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“Passing the Plate for Revolution”: European Forty-Eighters’ Fundraising Tours in the United States¹

Historian George Macaulay Trevelyan called the European revolutions of 1848/49 "one of the turning points in human history when history actually failed to turn".² Nevertheless, for several months autocracy stamping on individual freedoms in so many countries seemed defeated and hopes were high that it would be replaced for good through national unification and the installation of popular self-governments. The Spring of Nations affected over 50 countries one way or another, but eventually no co-operation developed among the various revolutionary groups in different countries. Among several other factors, this resulted in the reactionary forces bracing up again and, sometimes with foreign assistance, managed to suppress the revolutionary movements. Monarchy, conservatism and restoration prevailed in France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Hungary. Those hoping for change had to do with only a handful of lasting reforms: serfdom was abolished once and for all in Austria-Hungary and in the *Ausgleich* of 1867 Emperor Francis Joseph had no other option but to give Hungarians more self-determination. The absolute monarchy collapsed in Denmark and Louis Philippe of France was forced to abdicate in 1848 and live in exile in England.

The defeat of freedom struggles was followed by brutal retaliation: the powers of restoration, shaken and insecure as they were, wanted to make sure that no such attempt could endanger their authority. In Hungary, the only country where the conflict had reached the scale of an all-out war of independence to be suppressed only with the more-than-willing intervention by the troops of Russian

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² George Macaulay Trevelyan, *The War and the European Revolution in Relation to History*, (Creighton Lecture London University, Athlone Press, 1919), 35–6, 38.

Czar Nicholas I, whose anti-revolution determination earned him the label of the “Gendarme of Europe”. The Hungarian revolutionary forces could not face up to the combined Austrian and Russian troops and eventually had to lay down their arms, after one and a half years of desperate fighting. Following this, martial law was introduced in the entire country and General Julius Jacob von Haynau was appointed plenipotentiary. His previous brutality in Italy earned him the name the “Hyena of Brescia,” and he set out to restore order in Hungary as well. At his command the 13 leading generals of the Hungarian Army were executed in Arad on October 6, 1849 and on the same day Prime Minister Count Lajos Batthyány also had to face the firing squad in Pest. Altogether about 150 people, officers as well as officials were executed and imprisoned, whereas thousands (estimates regarding the number go as high as 50,000) were impressed into the Imperial Army.³ Although on a smaller scale, but similar examples of reprisals took place in several other countries.

No wonder that many participants of the liberal movements, leading figures as well as ordinary soldiers and officials, often found no other option but to flee in order to escape retaliation. Sometimes they literally had to run for their lives. Gottfried Kinkel, the German poet and professor of theology and art history, was sentenced to life imprisonment for his participation in armed rebellion in the Palantine, and could only escape from the infamous Spandau prison in Berlin with the assistance of Carl Schurz, his former student and future political leader of German-Americans.⁴ Lajos Kossuth had to shave his iconic beard to disguise himself as a British merchant and escape to the Ottoman Empire on August 17, 1849, where he was interned as “Guest of the Padişah” until September 1851, along with many of his escort.⁵

One of the most difficult questions was where they would find refuge. Hardly any governments were willing to take the risk of a diplomatic conflict with, for example, the Habsburg Empire, therefore, the exiled revolutionaries were running out of options very quickly. Many, especially from Germany, escaped to the Swiss cantons which, despite the diplomatic pressure they were exposed to, refused to extradite them. Most Forty-Eighters, however, headed for Great Britain, which they almost unanimously considered to be the most democratic country in Europe. Separated by the Channel from the Continent, it was exactly the kind of safe haven the refugees desperately sought. Consequently, London soon became the gathering place for a most interesting international group of idealists and political thinkers of the age. What they had in common was their lost struggle

³ Gábor Bona, *Hadnagyok és főhadnagyok az 1848–49. évi szabadságharcban*. (Budapest: Heraldika Kiadó, 1998), 1:12. Also: Róbert Hermann, “Az 1849–50. évi megtorlások,” in *Aetas*. 2000. 1–2, 82–131.

⁴ See, Alfred R. De Jonge, *Gottfried Kinkel as Political and Social Thinker*. (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1966.)

⁵ See, István Kornél Vida, *Hungarian Émigrés in the American Civil War: A History and Biographical Dictionary*. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011), 5–9.

against one of the oppressive monarchies in Europe, their similar cosmopolitan upbringing in Berlin, Vienna, Pest-Buda, Paris, or Prague. Furthermore, most of them sincerely believed that it was just a matter of time before a new war of independence could be started and their long-awaited freedom be achieved.⁶

Among the best-known Forty-Eighters who gathered in London (and many of whom settled in England for good) were Marx, Engels, Karl Blind, Arnold Ruge, and Gottfried Kinkel. As it can be seen, they represented a wide spectrum of political ideas and various degrees of radicalism. There were occasions when at the dinner table of the American Ambassador to London sat Giuseppe Garibaldi, Alexander Herzen, Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin, Giuseppe Mazzini, Lajos Kossuth, Francis Pulszky, and Stanisław Gabriel Worcell. No wonder that the ambassador's wife was asked "if she was not afraid the combustible materials about her would explode and blow them up?"⁷

The common cause blurred the sharp national boundaries between them and these cosmopolitan thinkers started vivid discussions on how to keep the revolutionary spirit alive and what possibilities were at hand for co-operation. Although many of the refugees had difficulties making ends meet in London, the city did provide what perhaps they needed the most: the freedom of speech and that of press which were both indispensable for their plot. This does not mean that there were no differences in how they pictured the future and how they hoped to bring about the desired pan-European revolution – void of the gravest shortcoming of the "Spring of Nations": international co-operation. Still, their efforts in London were rarely coordinated and there were numerous Forty-Eighter organizations operating side by side. The police prefect of Paris reported in 1851 that there existed a socialist democratic committee of German exiles, a Hungarian democratic society, a Polish democratic committee as well as an Italian national committee, among several others.⁸ Some leaders realized that they would need to put aside the differences in their political views and work together for the common goal. Perhaps the most noteworthy among them was Giuseppe Mazzini, who called all the revolutionary forces in Europe into his camp and also advocated that for their success the support, political and financial, of both Great Britain and the United States would be absolutely indispensable. He suggested establishing a directing body called Central European Committee in which each nationality was to be represented. According to his plans, this central committee would work closely together with the national committees

⁶ Sabine Freitag, "The Begging Bowl of Revolution: The Fund-Raising Tours of German and Hungarian Exiles to North America, 1851–52," in *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England*. (ed. Sabine Freitag) (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 164–166. (Hereafter cited as, Freitag, "Begging Bowl")

⁷ Quoted in Curti, Merle E. "Young America." *American Historical Review* 32 (1926), 48.

⁸ Quoted in Angela Jianu, *A Circle of Friends: Romanian Revolutionaries and Political Exile, 1840–1859* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011), 189.

in charge of secret societies in the individual countries homelands, and at the base of the organization the local committees would operate.⁹

The Central European Committee was set up in London and the members were the following: Ledru-Rollin for France, Mazzini for Italy, Albert Darasz for Poland, Arnold Ruge for Germany, Nicolai Golesco for Romania, and György Klapka for Hungary, with the possibility for other nations to join.¹⁰ As far as fundraising was concerned, Mazzini also conceived a grandiose plan which had the promise of gathering enough money for possible future revolutions and as such, it served as a masterplan to adopt for several national leaders in the upcoming months. Mazzini was convinced of the popularity of their cause both in Europe and in the United States, so he was planning to issue a national loan of ten million francs, which was to be repaid with interest by the government of free Italy, which he and his followers hoped would be born after the success of the revolution.¹¹ Mazzini pinpointed Italian-Americans as prospective supporters out of patriotism, but also trusted that the general sympathy of the American public would result in a significant amount raised for the support of the Italian cause. Quite realistically, he also counted on American investors who would be willing to purchase the bonds seeking considerable profits. In order to reach his goals, he envisioned large meetings in America in support of the Italian cause:

I am not acquainted with the United States, but they belong to the English race, and I know their customs. I am convinced that the moral advantage of a powerful echo of sympathy, coming to Italy from beyond the Atlantic, would be as great as the material advantage, and, if possible, should not be neglected. The meetings would be useful in two ways: to spread the sympathy for the cause, and to increase the number of subscriptions.¹²

Mazzini's plan, however, did not prove to be as fruitful as he had hoped, as hardly any bonds were sold in the United States. Nevertheless, his plan concerning the national bonds as well as the idea of fundraising tours in America fell into fertile ground among the leaders of the various political refugee groups and national organizations in London, as many of them set out to architect their own plan along these lines. The years 1851–1852 saw three lecturing and fundraising tours in the United States by various spokesmen of the Forty-Eighters, which

⁹ Rossi, Joseph, *The Image of America in Mazzini's Writings*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), 75–76, 78. (Hereafter cited as: Rossi, *Image*)

¹⁰ See, Heinrich Börnstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody: the Missouri Years of an Austrian Radical, 1849–1866*. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1997), 151.

¹¹ Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 100.

¹² Mazzini to Eleuterio Felice Foresti. Quoted in Rossi, *Image*, p. 78. For the original text see Giuseppe Mazzini, *Scritti editi ed inediti. Edizione Nazionale* (Imola: Galeati, 1905–43), 45:59–61. (Hereafter cited as, Mazzini, *Scritti*)

were followed by one much later, in 1858. My paper offers a summary of these lecturing tours by focusing on the following issues:

- 1) Why did the ethnic spokespersons unanimously turn to America for inspiration as far as a model democracy was concerned, and to what extent did they think the adaptation of it in the specific political environment of their homelands was possible?
- 2) What practical benefits did the individual fundraisers hope to gain from their trips? What specific target audiences did they choose for their campaign, and why?
- 3) What was the reaction of the American public to the individuals as well as the countries and causes they represented? What political/cultural/religious groups supported them and which were against them? What issues of American domestic politics and foreign policy were touched upon during the individual fundraising campaign?
- 4) What was the relationship between the travelling revolutionaries themselves? Did they see a rival in each other or tried to step up together?
- 5) How can the results of the tours be evaluated from the perspective of the a) individuals b) the ethnic group/political issues they represented c) American general public/political groups?

“The Guest of the Nation”: Lajos Kossuth’s *Tour de America* (1851–1852)

The charismatic leader of the Hungarian freedom struggle quickly became the emblem of fighting for national self-determination, as well as that of political and constitutional reforms and lifting feudal burdens. He became more and more popular not only in Europe, but in the United States as well. He literally placed Hungary on the maps for a lot of people in America, and after 1848, as Massachusetts Governor George S. Boutwell pointed out: “there was no other person of a foreign race and language of whose name and career as much was known”.¹³

Similarly to his comrades, Kossuth also stepped on the “thorny path of martyrdom”, as he put it, and this further increased his popularity overseas.¹⁴ Despite his above-mentioned internment in Asia Minor in the Ottoman Empire, the friends of Hungarian freedom on both sides of the Atlantic did not lose sight of him: dozens of articles dealt with his career, character and achievements. In politics, the so-called Young America movement urged the government to reconsider its

¹³ George Sewall Boutwell, *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs*. 2 vols. (New York, 1902), 1:184.

¹⁴ In a letter written from internment in August 1850, Kossuth wrote about his fellow-exiles: “They are firmly and unitedly resolved to continue in the *thorny path of martyrdom* – a convincing proof that their love of country is still pure and steadfast”. Quoted in *Albany Evening Journal*, September 3, 1851, 2.

traditional isolationist foreign policy, in order to, as historian Henry Meyer put it, “assume the form of a revised doctrine of Manifest Destiny whereby the onward tide of civilization (with all the millennial and perfectionist overtones) was most felt in these revolutionary advances of freedom and self-determination”.¹⁵

Eventually, the Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the president to provide transportation for Kossuth and his group and invite him to the United States as the “Nation’s Guest”. Kossuth took the opportunity and accepted the invitation; the Sultan was more than happy to see him and the other Hungarian exiles leave, since they caused almost constant diplomatic tension with Austria. Kossuth left onboard the *U.S.S. Mississippi* on September 10, 1851. The ship’s commander, Captain Long had been warned by George Perkins Marsh, the first minister-resident of the United States in Constantinople, that “Kossuth would jump the ship anywhere and re-ignite his dead revolution even at the cost of American neutrality,” therefore, he advised him that “the ship should touch as few ports as possible, and remain as short a period at them, as is possible”.¹⁶ Kossuth was outraged and constantly referred to the ship as a floating prison – no wonder that Charles W. Morgan, commander of the American naval forces in the Mediterranean wrote about him: “The devil seems to possess this gentleman. He is utterly ungovernable... He is like a firebrand”.¹⁷

Despite the efforts of the American diplomats and naval officers, Kossuth did leave the ship at Gibraltar and, instead of sailing directly to the United States he traveled to Britain first where he spent about a month. He took part in a highly-successful lecturing tour in several cities in front of huge crowds and he managed to win the heart of the British public.¹⁸ He excelled as an orator, which he had been well known for back in Hungary, but this time he delivered his speeches in English. According to the myth, he had learned English all by himself while being imprisoned between 1837 and 1840. Later, he emphasized several times that his most important source had been the works of William Shakespeare. As historian Tibor Frank correctly argues, this was a fine example of conscious personal myth-making on Kossuth’s part through which he aimed to farther his political goals and raise sympathy for himself and his cause in the Anglo-Saxon countries.¹⁹ Nevertheless, his audiences both in Britain and the United States

¹⁵ Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 416–417.

¹⁶ Marsh to Long, September 6, 1851. US Congress, Executive Documents, 32nd congress, 1 Session, 8, no. 78, 49.

¹⁷ Morgan to Hodge, September 23, 1851, Senate, Executive Documents, 32nd Congress, 1 Session, 8, No 78, 2.

¹⁸ See, Tibor Frank, “Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarian Exiles in New York,” in *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England*. (ed. Sabine Freitag) (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 121–134.

¹⁹ Tibor Frank, “Kossuth és Shakespeare: nyelv és politika” in *Századok*, 2002, 863–880.

were more than impressed by his rhetorical skills and English proficiency. The *Boston Evening Transcript*, for example, quoted the correspondent of the *Times* who had written about Kossuth as a speaker:

He speaks slowly, in very good grammatical English. He is a good actor. Sometimes his gestures were very graceful... Kossuth's imperfect English lent a charm to his speaking, which, however, was not, of course, so effective as that of many of our own orators, inasmuch as he had slips of notes in his hand, from which he read continually. Some passages were, however, highly effective... As a speaker, he is unquestionably a first rate man. Considering it was delivered in a foreign idiom, his speech kindled great enthusiasm...²⁰

Kossuth, similarly to other leading figures of the so-called Hungarian Reform Age in Hungary between the 1820s and 1848, considered the American type of democracy to be a model worthy of imitating and adopting.²¹ Once he wrote about the future form of government he considered ideal for Hungary:

Our homeland can find relief in a republican government. I mean a republican framework like that of the United States, which besides providing equality and freedom, guarantees security both for people and estates, and also allows abundant reward for those working... It is well known that when he worded the Hungarian Declaration of Independence, he used its American counterpart as a model. He fully acknowledged the role the United States played in setting him and his followers free and her support of the European revolutions: The Spirit of America's young giant shouted over the waves to Old Europe's oppressed nations: 'Don't despair; here is a brother's powerful hand to your aid.'²²

²⁰ *Boston Evening Transcript*, XXII, 6551, 2.

²¹ For the first travelogue published in Hungarian about the United States and its comparison to Tocqueville's more famous, yet rather similar work, see: Csaba Lévai, "A French Aristocrat and a Hungarian Nobleman in Jacksonian America: a Comparison of the Views of Alexis de Tocqueville and Sándor Bölöni Farkas" in *Global Encounters-European Identities*. (Eds. Harris, M., Agnarsdóttir, A., Lévai, Cs.) (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2010.), 247–258. Also: Éva Mathey, "Two Contemporaries Bölöni Farkas Sándor and Alexis de Tocqueville: American Democracy Praised and Criticized". *2nd International Conference of PhD Students August, 1999, Miskolc*. (Miskolc: University of Miskolc Press, 1999), 119–122. For another excellent study on the development of the image of the Americas in Hungary see, Balázs Venkovits, "Writing with Devotion, Drawing with Light: Images of the Americas in Nineteenth Century Hungarian Travelogues". Grzegorz Moroz and Jolenta Sztachelska, ed., *Metamorphoses of Travel Writing: Across Theories, Genres, Centuries and Literary Traditions*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 104–112. For a more general study about the importance of the genre in American studies in Hungary see, Tibor Glant, "Travel Writing as a Substitute for American Studies in Hungary," In *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 16/1–2 (2010), 171–84.

²² Kossuth's Letter to the Mayor of New York. November 10, 1851. Quoted in *Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the Common Council of the City of New York, To Make Arrangements for the Reception of Gov. Louis Kossuth, the Distinguished Hungarian Patriot*. (New York: Common Council, 1852), 9. (Hereafter cited as, *Report of the Special Committee*)

Furthermore, Kossuth was also convinced that the Hungarian cause, like those of other European countries, could not be solved without the political and financial support of the United States of America. This was the primary reason why eventually he set out for New York in November 1851: “Now I am sailing to America, to act for the sake of my nation. I will be a link so that the solidarity of two continents supports the Hungarian nation”.²³ Back in Asia Minor, he had composed an open letter entitled “Address to the People of the United States” which was published in most major American newspapers a few weeks prior to his arrival and its German translation appeared in the *New Yorker Deutscher Zeitung*, as well. Kossuth set out the goal of his mission: “To you [the American people], who have summoned the murderers of my countrymen before the judgment-seat of the world to you, who are the first judges of this court – I will bring the complaints of my nation, and before you I will plead her cause”.²⁴

Kossuth set foot on American soil in New York on December 6, 1851. What followed hardly had any parallel in American history, maybe with the single exception of the American visit of Marquis de Lafayette back in 1824–25. The Kossuth craze in America knew no boundaries: The Kossuth hat and beard became the fashion of the day, a newly-founded county in Iowa was named after the Hungarian revolutionary, along with thousands of babies, as their parents demonstrated their sympathy for Kossuth by naming them after him, one even baptized Eljenkossuth, which translates into Hungarian as ‘Long live Kossuth!’

Kossuth wanted to “translate the nation’s sympathy into economic and military support for the European rebels,” as historian David S. Spencer interpreted his mission,²⁵ and he did not leave anyone in the dark about the true intentions of his visit: “I trust...that the generous sympathies of the United States, will not know such a word as distance; but I humbly entreat that the brotherly hand of this younger giant will be extended to all Europe to help it to freedom and liberty,” he said on the very first day of his visit to New York.²⁶

What Kossuth meant was not some abstract solidarity and support, but he indeed hoped that the government of the United States would intervene and back the European freedom fights, which he and most revolutionary leaders hoped would gather strength soon, against their common enemies: the monarchies and the tyrannical powers that had brought about the demise of the liberal movements in 1848/49. The best way to summarize the major goal of Kossuth’s *Tour*

²³ Jánosy Dénes, *A Kossuth emigráció Angliában és Amerikában, 1851–1852*. 2 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1940), II/1: 15.

²⁴ “Address to the People of the United States” (March 27, 1850) in Henry M. De Puy, *Kossuth and His Generals* (Buffalo: Phinney & Co., 1852), 317–44. The excerpt on page 337.

²⁵ Davis S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848–1852* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 10. (Hereafter cited as, Spencer, *Kossuth and Young America*)

²⁶ *Report of the Special Committee*, 25.

de America is 'intervention for non-intervention': he was positive that the political and perhaps military involvement of the United States would be a bar to Russian intervention taking place again.

To reach his goals, Kossuth needed as much publicity as possible in order to address a wide audience. As in the first weeks and months of his visit, everybody wanted to see the "Champion of Human Liberty", he had actually way more invitations than he could possibly accept. "The greatest of Roman generals might have been proud of such a triumph," American historian James Ford Rhodes put it, "it was, indeed, a curious spectacle to see the descendants of sober-blooded Englishmen and phlegmatic Dutchmen roused to such a pitch of enthusiasm over a man [...] whose only title to fame was that he had fought bravely and acted wisely in an unsuccessful revolution".²⁷

Kossuth could not rely on Hungarian Americans, as there was no significant Hungarian diaspora in the United States as of yet, and the overwhelming majority of Hungarian immigrants in the United States were Forty-Eighters, themselves followers of Kossuth who had been in the country for several months at most. Among the specifically targeted audiences were, of course, Italians and especially Germans living in America; at the initial phase of his lecturing tour, however, he tried to address as wide an audience as possible. Both Italians and Germans actually gave him a warm welcome – Mazzini asked his friends in New York to welcome Kossuth, at the same time, warned them to do so "with dignity, speaking as one nation to another, as one power to another, so that he feels the need of maintaining a loyal alliance with them".²⁸

Kossuth had a packed schedule. During the 8 months he stayed overseas, he toured the country extensively, gave some 600 public speeches in front of various audiences and was the honored guest of hundreds of receptions and banquets.²⁹ He was even invited to deliver a speech at the joint session of Congress, the second foreign citizen to do so after Lafayette, and he was also received in the White House by President Fillmore, although only as a private person and not as a politician.

Besides calling the attention of the American public to the cause of Hungarian liberty, attempting to win political or even military support, Kossuth wanted to raise funds for his goals. Basically following the pattern Mazzini had introduced, bonds were issued in the name of the Hungarian Fund, which had Kossuth's portrait and signature on them, in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 dollars. The text on these promissory notes went: "On Demand one year after the establishment of the Independent Hungarian Government, the holder of shall be entitled to...

²⁷ James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States, From the Compromise of 1850 to the Final Restoration of Home Rule at the South in 1877*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1893–1906), I. 223, 236.

²⁸ Mazzini, *Scritti*, 47:91

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of Kossuth's American tour see, John H. Komlos, *Louis Kossuth in America, 1851–1852* (Buffalo, NY: East European Institute, 1973)

Dollar payable at the National Treasury or at any of its Agencies at London or New York”. Without purchasing and possessing any of these bonds it was often not allowed to attend his lectures, which sent a very clear message of what his real priorities were, although it certainly bore animosity towards him and his cause in many. In the first months, however, it seemed to work: most of his speeches and public lectures were sold out.

As time passed, however, the initial enthusiasm of the American public started to melt away. Kossuth, who tried to remain neutral regarding American domestic politics, since, as he early announced, he stood for national self-determination, he would “not meddle with any domestic concerns of the US”.³⁰ This decision, however, soon backfired on him and he appeared suspicious in the eyes of many exactly as a result of it. Kossuth, who was considered to be the Champion of Liberty, remained silent about the most hotly-debated issue of slavery, alienating the abolitionists who called him a hypocrite. William Lloyd Garrison, in particular, turned against him, attacking him week by week in editorials and a public letter in February 1852 in the *Liberator* for having “but one topic that he had shunned, as though to name it would be a crime, – and that is, SLAVERY!”³¹ What is ironic, however, is that Kossuth’s conscious neutrality did not earn him the sympathy of the slave-holding South either which nevertheless considered him a threat to their traditional peculiar institution and could not associate with or support the European liberal movements without becoming their targets themselves.³²

The list of those heavily criticizing Kossuth grew rapidly. The Catholic Church unanimously turned against the liberal movements due to their anticlerical nature.³³ Its major spokesman was Archbishop Hughes of New York, who vehemently attacked Kossuth from the very beginning of his visit. In his letter to the Austrian minister in Washington, D.C. he wrote:

I regard him and all that I have known of his class, as arch-enemies of the Catholic Church and of the Peace of Mankind; and, therefore, I take it for granted, that no blessing can attend their efforts, and that it is a charity which we owe to Christian faith and the tranquility of nations, to use every just and honorable means for the extinguishment of their efforts with as little delay as possible. I have very little doubt myself, that the cause of Austria, as against Kossuth and his band of conspirators, is a just and true cause.³⁴

³⁰ Poore, Benjamin Perley, *Perley’s Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis*. (Washington, 1886), 1: 416. (Hereafter cited as, Poore, *Reminiscences*).

³¹ William Lloyd Garrison, *Letter to Louis Kossuth Concerning Freedom and Slavery in the United States*. (Boston: R.F. Wallcut, 1852.), 5.

³² Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 416–417.

³³ Curti, Merle. *Austrian and the United States, 1848–1852*. *Smith College Studies in History* 11 (3), 1926, 213.

³⁴ Quoted in John R.G. Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D.D., First Archbishop of New York*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 342.

Using his influence, the Catholic community, including the majority of the Irish in New York, remained conspicuously indifferent to Kossuth and his cause throughout his visit.

The government and the majority of the leading politicians were polite but distant, not sharing the ideas of the ‘Young America’ movement. Kossuth soon had to realize that it had been a mistake to expect that the United States would intervene in European affairs in any way. During his meeting with the old and dying “Great Compromiser”, Henry Clay, the veteran American politician argued that the American intervention on Old World affairs would mean the European despots could likewise intervene in America’s domestic difficulties.³⁵ Amidst constant coughing in what became his death-bed, Clay told the Hungarian politician:

We have showed to other nations the way to greatness and happiness... But if we should involve ourselves in the tangled web of European politics, in a war in which we could effect nothing, and if in that struggle Hungary should go down, and we should go down with her, where, then, would be the last best hope of the friends of freedom throughout the world?³⁶

The isolationist tradition of the American foreign policy remained too hard a nut for Kossuth to crack, and it was hard for him to control his emotions and not show his disappointment. Many started to feel that he was trying to manipulate the American public opinion for his own purposes and even accused him of being arrogant. Senator Crittenden of Kentucky, for instance, pointed out:

Beware of the introduction or exercise of a foreign influence among you! We are Americans! The Father of our country has taught us, and we have learned, to govern ourselves. If the rest of the world have not learned that lesson, how shall they teach us? We are the teachers and yet they appear here with a new exposition of Washington’s Farewell Address. For one, I do not want this new doctrine. I want to stand *super antiquas vias* – upon the old road that Washington traveled and that every president from Washington to Fillmore has traveled.³⁷

Realizing the public interest towards himself and his cause fading away, Kossuth left the East Coast and set out for a lecturing and fundraising tour in the Midwest at the end of January 1852. Among several other stops, he visited Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville, Indianapolis and St. Louis before heading for the South. The change in the public sentiment required that he would re-adjust

³⁵ For the Clay incident see, “Kossuth in New Orleans”: based on: Rogers, William Warren. “The ‘Nation’s Guest’ in Louisiana”. *The Journal of Louisiana Historical Association*. vol. 9, no. 4, Autumn 1968, 358.

³⁶ *The Works of Henry Clay: Comprising His Life, Correspondence, and Speeches*. (ed. Calvin Colton.) (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 3:223–224.

³⁷ Poore, *Reminiscences*, 1: 406.

his tactics, as well. As opposed to addressing the general public, in the Midwest he started to specifically target German-Americans, among whose leaders were many Forty-Eighters, likely to support the common effort of the European liberal movements. Kossuth attended German mass meetings, appeared together with the two German fellow fundraisers, published articles and open letters in German in German-American newspapers. Nevertheless, there were many who did not leave this change in his approach to Germans unmentioned – Friedrich Hecker wrote about his visit:

As he [Kossuth] with his household moved in here, we recalled that when landing in New York he had coldly and arrogantly declined the warm-hearted welcome of the Germans, whereas he had shaken hands with Americans with overzealous friendliness. We observed that the farther to the West he had come and had realized that the curious natives even looked at him as an interesting elephant, but that was about it, the friendlier he became. Eventually he was exclusively enthusiastic towards the Germans – we, however, read at the bottom of his heart the hatred of Germans, therefore, decided not to jump on his bandwagon.³⁸

Kossuth's visit to the South brought even less success partly as a result of his name being associated with abolitionism (ironic as it was), partly due to the unpopularity of his idea of American intervention in Europe. Furthermore, he could not expect much in the South as far as fund raising was concerned – as one contemporary remarked: “Someone ought to have told him that southern planters seldom lavished money on any cause”.³⁹ At some places Kossuth's lectures were boycotted, or simply ignored (in Louisiana there were protests against his invitation, while he had to leave Charleston after just two days due to the indifference of the locals).

Allegations appeared in the American press claiming that Kossuth had pocketed the gathered funds for his personal purposes. Accounting was indeed not the strongest point of his fundraising campaign: there were disparities between the newspaper announcements of donations and Kossuth's accounts of the received sums, bills remained unpaid.⁴⁰ He was unable to pay back much of the money he had received prior to his trip, including the 500-pound loan from Mazzini in return for which he had promised to campaign for the Italian cause as well as promote the Italian national bonds. The disappointed Mazzini wrote to Adriano Lemmi:

Substantially, from the last letter Kossuth wrote to me I gather: that he has no money at all; he spent whatever he collected and made some additional commitments. He will not give you money; he will not give me any either. About the bonds, not even

³⁸ Quoted in Sabine Freitag, *Friedrich Hecker: Biographie eines Republikaners*. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 176. Translation mine.

³⁹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60.

⁴⁰ Sabine Freitag calls this fiscal incompetence. See, Freitag, “Begging Bowl”, 175.

a word; ditto, about the five hundred pounds of the Englishmen. He ruined me instead of helping me. Morally he did much good, more perhaps than he himself realizes now, but the result will not be apparent until the start of the revolution.⁴¹

It was not only Mazzini who was disillusioned with America. Kossuth, although he managed to influence the American public for a short period of time in a way hardly anyone before him, failed to accomplish what he came for: raising considerable funds for the planned European freedom fights and get American political and military support. Having come down from the clouds, he wrote to Mazzini: "I am leaving America, where, with much effort, I have accomplished a great deal for the future, but almost nothing for the present".⁴² The exact amount of donations was never revealed, but it is estimated that he managed to collect more than 80,000 dollars, out of which only some 1,000 dollars remained after expenses.⁴³ Much of this money was used for purchasing weapons and setting up an ammunition and belt factory, which operated only for a brief period of time and never assisted the European liberal movements in any significant way.

Kossuth left the United States on July 14, 1852 and returned to Britain exhausted and disappointed. Although many Kossuth Emigrés hoped, he never returned and settled in America.

Amand Goegg and Gottfried Kinkel – Two People, the Same Cause

Although Kossuth's American tour received by far the largest attention, he was not the only one who took part in a lecturing tour trying to gain support and collect funds for his national cause. The German revolutionaries in London also set out to raise support for continuing the revolutionary cause in Germany as well as establishing revolutionary societies among German immigrants in the United States. This, however, did not prove to be that easy. Unlike the Hungarian refugees, who were, with a few exceptions, all supporters of Kossuth, Germans in London were badly divided both politically and in how to realize their goals. Amand Goegg, Arnold Ruge, Josef Fickler, Franz Siegel were convinced that an official emigrant committee would be needed to represent the interests of all German refugees in London.⁴⁴ They also called for the necessity of organizing, gaining momentum

⁴¹ Mazzini, *Scritti*, 47: 299.

⁴² Mario Menghini, *Luigi Kossuth nel suo carteggio con Giuseppe Mazzini* (Vecchioni, 1921), 82–84.

⁴³ Spencer, *Kossuth and Young America*, 166.

⁴⁴ Freitag, "Begging Bowl", 165. For additional information on German Forty-Eighters consult, Charlotte L. Brancaforte, *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States*. (Peter Lang, New York, 1989), Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution. The German Forty-Eighters in America* (University of

and carrying out a wide-ranging propaganda campaign against the reactionary governments in Europe. They organized the so-called *Agitationsverein*, which emphasized the need for stepping up and making their voice heard. As opposed to them, others were of a more moderate opinion. Gottfried Kinkel, Carl Schurz, August Willich, Gustav Adolf Techow, Eduard Meyen, and Oskar von Reichenbach were against agitation in this form and attacked the idea of the emigrant committee.⁴⁵

What the two groups had in common was that they believed in the importance of a fundraising tour. As opposed to Kossuth, however, they wanted to focus on the German-Americans instead of addressing a wider spectrum of the American public or other ethnic groups, which was understandable considering that well more than 2 million Germans lived in the United States around 1850. The moderate faction selected Gottfried Kinkel as their spokesperson and appointed him to raise funds for the German National Loan. Kinkel seemed a perfect candidate in the eyes of many: the story of his participation in the revolution, his imprisonment and his adventurous escape was widely circulated in the American press.⁴⁶

Kinkel arrived in New York on September 14, 1851, a few months before Kossuth. At first, he received very cool welcome, as many believed that he was not representing the majority of the German exiles in London and had no proper authorization. When he traveled to Philadelphia, a German mass meeting was organized on September 27 with the “purpose of encouraging and assisting the spirit of republicanism in the *Vaterland*”.⁴⁷ When he arrived in Baltimore, 1,000 people welcomed him and he delivered a speech in German, which was followed by several other receptions and meetings. In October 1851 he introduced his National Loan plan, which was publicized in several dailies, including the ones in German language. The two-million-dollar Loan had for its object “the promotion of the impending German revolution”. The commencement of the project was entrusted to Kinkel, August Willich and Oskar von Reichenbach – they were authorized to issue provisional drafts with their signatures, for specified sums, bearing interest at five percent. According to the plans, once 20,000 dollars were collected, the above-named Financial Committee was to call a Congress of all the guarantors of the loan. (The guarantors’ committee consisted of well-known and respected Forty Eighters from both sides of the Atlantic.) The Congress was to elect the revolutionary committee which was to have full power to dispose of the money for revolutionary purposes.⁴⁸

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1952) and Adolf Eduard Zucker (ed.), *The Forty-Eighters. Political Refugees of the German Revolution*. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967.)

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 166. For the biography of Kinkel see, Hermann Rösch, *Gottfried Kinkel, Dichter und Demokrat*. (Edition Lempertz, Königswinter 2006.)

⁴⁶ About his escape see, *Richmond Enquirer* (December 6, 1850), 2.

⁴⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, (September 27, 1851), 1.

⁴⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, (October 21, 1851), 2.

In Cincinnati, Kinkel launched his *Denkschrift Über das Deutsche National-Anlehen zur Förderung der Revolution* [Memorandum on the German National Loan to Promote Revolution] in which he explained that no revolution can be started from the exile, however, emphasized that money from the outside was essential.⁴⁹

Kinkel traveled extensively in the Midwest and tried to make contact with other Forty-Eighters. On December 20, 1851 he met Friedrich Hecker, then in February Kossuth for the first time, following which they appeared together at a mass meeting in Cincinnati on February 15, 1852. Especially Cincinnati and her German population proved to be supportive of him: lectures, fairs, music associations' concerts were organized and the proceeds went to the loan. According to the newspaper reports, substantial donations were made in Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Baltimore.⁵⁰

On March 12, 1852 Kinkel left New York for London. He left some associates behind to take care of the National Loan in his absence, but the interest of the public declined rapidly following his departure.

The *Agitationsverein* in London followed Kinkel's mission with suspicion. They were worried that the moderate faction would not share the proceeds with them, so they decided to send their own agent to America. Amand Goegg and Josef Fickler were selected for the mission. Goegg studied administrative law, then worked as a journalist. He participated in the revolution in Baden and played a major role organizing *Volksvereine*. Later he was appointed finance minister in Lorenz Brentano's provisional government. Following the collapse of the revolution, he fled to Switzerland and eventually wound up in London. His companion, Fickler was a journalist, who had played a prominent role in the revolution in Constance. He was a major proponent of Baden becoming a republic. He was arrested, but, similarly to Kinkel, managed to escape and eventually found refuge in London.⁵¹

Goegg accompanied by Fickler arrived in the United States at the end of December. His visit was surrounded by much smaller publicity than that of Kinkel and was definitely overshadowed by the Kossuth-craze that dominated the country about the time of his arrival. Nevertheless, in New York and Philadelphia, where Kinkel had received quite a cool welcome, he was treated as the official representative of Germans in London. It was obvious, however, that this kind of division does not serve their interest and it should be finished as soon as possible. At the refugee's congress organized in Philadelphia on January 29–30, 1852 the *Amerikanische Revolutionsbund* was founded with the intention of bringing together all German democratic forces. Among the goals of the new organization

⁴⁹ See, Freitag, "Begging Bowl", 168.

⁵⁰ *Daily Atlas*, (October 22, 1851), 2.; *National Era* (November 20, 1851), vol. V, Issue 47, 187.

⁵¹ See, Friedrich Lautenschlager, "Amand Goegg, ein badischer Achtundvierziger. Zur Hundertjahrfeier der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49" In: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 96 = N.F.57 (1948), 19–38.

were “real and effective liberation of the European continent” by overthrowing any monarchy, introducing universal male suffrage, dissolving all standing armies, and destroying all oppressors of the people. They intended to set up revolutionary funds in which Goegg’s lecturing tour in America received key role.

Goegg also spent several months travelling, most of his fundraising activities focusing on the East Coast and the Midwest. It was a considerable handicap, however, that he was way less talented as a speaker than Kinkel, not to mention Kossuth. He was unable to win his audiences the way the two other orators did, as his speeches were often dry and too theoretical for the ordinary listeners. One of his contemporaries wrote about him: “People always simply laugh at him when he proves the necessity of revolution by reference to the history of antiquity”.⁵²

In the final phase of his tour, he appeared on stage with Kossuth: in June they campaigned together in the state of New York. They actually left the United States on the same ship on June 14, 1852.

In his report Kinkel summarized their activities in America and wrote that the funds they had raised with Goegg were “not large enough to be called amazing, but enough to cover the current costs of the most urgent and still possible revolutionary tasks”.⁵³ Their disagreement, however, continued, this time over how to use the accumulated money: Goegg suggested using it for printing propaganda material, whereas Kinkel wanted to save it for the future revolution.

Goegg returned to London for the time being, but later he traveled to Australia and South-America. He returned to Germany in 1861 when general amnesty was offered to the participants of the revolutions.

The “Latecomers”: Alberto and Jessie White Mario

Although Giuseppe Mazzini was one of the masterminds and major proponents of the National Loan system, the Italians did not take part in the first phase of fundraising and lecturing tours. Nevertheless, similarly to other countries and regions, the American press covered the main events of the Italian revolution and Mazzini enjoyed huge popularity overseas. He was acclaimed for his “unsullied moral purity”: many articles emphasized that Mazzini had Washington as his model and that he was the “apostle of the doctrines on which American institutions rested”.⁵⁴ This favorable opinion, however, changed over time. The news of the revolt of 1853 in Milan received harsh criticism in the American

⁵² Adolf Cluss to Karl Marx, Washington. (April 15, 1852). Quoted in Freitag, “Begging Bowl”, 177

⁵³ “Kinkel’s Bericht auf dem Garanten-Treffen” (March 19, 1852) Published in *Cincinnati Volksblatt*, April 13, 1852.

⁵⁴ Howard Rosario Marraro, *American Opinion on the Unification of Italy, 1846–1861*. (Philadelphia: AMS Press, 1932), 209.

press, and the fact that more and more Italians were thinking in terms of a monarchy caused further misgivings. Following Felice Orsini's assassination attempt on Napoleon III, many believed that Mazzini was behind the plot making him unpopular in the eyes of many.⁵⁵

It was under these circumstances that Jessie White, a young English writer, having had completed a successful lecture tour in England and Scotland on behalf of the Italian cause, suggested Mazzini her plan for an American lecture tour in 1857. Eventually she started the preparations in the summer of 1858, after she had married Alberto Mario, the Italian journalist, revolutionary, follower of Garibaldi and Mazzini. According to the proposed plan, she was to lecture the American public in English, while her husband was to address Italian-Americans. They secured letters of recommendation both from Kossuth and Mazzini, and the latter financed their trip almost entirely. They sailed for America on October 26, 1858.

Their lecturing tour did not start smoothly. The sponsors they had recommendations to were out of town, so they had to stay put for about a month, which was disastrous, considering their lack of funds. Finally her sponsors, among whom were Harriet Beecher Stowe and Horace Greeley, arranged a series of lectures for her to be delivered at the Clinton Hall in Astor Place from December 1, 1858 to January 5, 1859. The schedule of her talks was as follows: December 1: "Italy and Papacy", December 8: "The First Martyrs of Italian Liberty", December 15: "The Revolution of 1848", December 20: "The Heroic Defense of Venice and Rome", January 5: "The Future Plans of the Republicans".⁵⁶ The first lecture attracted a full auditorium with several prominent citizens sitting in the audience. "The fine lecture room at the Clinton Hall was very fashionably and largely attended, and there are few popular lectures so fortunate as to secure so large, intelligent, and appreciative audience on occasion of an introductory lecture," reported the *New York Herald*.⁵⁷ This interest, however, gradually and significantly decreased throughout December: hardly any newspapers mentioned her last talk and according to the reports very few people attended it.

It definitely did harm to her cause that she got into an argument with the editors of the *New York Times*, who, sympathetic to the Italian cause as they were, pointed out: "As year after year this agitation passes by, as lecture follows lecture, and speech speech, and dinner dinner, we look for some tangible proposition, or plan of campaign, or scheme of general *soulèvement*".⁵⁸ Furthermore, they concluded that Mazzini did not show executive abilities, as he had never accomplished anything he had set about. Jessie tried to defend both Mazzini and the Italian cause claiming that they had specific plans and accused Piedmont and

⁵⁵ Rossi, *Image*, 107.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 110–111.

⁵⁷ *New York Herald*, 2 XII 1858, 2.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, 13 XII 1858, 3.

the aristocrats of Sardinia of the failure of the revolution. In the meantime, Jessie's husband delivered lectures in Italian for the Italian-American community.

Due to the fading interest and the fact that they were running out of money, the Marios found themselves in a more and more desperate situation. Mazzini sent them 100 pounds once more, but soon it became obvious that their tour had been a financial disaster. Mazzini tried to comfort Jessie in a letter:

You have done your duty nobly and bravely; you have, owing partially to me, tried an experiment, which it was well to try. If it is not as successful as we wish, the fault lies with the Americans, not with you. Morally you have done good; Mario has done good with the Italians.⁵⁹

The Marios left America in July 1859, as Jessie was hoping to become the Italian correspondent of an American newspaper in the Second Italian War of Independence of 1859. When they arrived in Sardinia, however, both of them were arrested, imprisoned and were released later only at the intercession of Garibaldi.

Conclusion

When the disappointed and exhausted Lajos Kossuth was about to leave America without accomplishing much of the original goals of his lecturing tour, the editor of *The New York Times* summarized the essence of the Kossuth phenomenon accordingly:

We have heard the grandest of orators; our view of the National duty and destiny has been enlarged [...] and the warmth of our patriotism and humanity tested by the sure gauge of a practical appeal. The author bade farewell by naming Kossuth: Epaminondas, the last Greek of European annals.⁶⁰

Probably all the lecturing and fundraising tours can be analyzed in this context. Having run out of options in Europe, the exiled revolutionaries were desperately seeking support – political, financial, moral, or even military – so that they could strike back to the previously triumphant reactionary forces. Besides Britain, where most of them found temporary or permanent refuge, the United States seemed an obvious choice. The American type of democracy served for many of them as a model to imitate anyway, and several leaders of the liberal movements saw a striking similarity between the causes they fought for and the ones the American revolutionaries had struggled for. What is more, the American public welcomed enthusiastically at least the first republican phase of the European revolutions.

⁵⁹ Mazzini, *Scritti*, 63: 218–220.

⁶⁰ *The New York Times*, 9 VI 1852, 2.

Due to the lack of in-depth knowledge about domestic issues in American politics, the misreadings of the prevalence of isolationism in foreign policy, the division of the American public as well as the revolutionaries themselves, the fundraising and lecturing tours were doomed, probably from the beginning. However, all of the spokespersons managed to win many supporters, Americans as well as members of the ethnic diaspora, and called the attention to the cause of European liberal movements. Although the so-called Young America movement proved to be too weak as of yet, there were signs that the traditional doctrines of American foreign policy would sooner than later require revision. Although none of the above-mentioned revolutionaries settled in America for good, many among their followers did so: the Forty-Eighters became one of the most significant immigrant waves in American history, not so much numerically, but due to their contribution to the preservation of the Union and the development of the “United” States of America in the decades of the post-Civil War era.

István Kornél Vida

“Passing the Plate for Revolution”: European Forty-Eighters’ Fundraising Tours in the United States

Summary

Following the defeat of the revolutions in France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Hungary in 1848 and 1849, many participants of the liberal movements had to flee to escape retaliation. In Europe, Britain was the only safe haven for the refugees: in London perhaps the most interesting group of idealists of many nationalities convened – with the major link between them being their unsuccessful clash with the forces of monarchy in their homelands and their grandiose plans for re-starting the freedom fights. For Marx, Kinkel, Hecker, Kossuth, Mazzini, Ruge London, as one of them put it, offered little bread, but did provide the necessary freedom of speech and that of press. Many deemed it crucial that they succeed in the mobilization of the United States in support of their struggles. In order to mobilize the American public, and, of course, to collect donations for their cause, these (ex-)leaders of the revolutions traveled to the United States sometime in the 1850s and organized extensive lecturing and fundraising tours: Gottfried Kinkel (September 1851 to March 1852), Amand Goegg (December 1851 to July 1852), Kossuth (December 1851 to July 1852), Alberto and Jessie White Mario (October 1858). This paper aims to analyze the historical significance of the lecturing tours by seeking answers to the following questions: 1.) Why did the revolutionary spokespersons unanimously turn to America for inspiration? 2.) What practical benefits did the individual fundraisers hope to gain from their trips? What specific target audiences did they choose for their campaign, and why? 3.) What was the reaction of the American public? 4.) What was the relationship between the travelling revolutionaries themselves? 5.) How can the results of the tours be evaluated from the perspective of the a) individuals b) the ethnic group/political issues they represented c) American general public/political groups?