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This volume presents three hundred and eighty six letters of second generation Hungarian American (referred to as "American Hungarian," meaning American of Hungarian origin) soldiers in World War II, sent from US army bases in the States, Europe and the Far East, and addressed to Rev. Andrew Kosa (Kósa András), the Minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Brunswick, New Jersey. This epistolary corpus exemplifies the significance of publishing archival material for learning about a period, a group in the American multi-culture, immigration, language and translation issues, and about letters as a genre of documentary writing. The readers of this volume can approach these topics thanks to the volume's bilingual Introduction and name and subject indexes, as well as due to the preservation of the letters' original language (three hundred and fifty letters are written in English and thirty six in Hungarian), with their authenticity kept intact (including highlighted errors), and a rich section of photos, ads and samples of dozens of handwritten letters.

Ilona Kovács of the Hungarian National Library (OSzK) in Budapest presents in this volume a group portrait of the generation born or raised *ott kint* [out there] from the point of view of Hungarians, and of their state of mind while serving in the US army, which is no doubt a formative "going native" experience. The letters cover the crucial period of the second half of WWII, from May 1942 to November 1945, in which some two hundred young Hungarian Americans, writing each from a single letter up to a dozen or even twenty letters, told their Pastor about their lives as American soldiers away from home. Kovács in her Introduction calls this generation a "bilingual generation" (81), presumably on the assumption that all *spoke* Hungarian, although less than a tenth of this corpus is written in Hungarian. Interestingly, however, the writers of the Hungarian letters present a better command of the written language than those who write in English. Put differently, the number of language and style errors (even after subtracting unintentional typos caused by distraction, exhaustion and poor conditions) is greater in the English letters than in the Hungarian ones. Furthermore, the English letters have more informal and slang words and expressions than do the more formal Hungarian letters, although all are addressed to the same revered Pastor back home.



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In her bilingual Introduction, Kovács describes the New Brunswick Hungarian community that numbered a few thousand souls belonging to low and middle classes in the 1920s and 1930. Church was central to this community and so was Rev. Andrew Kosa, the Pastor of the New Brunswick Reformed Church as of 1925, who served in this post for thirty eight years. Considering World War II and the army service of the community's young men, Kovács stresses the "loyalty of American Hungarians [meaning Hungarian Americans] toward America" (73). Quoting short excerpts and phrases from the letters, Kovács then delineates the succession of the soldiers' army experiences from basic training to "new lands and new cultural experiences" (74-75), the different fronts in which they served (78-79), their pride in the activity of the Hungarian Defense Council back home (76), and their wish to return home and to their (in the meantime) remodeled church (82).

In the letter section, the soldiers write about learning various professions in the military, going on missions, suffering wounds or ailments and longing for home, with a special stress on church activities wherever they serve, probably because they were writing to their hometown priest. Of no less interest is how the soldiers mention their womenfolk at home in many references to family correspondences, hopes for being re-united with one's wife, missing a long deceased mom, and requests from the Minister to send or pass on messages and documents. Because all the letters are addressed to the parish priest and because of the male gender of the correspondents, the scope of army life, and the wartime period, the letters have many common contents and themes. Among them are: holiday greetings, polite thanks for receiving gifts such as cigarettes, Christmas packages and prayer booklets, donations sent to the church, expressing uncertainty about the future, and requests like asking for a marriage certificate to enable the requesting soldier to receive a family allowance (99, 100). The soldiers describe at varying length their learning and constant drills, as well as other everyday army routines. Some write that they cannot tell more because of army censorship, while others describe at length the routes and journeys they made, including details of flora and fauna in faraway wild nature locations.

Kovács's subject index lists some thirty five recurrent items related to the soldiers' service, families, beliefs and conceptions, and - of special interest for a volume published by a Hungarian ethnographic museum seventy years after the events - their Hungarian American identity, which Kovács terms "dual tights" (76). For example, the subject index details references or phrases such as: "Hungarian boys," "Hungarian church," "Hungarian Defense Council," and "Hungarian language." Yet, all these terms, except "Hungarian language," refer to the American locale and experience of the correspondents, while the Hungarian country of origin, *Magyarország*, is, interestingly, never mentioned in the letters or the subject index. Therefore, the editor's stress on the "goal of American Hungarians to liberate Hungary from the German occupation" (76) is - beyond the soldiers' obvious recruitment for the Allied Forces cause - probably part of this volume's tendency to see these soldiers as more American Hungarians than Hungarian Americans.

In fact, these letters tend to be concerned with everyday issues, and the two quotes cited by Kovács as illustrating their concern about "liberat[ing] Hungary" (106, 223-224) talk about "victory" and "free[ing] an enslaved world," respectively, in very general terms and never mention Hungary. To complicate, in the period in question the old country Hungary as part of the Nazi German Axis was - until March 1944 - part of the declared enemy of the US. Yet,

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interestingly, none of the 200 soldiers refer to this political reality in their almost four hundred letters to their Hungarian American New Jersey Pastor. The closest they get to deal with their potential or rather theoretical double-bind is in statements made by soldiers stationed in Germany: "the Nazis are getting the same medicine [probably from Hungarian: *ugyanazt az orvosságot kapják*] that they gave the Russians" (284); or: "I can't feel sorry for them [the Germans] because I've also seen the rubble the other countries had and all because of German occupation" (288). These statements re-enforce the soldiers' "loyalty toward America" and their lack (or suspension or suppression) of awareness of any possible contradiction between their American and Hungarian identities vis-à-vis the war and the role of their (or their parents') past motherland in it.

Ilona Kovács's presentation of this archived rich body of documents is of value for researchers interested in mega events as experienced and responded to by everyday people, in this case sons of Hungarian immigrants serving in the US army in WWII. This treasure of wartime letters is of no less interest for the present-day American offspring of those soldiers, who can have a rare look at a transformative period and experience in the lives of their previous generations.