provided the most important sources for my research. The Draft Registration Cards were produced from June 1917. There were more than 4,000 draft boards countrywide to register all the eligible men for the draft. According to the law, all men between the age of 18 and 45, living in the territory of the United States of America had to register for the draft. Naturally, not all of them were actually drafted, but their information in the registration cards is valuable for the research.

The registration process had three stages.

– First Registration. The first part was on June 5, 1917. All the men between 21 and 31 years had to register who were born between June 6, 1886, and June 5, 1896.

– Second Registration. It was on June 5, 1918, and all the men born between June 6, 1896, and June 5, 1897, had to register. Those who missed the first opportunity got a second chance without a penalty. There was an extra day on August 24, for those who reached 21 since June 5.

– Third Registration. It was held on September 12, 1918. Every men between the age of 18 and 21, and between 31 and 45, who were born between September 11, 1872, and September 12, 1900, was made to register.

It is a hard task to specify the exact number of Hungarians among the registrants. According to statistics based on the national census in 1910, there were 473,538 people living in the United States, who spoke Hungarian as a native language.[18] Of course, we would need to filter out the men between 18 and 45 years, and take into account the flow of immigrants between 1910 and 1914 to give an approximate number of those eligible for the draft.

Based on the author's original research into the Draft Registration Cards created as part of the Selective Service System in 1917–18, a database of 1198 Hungarian immigrants who registered for the draft has been complied.[19]

Out of the 1198 individuals, only 357 answered 'yes' to the question. This is little less than 30 percent (29.8), which means less than one third of Hungarian registrants claimed clearly that they did not wish to fight in the First World War. It is important to note how-

[17] There were several examples to this, as the author's another ongoing original research based on the Abstracts of World War I. Military Service, 1917–1919 shows – as it will be elaborated in a different paper.

[18] Based on statistics published by Julianna Puskás in Puskás: *Overseas Migration*.

[19] The research was based on a representative sample of some 1198 Hungarian registrants who filled out Draft Registration Cards in 1917–1918. The database is based on the following record group: National Archives and Records Administration, United States Selective Service System. Selective Service Registration Cards, World War I: Records of the Selective Service System, Record Group Number M-1509.

ever, that there could have been many who completed the compulsory registration knowing for a fact that they would not be obligated to enlist. So, being sure of their safe position, they may simply have left this answer empty.

The following chart contains those who indicated their claims for exemption. The 357 individuals were divided into 8 categories. The four main grounds for claiming exemption were family, health, citizenship and ethic/moral issues. These make up four of the eight categories. The 'other' category was created to include those who cannot be clearly categorized into one of the previous four. There were also some who mentioned two reasons for exemption, and those who did not specify any grounds at all. Finally, in some cases, the answers were unreadable. Each of these are represented in different lines in the chart.

Grounds for claiming exemption	
Grounds	**Quantity**
Family	250
Health	24
Citizenship	14
Ethical/moral	22
Multiple grounds	5
Unreadable	8
Other	5
Not specified	29
Altogether	357

Figure 2: Classification of grounds claimed for exemption by Hungarian registrants[20]

As shown in the table, in the majority of the cases (250 out of 357) the Hungarian registrants claimed exemption on family grounds, which is 70 percent proportion. Among these, most claims mentioned wives and children under 12, or simply 'family'. 'Support of family', 'support my wife + children', 'have to support family' were the most frequently used expressions but the registrants sometimes simply put 'married man' as the answer. In some cases, only the word 'dependents' or its misspelt variant 'dependants' was mentioned. Many registrants (41) claimed exemption because they had one, or both parents to support. Four registrants claimed they had to support their siblings, too, while three registrants put 'dependent relatives' as their answers, which indicate the support of more distant relatives. In one case, a registrant asked for exemption due to the support of his four children and his mother.

Health reasons were mentioned 24 times in the registration cards, which comprises 6.5 percent of the sample. Among the members of the draft boards usually were physicians to conduct a short medical examination during the registration process. So claiming exemption on medical grounds could only be accepted if it had strong basis. This may provide an explanation as to the low number of health-based claim. One person claimed nervous frus-

[20] From the database of Hungarian registrants of 1917.

tration as grounds of exemption, but most men named physical problems such as limb injuries (8 cases), and vision problems (5 cases). Apart from these, rupture, physical weakness, not specified physical disability, and two serious illnesses: asthma and tuberculosis appear in the sources.

Fourteen registrants claimed exemption on the grounds of their citizenship. The overwhelming majority of them were, of course, not American citizens. The Selective Service Act categorized immigrants into four major groups: diplomatic, declarant, non-declarant, and enemy aliens. Foreign diplomats were of course exempted from the draft since they were not residents of the United States. Declarant aliens included immigrants who had filed their first papers of intention to become citizens. In most cases they were expected to fulfill the five years' residency requirement to complete the naturalization process. Declarant immigrants from friendly and allied nations were made eligible for the draft. Non-declarant aliens were those who did not file any papers to signal their intention of becoming American citizens. This group was made transitory, and could not be drafted due to their temporary status. The goal was to protect American citizens living in other countries under temporary resident status, so they would not be subjects for drafting into foreign armies. The category of enemy aliens included both declarant and non-declarant immigrants from enemy nations. By the report of a provost marshal general, enemy aliens were considered to be unfit to serve since they would be pit in a position of potentially fighting against their own countrymen.

More than 80 percent of them belonged in the "enemy alien" category for they had not even filed their papers to start the naturalization process. Still, only 14 people in the sample chose this reason to claim exemption.

The most interesting part of the sample may be those who claimed exemption on ethical/moral grounds, even though only 22 people did so, which is only 6 percent of the whole sample. Despite the low quantity, this is the category that provides us the most insight into the immigrants' way of thinking. Some of them referred to pacifism. Among them, there was Laszlo Bartha, who stated 'I am against war', Gabor Janki, who put 'I am not willing to go war' (sic!), and Nick Focht, who claimed to be an international socialist and wrote 'do not believe in war'. Louis Stark, a Tibolddaróc, Borsod County born immigrant, who went on to become a well-known reporter at The New York Times had a similar reason, he put 'ethical grounds, against taking life' as his reason for exemption from the draft. On an also similar note, Zsigmond Adler was not particularly against war but at least he was 'against conscription'. Some other registrants were also not particularly against war, it was participation in it they opposed. Steve Szaller for instance, put 'I am neutral' as his answer, while similarly Sandor Peto wrote 'dont intend to war' (sic!), Samuel Hiber put 'refuse to fight abroad' on his registration card.

Some registrants imposed conditions for their participation in the war. One of these examples is Bertalan Gero's, who answered 'only for defence of America, not for offence in Europe'. Another one was Daniel Toth, who claimed he was 'willing to defend the country'. On a slightly different note, Frank Jo did not intend to fight in the war but said 'if law force me I will go' (sic!). John Varga had a similar answer but he trusted the federal government to decide if he should go or not, stating 'only if it is necessary'.

Taking a look at marital statuses might provide some sort of explanation to the low number of people claiming ethical grounds for their exemption. Out of the 22, only four

were married, and only two of them had children. The most certain excuse for avoiding the draft was having dependents, most importantly children to support. Single men without children, of course, could not take this option, and if they did not have any underlining medical condition either, they could only refer to their citizenship status or their ethical objections to avoid the draft. It is safe to say that there must have been many people among those who claimed exemption based on family reasons, who had ethical/moral issues with the war but dependents were their best chance to avoid being drafted. The four married out of the 22 were the aforementioned international socialist Nick Focht, Zsigmond Adler who was against conscription, Joe Shultz who only put 'morally' as his answer, and Jozsef Zsrinszki, who specifically stated that he would not go to war on the side of the United States claiming 'wants to fight for Hungary if called".

There were some others who, although did not dare to give such bold statements as Zsrinszki, also signaled their opposition to serving. They did so in fears of having to face their fellow Hungarians on the trenches. Such person was Joe Barber for instance, who asked for exemption because as he wrote, upon conscription 'would have fight my country'. Joe Kardos had similar reservations, asking for exemption because he could not take up fight against his original homeland. He put 'exempt, fight against brother' (sic!) as his answer.

Of course, the research is not a comprehensive one. It would take years, and a research group, to fully process the 24 million registration cards to find, filter, and catalogue all – approximately 50 to 60 thousand – Hungarian immigrants. With the necessary critical remarks, the sample of 1198 people is suitable for examining some social-historical aspects of the Hungarian-American community of the time, but no final conclusions should be drawn from the results presented here.

Fighting Under Uncle Sam's Flag

Despite being labeled "enemy aliens" and having to suffer hostility from Americans, approximately 3000 Hungarian (first and second generation) immigrants served in the United States Armed Forces during the years of World War One.[21] Most of them were drafted in the framework of the Selective Service System but there were numerous volunteers, too, many of whom joined the army even before 1914. A significant part of the research is collecting information and drawing up life stories of Hungarian soldiers who actively fought in the world war on the side of America. These case studies are perfect examples of how a complete cooperation between the host nation and the immigrant nationals can be observed. In the following pages one of the best case studies of these volunteers will be discussed. He was an artilleryman, who made quite the name for himself by firing the first shot of the United States in the First World War.

This Hungarian-American soldier was Sergeant Alexander Arch (Ács Sándor), the commander of the gun crew of Battery C, 6th Field Artillery. To be fair, there was another Hungarian member of the same gun crew, Corporal Louis Varady (Várady Lajos). Being Hungarian was not the only common feature between them, both of them also lived in the same town during the years of the war: South Bend, Indiana. In this paper, I will only focus

[21] Vida, *Hungarian Americans*. 314–315.

on Ács, who by becoming one of the icons of the American army in the public eye of his state, Indiana for a few years, may be a better case study.

> *"Sergt. Alex Arch of South Bend, Ind., pulled the lanyard of an American gun in a battery position on a muddy hill northeast of Einville, firing the first American shot of the war into the German lines."*[22]

The battery was manned by four people. Sergeant Alexander Arch, chief of the first gun section, Corporal Robert Braley, gunner, and Cannoneers Louis Varady and John Wodarczak.[23] Alex Arch was first believed to be an Irishman, on account of his copper hair, but later it was discovered by the Hungarian-American press that he was, in fact, a Hungarian man. Primary source evidences have proven his Hungarian ancestry. Arch was born in Röjtök, Hungary, on March 19, 1894, as Ács Sándor, a son of István Ács and Terézia Pusztai.[24] The spelling of their family name must have been modified to reflect the English language, as it sounds much like the word "arch", and to make it easier for Americans to pronounce. According to the Ellis Island Ship Manifest database, the father arrived in New York City on November 9, 1899 with his eldest son, Máté.[25] His wife, with daughter Ilona and younger son, Sándor (Alex) followed him on May 21, 1903.[26] Next month they moved to the state of Indiana. The family started building their new lives in South Bend, the children went to American schools and were very quick to learn English.

Alex chose the military career and enlisted in 1913, when he was 19 years old. For four years he had served on the Mexican border, reaching the rank of Private First Class, then Corporal in 1916, and becoming a Sergeant in 1917. After the United States entered the Great War, he was assigned to the 6th Field Artillery Regiment, which was deployed in France from July 27, 1917 to August 26, 1919. During this time, Ács fought in major battles of the World War such as Montdidier-Noyon, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne. He was wounded two times: April 1, 1918 (after a gas attack), and May 28, 1918 (wounded by shrapnel). After the war he arrived back in the US with his regiment on September 5, 1919, and was honorably discharged on June 20, 1920. He received the Silver Star Medal for his services.

The deed in which he played a major role was of historical importance. Firing the first shot in the First World War is a significant step, although more from a historical and psychological point of view than a strategical perspective. Still, the event itself is important but the name of Ács is not recorded anywhere in the Hungarian military historiography. The case was very different in the contemporary American press, which paid a remarkable deal of attention to this young Hungarian soldier.

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[22] *South Bend News-Times*, October 22, 1918.
[23] History of the Sixth Field Artillery, US Army 1798–1932. (Edited by the US Army Sixth Field Artillery) Fort Hoyle, MD, USA. 1933. 169.
[24] Birth Register of Röjtök, Hungary, 1894. Available also at:
https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9TVG-VSR?i=114
[25] List or Manifest of Alien Immigrants for SS Southwark, Sailing from Antwerp, October 28, 1899.
[26] List or Manifest of Alien Immigrants for the Commissioner of Immigration. SS Pennsylvania, Sailing from Hamburg, May 8, 1903.

Ács became a minor celebrity in his home state between 1918 and 1921. First in his home-county, St. Joe, the state began to promote the purchase of war bonds (Liberty Loan) with his name. Local newspapers, the South Bend Times-News, the Indiana Daily Times, and The Richmond Palladium, and many others wrote such things as

> "*What Are You Going To Do? – Alex Arch and the rest of the St. Joe County boys 'Over There' Want to Know. Those boys – our boys – would today be putting the question straight to us, if they could.* […] *They want to know how the Home Folks stand – they want to know if the Home Folks are with them cheerfully, even to the last dollar.* […] *Be a Volunteer Buyer – 4th Liberty Loan.*"[27]

But his name was not only used for advertisements. After the American army returned from "Over There", Ács was considered a hero by both the Indiana State press and political leaders of the state and several cities, too. He was regularly invited as a guest of honor to a wide variety of events, and was awarded with several honorary citizenships and other awards. His home town, South Bend even organized a welcoming ceremony for him. The organization board also created a Hungarian committee, which is a sign of how much the local American patriots were aware of Ács's Hungarian roots. His homecoming was supposed to be "a unique event in the history of this war."[28] The organizers invited General John Joseph Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War One himself, to attend the ceremony and present Ács with an award. Due to his other responsibilities, Pershing refused to attend, despite the continuous attempts to persuade him by both of Indiana's senators James Eli Watson and Harry Stewart New.[29] The involvement of both senators goes to show the significance Indiana officials gave to welcoming Ács properly.

The ceremony took place on October 29, 1919, where attendees had an opportunity for a "meet and greet" with Ács, but prior to the big event, there were several other occasions during October, when locals could talk to the "pride of America's armies".[30]

He was invited to a wide variety of events. For example, on January 13, 1921, he attended the annual meeting of the Indiana Brotherhood of Threshermen in Indianapolis, IN. As advertised in the Brotherhood's periodical, the American Thresherman and Farm Power, the people of Indianapolis could meet the man who "fired the first American gun against the Germans" and owed him a great deal of respect. The event was expected to draw a lot of attention.

> *"To say the least, Indiana is very proud of this soldier; it fell to his lot to fire the first gun. We owe him a great deal of praise. Not only that, but Indiana should be more than proud in the fact that she furnished the first American soldier to fire the first shot in defense of our flag."*[31]

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[27] *South Bend News-Times*, September 18, 1918.
[28] Ibid. September 23, 1919.
[29] Ibid. September 28, 1919.
[30] Ibid. October 21, 1919.
[31] *American Thresherman and Farm Power*, December, 1920. 21–22.

The Indiana Daily Times reported on the parade the next day, writing "one of the features of entertainment Thursday night was in Tomlinson Hall was the appearance of Sergt. Alex Arch, who fired America's first artillery shot in the World War."[32] As part of the night's entertainment, Ács took part in the patriotic pageant, which depicted American war activities from 1776 to 1918.

Later that year, on November 11, Ács was invited to participate in the burial of the Unknown Soldier, a national monument commemorating the soldiers fallen in the World War in Washington, DC, as the representative of the State of Indiana.[33] The next year, 1922 saw Ács in New York City, where he served as recruit officer for his former regiment, the 6th field artillery.[34]

There is no significant information about him until 1930. The national census shows Ács, 36, living in South Bend with his wife, Julia, and three children: Mary, Alex, and Yolanda. At the time, he worked at Studebaker Automobile Company.[35] He also appears in The Indianapolis Times that year – the newspaper remembers his deed in the World War by publishing a photo of him in uniform, with his children.[36] We can also find information about him from the 1940s. He appears in the 1940 census, still living in South Bend with his family, the only difference is another child: Margaret.[37] In 1942, when the United States entered World War Two, the 48-year-old Ács registered for the draft but he was not called into service due to his age.[38] Unfortunately, the next source where we can find his name is his death certificate from 1979. He passed away in pneumonia on December 9. His grave can be found in Osceola, IN, which is near South Bend. He possibly moved there with his wife upon retirement.

Closing Remarks

The Hungarian immigrant experience in the United States during the years of World War One was a very complex phenomenon with several layers and factors to consider. In this paper I made an attempt to provide an overview of their situation and to pinpoint some of the aspects explored in this research. Based on the research into the contemporary press, Hungarian-Americans showed dual allegiance: they pledged loyalty to both the American and the Hungarian regiments fighting in the war. Several Hungarians tried travel home to enlist in the Hungarian army but several others enlisted in the American army, or registered to for the draft with the intention of fighting in the war. But there was also a lot of people who tried to avoid the draft by claiming exemption on a variety of grounds. Ultimately,

[32] *Indiana Daily Times*, January 14, 1921.
[33] Rider, *Merit*.
[34] *The Indianapolis Times*, September 22, 1922.
[35] United States of America, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Year: 1930; Census Place: South Bend, St Joseph, Indiana; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0040; FHL microfilm: 2340362.
[36] *The Indianapolis Times*, September 27, 1930.
[37] USABC Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Year: 1940; Census Place: South Bend, St Joseph, Indiana; Roll: m-t0627-01135; Page: 29B.
[38] NARA United States Selective Service System. Selective Service Registration Cards, World War II: Fourth Registration. Records of the Selective Service System, Record Group Number 147.

some 3000 Hungarian-born soldiers fought for the US in the World War, some of whom did remarkable deeds of historical importance, as the case study of Alexander Arch (Ács Sándor) showed. This research is a comprehensive exploration of the topic, based on a wide-range of primary and secondary sources from both countries. The goal of this paper was to introduce some of the main ideas. Hopefully, the research will bring us closer to better understanding the life and situation of the largest Hungarian diaspora.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Cartoon showing the "Pan-German hopes" being watered with "Hungarian blood". Source: Amerikai Magyar Népszava, *January 14, 1918*

Form 1

REGISTRATION CARD

No. _____

1	Name in full _____ (Given name) (Family name)	Age in Years
2	Home Address _____ (No.) (street) (city) (state)	
3	Date of birth _____ (month) (day) (year)	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? _____	
5	Where were you born? _____ (town) (state) (nation)	
6	If not a citizen, of what nation are you a citizen or subject? _____	
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? _____	
8	By whom employed? _____ Where employed? _____	
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on your for support (specify which)? _____	
10	Married or single (which)? _____ Race (specify which)? _____	
11	What military service have you had? Rank _____ branch _____ years _____ Nation or State _____	
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? _____	

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

_____

(Signature or Mark)

If person is of African descent, cut off this corner.

Appendix 2: Blank Sheet of a 1917 Draft Registration Card

Appendix 3: Alex Arch in uniform, possibly after the war

AUDITORIUM Today and Tomorrow

Benjamin B. Hampton and Ettinge F. Warner present

ZANE GREY'S

most powerful picture

DESERT GOLD

Directed by T. Hayes Hunter

Zane Grey

W. W. HODKINSON DISTRIBUTION

EXTRA SPECIAL
DOUBLE ATTRACTION!

SERGEANT ARCH

(HIMSELF)

TODAY AND TOMORROW

See him and shake hands with him

SERGEANT A. L. ARCH

In the first place we are safe in saying that ZANE GREY never wrote a western story to equal in sensation his "DESERT GOLD." Every foot of this big 7 reel feature is filled with thrills nd action, and contains the most wonderful and beautiful mountain scenery and natural characters ever seen in a western drama. And the large and appreciative audience who saw this masterful Zane Grey photoplay yesterday will join us in saying it's the best western drama they ever saw. Its cast is all-star and it equals the magnitude of the drama. If you miss "DESERT GOLD" you are missing the best ever and one grand treat. TODAY AND TOMORROW should prove to be two big gala days, as the pride of America's armies, a South Bend boy and the talk and admiration of the country, SERGT. ALEX ARCH, who fired the first shot of our American boys in the great war, will be here to meet, greet, shake hands and talk to you. He will hold a reception in the lobby on a specially arranged platform, and will also talk to you from the stage. And as every man, woman and child will want to meet and shake hands with Sergt. Arch, the man of the hour, and in order that everyone shall have this pleasure, we must insist on the ladies and children and as many as can to come to the matinee, very early in the evening or to the 9:15 show. We want to say that the greatest honor ever given to a South Bend citizen will be given Sergt. Arch Wednesday, Oct. 29, with the greatest patriotic parade ever seen in South Bend, a great and worthy patriotic cause for our great hero who spent so many months in the trenches so bravely. DON'T FORGET SERGT. ARCH HERE TODAY AND TOMORROW FROM 11 TO 11. DON'T TRY TO GET IN AT 8 O'CLOCK, AS THOUSANDS WILL BE TURNED AWAY.

Appendix 4: Newspaper advertisement for an event with Ács in the focus from South Bend News-Times, October 21, 1919.

Alex Arch, South Bend, credited with firing the first American shot in the World war, and his three children.

Appendix 5: Ács with his children in a photo in The Indianapolis Times, September 27, 1930.

Appendix 6: Ács's grave in Osceola, IN. Source: https://images.findagrave.com/photos/2012/24/45538328_132752060767.jpg

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Torn between Two Nations – Loyalty Issues of Hungarian Immigrants in the United States in 1917–1918

Immigration from the territory of Austria-Hungary in the United States had been at its peak in the decade before World War One. Approximately 1.5 million Hungarians were living in the US in the years preceding the Great War – some of whom were temporary immigrant labor, but the majority was seeking permanent stay or even citizenship. When the war broke out, thousands of Hungarians indicated their intention to travel home and enlist in the Hungarian army, other tens of thousands stayed in the US but attempted to help by sending money or supplies to the troops fighting in the frontlines. Soon, questions started to rise about where the loyalty of these ‘hyphenated’ immigrants’ lied.

After the US entered the war in April, 1917, immigrants from Austria-Hungary were categorized as ‘enemy aliens’ under the Selective Service Act. However, roughly 3000 of them ended up serving in the American Military. Although Hungarian communities were not targeted with xenophobic attacks as much as their German counterparts, but they definitely faced atrocities for being ‘enemy aliens’.

The paper will look into the way Hungarian immigrants experienced the war. It aims to explore how Hungarian communities were affected by war propaganda, conducted by both the American and the Austro-Hungarian governments. The paper will also attempt to reveal how Hungarian-Americans discussed news from the frontlines. It will seek answers to the following questions: How did they react to certain events? How did they see the role of Austria and Germany in the war? What did they think about the Hungarian, and the American involvement in the Great War? For whom were they “rooting”? The research is based on two main source groups: primary source records from American archives, and contemporary, predominantly Hungarian-American newspaper articles. Additionally, relevant works of secondary literature will be explored and utilized.