

Grape-Harvest Festival of Strawberry Farmers: Folklore or Fake?

THE TRAVELER WHO TAKES the Springfield-Albany exit from interstate highway 12 between Hammond and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, faces a well displayed historic marker which reads as follows: "Hungarian Settlement. Known as Arpadhon area, is site of largest Hungarian settlement in the U.S. Settlers attracted here in 1896 by Charles Breckenridge lumber mill. People bought cut-over timber land to farm and raise strawberries." This text was formulated by the Livingstone County Bicentennial Committee and approved by John L. Loos, Chairman of the Department of History at the Southeastern University of Louisiana in 1975.

Further up the road toward Springfield, after about 100 yards, a new sign marks the beginning of the Hungarian settlement. From there the traveler will pass by St. Margaret Catholic Church, named after the medieval Hungarian saint, an appliance store, a market, an auto repair shop and a fast food restaurant with the Hungarian owner's name posted. Next a now defunct nursing home follows, fronted by a marker with the long deceased sponsors' names, a school, and the Hungarian Presbyterian (Reformed) Church with a cemetery by its side. In between and scattered around the main road there are modest to shabby farmhouses in a stretch of about three miles distance where the end of the Hungarian Settlement is marked.

What seems striking to the traveler at first sight is that there is such a settlement; that the first settlers in the spirit of nineteenth century nationalism named their land after Árpád¹, the chieftain of the Magyar tribes who conquered the land of today's Hungary in the tenth century; and that today's residents of an American locale are proud to communicate to the outside world that they represent "the largest rural Hungarian Settlement in the U.S." It is also remarkable that they place such a great emphasis on being separated from the neighboring towns of Hammond, Albany, and Springfield, where many of the Hungarians actually live², in the same way that Indian reservations are marked. The field-worker taking a closer look, however, will find that this community lacks most of the ethnic group signifiers which even less self-conscious enclaves possess. When speaking to the residents and observing life in the settlement, one soon realizes the lack of the ethnic institutions which ordinarily support, organize, and direct national traditions and carefully protect them from falling into oblivion.

Rural as well as urban Hungarian enclaves in North America are characterized by an active network of sociocultural interactions, organized by the native

1. The placename Árpádthon was not marked on the map officially before the 1976 ethnic revival. This was not only because of the controversy over the naming among the first settlers (Géza Hoffmann, *Csonka munkásosztály: az amerikai magyarság*. Budapest, 1911, 74) but also because the homesteads were scattered over a larger area, not forming a village-like concentration where a post office could have been established as was customary in the United States.

2. For a detailed description of the Hungarians in Livingstone parish see Robert S. Hosh, *Árpádthon, Louisiana: An Example of Hungarian Immigrant Acculturation*. 57 p. (MS, no date).

churches, the Hungarian Reformed (Presbyterian)³ or the Roman Catholic, dedicated to the cult of one of the Hungarian saints⁴. The churches, like ethnic-American churches in general⁵, are committed to maintaining language loyalty, historic awareness and folk tradition through different programs offered for leisure, recreation, and education. In addition to the Hungarian language, the essential symbols of Hungarian ethnicity for Hungarian-Americans are folksong, folkdance and drama, arts and crafts, cuisine and soccer games. Religious and patriotic holidays, weddings and picnics are highlighted by their display representing Hungarian heritage. In addition to church-oriented ethnic life, ethnic Hungarians also share membership in their national insurance and mutual benefit companies as well as in occupational clubs and associations⁶.

There are few if any of the above common patterns present on the Árpádhon settlement. The churches are not centers of social and cultural life, and do not carry out the function of maintaining national identity. No Hungarian services are conducted in the two churches. The Catholic congregation which, since its foundation in 1910⁷, never had a Hungarian priest is now served by an Irishman, and the Hungarian Presbyterian church, founded in 1908⁸, gave up its language loyalty twenty years ago. There is little organized community activity: church ladies do not get together to fix traditional sausages and noodles for the benefit of their church. Although informants above fifty still recall a vibrant ethnic life, similar to the one existing in larger urban neighborhoods, banquets, picnics, and weddings lost their Hungarian style and spirit⁹. People speak little, if any, Hungarian. Even the very few survivors of the immigrant generation feel more comfortable in expressing themselves in English, and those born in America switch quickly to English when conversation is started in Hungarian. Families either translated their names into English: *Király*, became *King*, *Juhász*: *Shepard*, *Joó*:

3. Aladár Komjáthy, *The Hungarian Reformed Church in America. An Effort to Preserve a Denominational Heritage*. (D. of Theology diss., Princeton, New Jersey, 1962).

4. The most prominent are Sts. Stephen, Emery, Elizabeth and Ladislaus. On religion in "Little Hungary" see Emil Lengyel, *Americans from Hungary* (Philadelphia and New York 1948) 179—193. On denominational distribution see Joshua Fishman, *Hungarian Language maintenance in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Publications 62, Uralic and Altaic Series, 1966) 20—21.

5. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted. The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*. (New York 1951) 117—143; Richard Krikus, *Pursuing the American Dream. White Ethnics and the New Populism*. (New York 1976) 75—93.

6. Emil Lengyel, *Americans from Hungary* (Philadelphia and New York 1948) 156—178; a typical example of Hungarian life in the heydays of the "little Hungarys" around the 1930's is presented in Malvina Hauk Abonyi and James A. Anderson, *Hungarians of Detroit* (Detroit: Center for Urban Studies, 1977) 22—40.

7. *St. Margaret Catholic Church, Albany, Louisiana. Sixtieth Anniversary* June 14, 1970 (published by the History Committee) 24 p.

8. Wesley Jackson, "Religion in Louisiana: A History. Hungarians Formed their Church in 1908". *The Times-Picaring* January 6, 1974 offers a detailed description on the basis of the last Hungarian minister, the Reverend Alex W. Bartus who died in 1976. During his retirement guest ministers were invited from nearby parishes and his function remained to deliver the last prayer and blessing of the congregation. Edna Campbell, "Old Church Memories Recalled by Minister" in *Star Plus* (Baton Rouge) January 9, 1974, gives a similar account.

9. Several informants remembered that the last traditional wedding that ran over three days was held in 1952.

Good, or otherwise adjusted them to facilitate English pronunciation like *Bata: Bates, Császár: Chaucer, Deák: Dick, Juhász: Yuhás*. In many cases the bearers of family names did not change the spelling, only pronunciation. Marriage outside of the group took its toll on the language and loyalty to the country of origin. For the people of Árpádhon today, Hungary appears in three facets: "the place our ancestors left because they did not want to bow and kiss the hand of the Lords", "an exotic and picturesquely backward country", and "a communist-Russian threat". There is no historic awareness or knowledge of Hungarian history: the Hungarian national independence of 1848 which is celebrated in most Hungarian-American communities on March 15 is unknown to the Árpádhon folk. Upon direct questioning, informants showed ignorance of the Hungarian past and its legendary heroes. Even the memory of the 1956 uprising, remembered festively in larger Hungarian enclaves, has faded away, although the Presbyterian pastor of Árpádhon sponsored thirty-seven refugees who, nevertheless, soon drifted toward more promising pastures. "It was not possible for them to stay with us because they could not speak English," said one informant. Furthermore, the Árpádhon people do not know who Árpád was. "He was the first settler of Louisiana", answered an informant to my question; "I don't know how it was actually or how long ago that was I couldn't tell, a hundred years?" Another said: "There were you know those old people who read those old books, novels with this name, Árpádhon, so they picked it from there." Again, another thought: "The first settlers wanted to assign a name to the area, I don't know why they got this one."

WHAT THEN MAKES THIS SETTLEMENT Hungarian aside from the poster that says so? It is hard to believe but it is nothing else than a dance, or more correctly, a ceremony, consisting of a set of nine to eleven dances which has been performed since anyone can remember. The so-called Harvest Dance seems to be a remarkably strong tie, able to maintain and symbolize Hungarianness for this small group which does not adhere to or identify consistently with any of the usual descriptive ethnic traits. The identity of Árpádhon-Hungarians is carved out in terms of their being the bearers of a "pure Hungarian folk tradition", the Harvest Dance, which along with all its props and paraphernalia had been carried on by the Hungarian people over centuries, in the belief of local informants.

Árpádhon Hungarians describe themselves as proud and loyal Americans in the first place, but also as proud custodians of their Hungarian heritage to which, as they state, today's Hungary was unfaithful. Even without asking, people often state their Hungarian-American loyalty in informal conversation: "I'm American born but I'm proud of my Hungarian heritage. I really am. I'm proud I married a Hungarian boy, not a *vad móc*¹⁰ (redneck) or a *cigány*¹¹", says Mrs. H. Ny;

10. The term *móc* originally designates a regional Rumanian ethnic culture (*moț*) in Transylvania which was perjoratively used by the neighboring Hungarian population in the sense of "rough, uncouth". It is unclear why the Louisiana-Hungarians applied this term to their white Anglo-Saxon neighbors, not necessarily contemptuously.

"I can only say that I'm happy to be a Hungarian-American", says Mrs. O. K., "I'm happy to speak Hungarian but still, this is my country, America" whereupon her son, Mr. A. K. adds: "We are Americans in the first place and we wanna be good Americans, (but) we hold onto our traditions, our customs and we are proud of our heritage." Mr. and Mrs. R. remember the example of their parents, illiterate peasants who fled poverty and humiliation in Hungary: "There is freedom here not like over there. My father was a gooseherd: he never ate goose and was spanked for falling asleep in the pasture. They kissed the hand of the masters, those who owned the land" said Mr. R. Mary I. notes a decline of enthusiasm in Hungarian consciousness among the young: "My children don't feel as strongly about their heritage as I do. I don't know whether it is a liking in me or the children are raised more in Americanism. I tried to listen to Hungarian tales and the people from Europe, but to them it does not mean anything, you know. They're Hungarians, so what? They're like everybody else. But I feel I stand out. I want to stand out because I'm Hungarian, I want everybody to know it but I don't believe the younger people feel that way. They're pure Hungarians, my children came from Hungarian mother and father, but to them this isn't anything to brag about."

The composition of the population of Árpádhon which never quite reached 500 in number, is peculiar in itself. It is a secondary settlement and consists of the descendants of single individuals or nuclear families with previous experience in the mining places of Pennsylvania, Michigan or West Virginia, and the industrial towns of Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago or South Bend. Already uprooted from their original villages and rural existence¹², the early settlers learned through an advertisement about the chance to escape from the unhealthy and strenuous industrial labor and to return to farmwork, their ancestral occupation, in a pleasant and mild climate. Three men from Hungary, Gyula Bruszkay, Tivadar Zboray and Ádám Mocsáry, placed this announcement in the Hungarian language newspapers of the east and the midwest "extolling the advantages of owning one's own farm in a climate mild enough to raise two crops of vegetables a year"¹³. "The founders of Árpádhon actively promoted their new home" and an unknown rather clumsy poet, writing in the traditional folksong style, "blatantly advertised its virtues"¹⁴. The song, which can be sung to a folk melody, follows with its free translation by Leslie Könnnyű.

11. The word *cigány* (Gypsy) refers to black Americans in the usage of Hungarian-Americans in general. The application of this term is appropriate not only in the indication of racial distinction but also in the recognition of similarity in the social status of Gypsies in Hungary and Blacks in America.

12. Hoffmann noted not more than six Hungarian farming settlements in the United States: it was more common to undertake industrial work, make money quickly and return with the capital to be invested at home (74-75). Nevertheless, to stay on and not to return to the homeland but reestablish an agricultural existence in America on a different economic and technical level could be realized only after the industrial experience had provided a certain degree of acculturation.

13. Hosh, 11.

14. *ibid.*, 17.

Árpádhonba szeretnék lemenni
Csak ott lehet szeretőt szerezni
Kökényszemű árpádhoni lányok
Pünkösdi napján lemegyek hozzátok.

Ahol a sok földi eper terem
Onnan való lesz a feleségem
Kiválasztok a sok közül egyet
Kit az Isten számomra teremtett.

Piros pünkösdi reggelén
Esküdött egy árpádhoni legény
Szamócába nőtt fel a kedvese
Isten áldja meg őket örökre.¹⁵

Sometime I would like to go to Árpádvile;
You can find there many pretty lovers still.
Árpádvile's fair, blue-eyed maidens, let me say:
I shall visit you upon next Whitsun-day.

Where so many acres grow the berries rife
There I'll pick a maiden to become my wife,
From the many girls I'll take one for my own,
Whom the Lord created just for me alone.

On the morning of the rosy Whitsun-day,
Árpádvile's young lad will take his bride away.
She was grown upon a fragrant berry field —
Bless them, God, protect them always with your shield.

From the outset, the arrivals were of heterogeneous origins. People did not come in kinship or neighborhood groups and did not seek the company of the carriers of identical regional cultures. The settlers remained in touch with kins on United States industrial settlements where they often returned as laborers, when the crops failed — some even spent decades in the mills, until retirement age — and persuaded relatives to come to the Strawberry-plenty "God's Country". Nevertheless, Árpádhon people seldom remained in contact with the homefolks and hardly ever invited relatives or marriage partners from the old country. Only one elderly informant remembered a "mail order wife" way back in Ohio; something like that could never have happened down here in Louisiana. The last family that joined the settlement came from West Virginia, in 1941. Ties with Hungary were completely severed. Only over the last five years were visits paid to the homeland to see graves of long deceased relatives. But these recent nostalgic journeys are a result of the new ethnicity movement¹⁶. As A. B. aptly put it: "The visit reinforced me as an American but made my roots a little bit stronger."

15. The poem was published in György Kemény, "A magyar nóta Amerikában" *Dongó: Hungarian Magazine, Anniversary Issue*, 1903, 10. Translation by Leslie Könnnyű, *A History of American Hungarian Literature*. (St. Louis: The Cooperative of American-Hungarian Writers, 1962) 124.

16. The phenomenon was discussed by many authors of ethnicity; see for example Maxine Seller, *To Seek America. A History of Ethnic Life in the United States*. (Jerome S. Ozer, 1977) 272—93, Krikus, 354 sk.

MOREOVER, true to the multiethnic composition of pre-World War I Hungary, the Árpádhon colonists were of mixed ancestry in terms of national origins. As known to immigration historians, most of the early emigrants to America (like two of the first three Árpádhon settlers) were Slovaks from Upper Hungary¹⁷ and judging from today's family names in Árpádhon, it seems clear that apart from the Hungarians who to a great extent are of Calvinist faith, the largest group is Catholic Slovak along with a lesser number of South Slavs and Germans¹⁸. Although Hungarian ethnicity proved powerful enough to absorb traces of the other ethnic elements, the diversity still survives in the split membership of the two churches and in a less overt rivalry in community affairs. The historically mixed ethnic composition of the settlement might explain why the usual symbols of Hungarian ethnicity declined so fast in Árpádhon, why strong family ties with powerful women in the lead substituted for the elsewhere common forms of organized ethnic socialization, whereas Hungarian consciousness became an essential platform for unity.

This unity is often emphasized in contrasting Hungarian character features with that of Americans and neighboring minorities in Louisiana. Self-description by the Árpádhon-people is comprised of the often emphasized Hungarian peasant virtues such as family orientation, respect for the old, thrift, industry, cleanliness, sanctity of the given word. Mutual trust, cordiality, and intermarriage are possible because of the decline of essential ethnic barriers between the groups in more recent times. Even so, past discrimination, hostility, and the conflicts between behavioral norms are still remembered. Industry is mentioned as the most cherished feature of Hungarians by numerous people. Mrs. E. K., for example, states that "Hungarians were good workers, taught Americans how to work. They cleared the ground, plowed, sowed and harrowed while those hunted and fished. There were such old Americans here, who lived out in the swamps. They made little gardens for themselves, planted some corn, potato, beans and sugarcane. They did not know white bread, lived on cornbread. The Hungarians taught them everything so that they could improve themselves". Mrs. A. D. also remembered that people "lived poor and learned from us to plow and to sow the seed. Hungarians were more educated. But now they improved as they intermingled with Hungarians". Mr. A. P. recalls his experience as a youth: "Industry is in our blood whereas the *móc* are lazy. We didn't even talk to *móc* girls, lest to

17. J. Puskás, *Emigration from Hungary to the United States before 1914*. *Studia Historica* 113, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975) 18.

18. Hosh lists Slovak, German, Croatian, Serbian and Romanian among the languages spoken by his informants (25). Several of the people I interviewed referred to their ancestry as being *hornyák* (Highland Slovak) or *tót* (Slovak). Evidently, many of the settlers who originated from North-Hungary were bi-or even trilingual: Mrs. R., for example, emphasized that her mother taught her languages. But the multiethnic origin of the Árpádhon residents is most visible in non-Hungarian family names which prevail in the membership of St. Margaret Catholic Church, such as: Kropog, Prokop, Hudák, Spisák, Szisák, Resetár, Poncsok, Ivanyicki, Palascsák, Csabina, Pilczer, Blahut, Koleszar, Pfiffner, Gubancsik, and so on.

marry them. Had a Hungarian boy married a *móc* girl he wouldn't have dared to go home to his parents' house. We respected our elders." As to raising children, Mrs. E. D. felt it was good for the young to begin early work training at the estate of the masters, back in the old country, "they did not let children run loose, they taught them to be good people, not thieves". Mrs. M. R. quoted a friendly *móc* woman who said "My, am I glad to live among you Hungarians. You did it the hard way. The French take it easy, the Germans talk about it, but you did it the hard way". Some others emphasized that Hungarians are righteous: "We pay if we owe. Our word is worth more than the written statement of others" (Mr. S. R.); "Hungarians have a lot of pride," says Mrs H. Ny., "when they say something they mean it. They are serious and truthful" and, as an afterthought: "Have you ever seen a Hungarian without money?"

Vintage, the harvest of grapes in October, was generally celebrated with a customary ritual procession all over Hungary in regions where wine was grown, on the land of the masters or on the small plots of villagers¹⁹. The pickers, dressed in festive costumes and carrying bunches of grapes were led by horseback riders and followed by mummers on wagons or afoot and by a band of Gypsy musicians. The group marched through the vineyards and the main thoroughfares of the community, magically-symbolically "closing" and protecting the next harvest and the land from the perils of winter. Finishing the parade, the villagers joined in a feast of roast calf, pig or lamb stew, and new wine. The bunches of grapes were suspended to decorate the dance floor where the young engaged in play party games and dancing after the meal. A forfeit game included the stealing of grapes by young men before the watchful eyes of the girl-rangers who reported to a "judge", expecting to penalize their sweethearts by playful humiliation ending up with reconciliatory kissing.

This custom, marking the end of the harvesting season is still popular in Hungary. It is not altogether clear when and how it was carried over to America, why it had spread to all Hungarian-American settlements, whether grapes were planted or not, and why it had become one among the very few ethnic rituals which defied acculturative processes. The early generations of peasant immigrants evidently tried to transplant their local customs connected with wine making, the provision of the beverage without which Hungarian cooking was unimaginable. What actually happened was, that they did not plant grapes but bought them from farmers. As was reported from Delray, the Hungarian section of Detroit, "the railroad ran special cars . . . loaded with grapes from California,"²⁰ and the households were busy with making wine. Although the processing of the grapes did not call for a community *szüreti mulatság* (grape harvest feast), "this was usually the best dance of the year" and the hall was decorated

19. Some of the early ethnographic reports (Johann Csaplovics, *Gemälde von Ungern*, Pest, 1823, 281; "Balatonmelléki szüret" *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* 1827, II, 99; Sándor Rész Ensel, *Magyarországi népszokások*, Pest 1868, 11) give already a rich variety of the custom. See also László Madarassy, "Magyar szüreti szokások", *Ethnographia* 40 (1929) 162—67.

20. Hauk-Abonyi and Anderson, 28—29.

with bunches of grapes hanging from the ceiling²¹. In the course of time, while the home pattern remained highly variable, this American version became standardized and formularized just like other symbols of ethnicity, following immediate socioeconomic needs.

The Hungarian-American vintage festival is an arranged dance, usually set up in a community hall, and sponsored by an ethnic association with admission tickets, food and drinks for sale, to benefit some charity. The ceiling of the hall is decorated with red, white and green paper ribbons (the colors of the Hungarian flag) and store-bought, select bunches of grapes, apples, and oranges are suspended on wire from the ceiling. Guards watch carefully for fruit-thieves and make them pay a fine to increase the income. A band plays standard Hungarian dance music and a group of young people, dressed in the standard Hungarian dance costume open the dance with a conventional *csárdás*. After the performance of the well-rehearsed, carefully choreographed, staged dance, the dancers mingle with the crowd and the floor is opened for general informal entertainment, singing, and improvised dancing.

THE ARPADHON HARVEST FESTIVAL, no doubt, originates in this homogenized Hungarian-American custom and genetically might be traceable to the import of one or several of the early settlers. But it has nothing of the more or less spontaneous festive pair dances so common in ethnic neighborhoods. On an October Sunday, following an ethnic luncheon, consisting of *búsleves* (meat noodle soup), *töltött káposzta* (stuffed cabbage) and *kalács* (walnut roll), the afternoon is opened by the dance program of a group of eight to fourteen couples. The single dances and their combination into a whole sequence has a clear cut choreography taught and coached regularly (twice a week for two months preceding the performance) by the current teachers, committed to the observation of ancestral tradition from which deviation is not permitted. There are four dance teachers, one of whom being French. Everyone agrees that the Harvest Dance was brought directly from Hungary to America and must be maintained in its original form to enhance national distinctiveness. Loyalty to heritage, however, is more theoretical than practical because different leaders trace the custom to different ancestors and suggest various intermediary stages in its evolvement. Some say that the Harvest Dance was initiated by the parents of the Reverend Bartus, others refer to a settler from Detroit, and some mention a certain Tony Nagy from South Bend. Four different participants insisted that their parents were the first to dance it in 1902, 1908, 1912 and 1921. Inevitable modifications must have occurred according to generational change over more than a half century, conscious innovations must have been carried out by talented dancers and inspired musicians, even if current performers — children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the initiators are convinced that both the dance and its accompanying music were preserved in their original form, that in all its parts it is a genuine archaic Hungarian folk

21. *ibid.*, 28.

custom. Be that as it may, the dance has been performed over a period of more than seventy years. Today, as in the past, the Harvest Dance remains a common property of Árpádhon settlers; everyone, young and old knows the steps and the tunes, even if they do not participate actively in the performance.

Árpádhon families preserve photographs of earlier Harvest Dance performances which show a remarkable consistency in the style of the costumes if compared to those worn today. Slight changes by individual seamstresses are limited to the width of the skirt or drawers, the elaboration of women's headdress, the embroidery of the bodice, but any radical change needs community consent. Mr. M. D., a leading dancer who was among the performers since his early teens, mentioned a controversy over the questions if the girls should wear boots as recently suggested instead of the customary laced black patent leather shoes. Mrs. M. K. said that when she first danced with her husband in 1920 the drawers were gathered differently and it was she who made them wider. From then on, she made the *gatyá's* (drawers) for the boys and Mrs. E. K. sewed the girl's dresses.

The costumes do not copy any of the regional Hungarian folk styles but rather represent an abstract, imaginary Hungarian national tradition²². The men wear white *gatyá* drawers cut out of rectangles with matching white wide sleeved shirts, trimmed with the red-white and green ribbons, a black bow-tie, black boots, a black vest with the tricolor ribbon running diagonally across the front and back and a black English derby hat (available in New Orleans) with the tricolor ribbon. The women's costumes consist of a full-pleated white skirt and a tiny white apron trimmed with the national colors, a red velvet tight bodice embroidered with gold beads and ribbons, and a blouse with short puffed sleeves and ruffled round collar. The accessories are the *párta* (beaded velvet headdress) worn only by unmarried young women in Hungary, a *keszkenő* (a red kerchief) and black shoes (or more recently, boots). Traditionally members of the band did not have formal wear. Recently however, they adapted the costume of Hungarian Gypsy music bands playing in restaurants all over the world; white shirt, red vest, black bow tie and black trousers.

As far as people can remember, the Harvest Dances were set for two October Sunday evenings. They were planned well in advance, not to conflict with football games in New Orleans or Baton Rouge. One was held in the Presbyterian Hall, and the other in the Catholic Hall with the participation of the same dancers, band, and audience. A three course Hungarian dinner preceded the program. After a pause, while tables and chairs were pushed aside, the floor was

22. "The Hungarian costume" which is often displayed by immigrants at national festivals and photographed by American newspapers has little in common with the "folk costume". The "Hungarian costume" is a fancy dress contrived for the purpose of patriotic meetings. Its style shows a medley of various, often non-Hungarian elements and was greatly influenced by the stage costume of the late nineteenth century. This "Hungarian costume" has never been worn by the "folk", but only by school children of the civil service, and by other lower middle class patriotic leaders". John Kósa, *Land of Choice. Hungarians in Canada*. (Toronto 1957) 64; see also Linda Dégh, *People in the Tobacco Belt: Four Lives*. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975) 5.

ready for the dance. The dancers, boys and girls, marched in from opposite sides and joined in the middle to perform. Following the dance, the band played on till the early hours. Hungarian *csárdás* tunes alternated with modern American jazz and the audience joined in the general entertainment. Since high winds had destroyed the Presbyterian Hall in 1959, the Catholic Hall became the sole place for the event. There were changes. People complained about too much smoking and drunkenness and fist fights out in the church yard under the cover of darkness so that the Catholics moved the feast to daytime. Following the services in both churches people gathered in the Catholic Hall for a Hungarian luncheon and the Harvest Dance was performed immediately thereafter. By five o'clock the whole program was over.

THIS WAS THE SITUATION until the beginning of the ethnic revival movement, that was particularly stimulated by the ethnic consciousness-raising festival-project of the Smithsonian Institution. As soon as the states formed their local Bicentennial Committees, ethnic groups were encouraged to present their folk-heritage in the form of the performing arts, crafts, and cuisine. From 1974 on, local and national experts, i. e. professional folklorists, festival operators, music and dance teachers explored regional and ethnic folklore for potential staging first for local-regional showing and then, in culmination, for national display at the 200th anniversary celebrated in a gigantic cultural program in Washington. As soon as the Southeastern Louisiana Bicentennial Committee approved the erection of the Árpádhon marker, the Harvest Dance gained new impetus, and became an ethnic symbol not only for self-preservation for the inside but also as a presentation for the outside. Regional performances and competition with other ethnic dance groups in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, as well as press, radio and TV coverage precipitated enthusiasm for the group with the "exotic dishes of *kolbász*, *hurka*, and *töltött káposzta*" and the Harvest Dance which was called "unusual and different²³" right at the time when it was about to eclipse. As stated by Groene "the old settlers have died, however, interest in the motherland has fallen by the wayside . . . (the) farms are no longer Hungarian . . . the language is all but extinct and young Hungarians only occasionally marry other Hungarians"²⁴. Amazingly Árpádhon Hungarians were selected to represent the New World prototype of Hungarianness to be compared to the Old World group invited to display folk culture in the Washington event.

Expert counseling to get to Washington, recognition and the ambition of local leaders were effective in necessary changes. Why would strawberry farmers celebrate vintage in October? A romantic explanation traced the custom to imaginary antecedents. As dance teacher Vonnie R. Brown writes: "Perhaps at no other time is the culture of the old country more evident in this small com-

23. Dr. Bertram H. Groene, "Our Hungarian People", *Hungarian Settlement History*. Pamphlet, published by the Bicentennial Committee, June 13, 1976, 2.

24. *ibid.*

munity, than in October and November of each year when the harvest festivals are held. It is at this time that the local residents pay tribute to their succulent strawberry crops and other bountiful truck produce. Legend has it that the harvest festivals began in 15th century Hungary when King Matthias observed that the landowning nobles paid too little honor to the hard-working serfs responsible for their land's productivity²⁵. For the Washington show a little adjustment was appropriate: the Harvest Dance was performed under a poster 'Hungarian Spring Festival' and four strawberries in the four corners made it clear that it celebrates the harvest of strawberries in the Spring. Romantization of the Árpád-hon Hungarians (and the Magyar past as well) by outsiders, no matter how erroneous, increased the group's ethnic pride and contributed greatly to a desire to revitalize long lost loyalties. It was asserted again and again, that "the Hungarians kept their cultural identity largely due to isolation,"²⁶ that because of this isolation, they "preserved archaic customs which could not survive in today's Hungary,"²⁷ and are of "unrefined peasant quality". As to the Harvest dances: amazingly, they are "performed today exactly as they were several generations ago . . . in their original form . . . The audience identifies with the dance because of its ethnical purity, and year after year they watch the same dances, done the same way, in the same costumes . . ."²⁸. Evidently, these statements reveal ignorance in the true nature of Hungarian folk culture both in Hungary and in America.

Even a cursory look will convince the folklorist that the Harvest Dance is far removed from the peasant model which the nineteenth century emigrants nostalgically remembered on their industrial working places and which some early settlers — as the Reverend Bartus conjectured — reconstructed "from a memory of what had been done in their native villages"²⁹.

More than thirty people — dancers, musicians, organizers, and others who at one time participated or now participate in the Harvest Dance were questioned about the custom and its details. In addition, a rehearsal was also observed to relate individual opinions to the manifest event.

The music seems to dominate the performance and its gradual change marks stages of acculturation: there is change in musical instruments, the choice and sequence of the pieces of music, their style and rhythm, as well as the ethnic composition of band membership. At the time of the first wave of immigration, Gypsy bands were becoming widely popular in Hungarian villages, providing accompaniment to dance entertainments. With previous experience in the service of urban groups, Gypsies became the prime performers of Hungarian folk and pop music, and also the mediators of folk, national, and international melodies. The Gypsy band whose creativity lies essentially in the skill of improvisation and

25. Vonnie R. Brown, "The Louisiana Magyar" *Viltis* 34 (1976), 8.

26. Groene, 1.

27. Brown, 9.

28. *ibid.*

29. *ibid.*

ornamentation, absorbed a large stock of formulas and routinely exploited the technical potentials of the instruments. One violinist (the *primás*) played the melody, the other, along with a contra bass and a *cimbalom*, provided accompaniment in harmony and rhythm³⁰. In general, village Gypsy bands play the *csárdás* and the *verbunk*³¹ at customary dance parties. Gypsy musicians — according to Béla Bartók — romanticised classical Hungarian peasant music. Technically this can be seen in the characteristic rubato play with frequent accelerandos and retardandos, crescendos and decrescendos, extended pauses, fermati, and excessive ornamentation of the main melody.

There is little, if anything, in the Harvest Dance music that resembles this style. Since people can recall, the music of the dance was furnished by the local orchestra consisting of a violinist, a saxophonist, a pianist, a drummer, and occasionally an accordionist, although some vaguely remember the time when the *cimbalom*³² was still in use. The last player, whose daughter keeps the instrument in the attic, died twelve years ago. Thus, the violin remains the only "Hungarian" instrument in the band. The current player who is also the only Hungarian member of the band at this time, distributed fifteen violins among teenage boys in order to help keep up tradition. Old time dancers, nevertheless, also consider the piano as their heritage. Mrs. H. Ny reminisces: "The person I remember to play the piano was Andy Oláh. When he played it, he made it talk and we all had to cry. It was real Hungarian." The orchestra, hired and paid by the hour at rehearsals and performances is more equipped to serve the audience of American jazz than of the Harvest Dance.

It is no surprise, then, that the Harvest Dance music sounds like a cross section of different melodic traditions in which even the genuine Hungarian folk tunes seem alienated from their original styles. It impresses the listener as a potpourri of a German beer hall band with some southern music hall reminiscences. The single melodies are performed by the saxophone, drowning the voice of the violin. When informants lovingly hum their favorite pieces, they expand the song lines to accomodate ornamentation given by this instrument, at the cost of unnecessary repetition of words. The piano, the drums, and the cymbalo accompany the air with a loud, monotonously even beat to underscore the clap and the tap of the dancers. Because the dominance of the saxophone the orchestration and rhythm is neither Hungarian nor Gypsy in style, the accent is moved from the first to the third or fourth beat in the quadruple measure, accompanied sometimes with syncopation.

30. Bálint Sárosi, "Cigányzene". *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon) ed. Gy. Ortutay. (Budapest 1977) I, 429—30.

31. For *Csárdás* and *verbunk* see Ernő Pesovár, "Csárdás" *ibid.*, 467—73., and Balint. *Csárdás* is the overall popular national couple dance originating in the first half of the 19th century; *verbunk* is an equally popular male solo dance used as a means of recruiting soldiers into the Austro-Hungarian army (thence the origin of the name from the German verb "werben") in the 18th century. See György Martin, "East-European Relations of Hungarian Dance Types". *Europa et Hungaria. Congressus Ethnographicus in Hungaria*. (eds. Gy. Ortutay and T. Bodrogi) (Budapest 1965) 489—95; György Martin, *Hungarian Folk Dances* (Budapest 1974).

32. Bálint Sárosi, "Cimbalom" *op. cit.* 431—32.

FROM DIFFERENT INFORMANT EXPLICATIONS one might infer that originally the Árpádhon Harvest Dance might have been intended as an ethnic loyalty statement of the immigrant generation. They saw in it an attractive symbol capable to survive in future generations. For this end the early settlers composed the dance program and taught their children who were threatened by alienating cultural influences. The program concentrated on young teenagers, most likely to enjoy dancing in fancy costumes. The post-harvest season was convenient to the farmers for celebration. While women sewed the dresses, and coached the dancers for the big event, the men furnished the music. The women also exploited the opportunity to display their ethnic cooking skill competing with each other for the title of best Hungarian cook. As Mr. A. K. phrased it: "We have our Harvest Dance and our foods to make us different . . . the stuffed cabbage, the *kolbász* and the *hurka*, the sausages . . . the pastries . . . we view ourselves different from the regular Anglo-Saxons."

As time passed, and the dance became an established ethnic institution and was transmitted from generation to generation, it became public demand that adults also partake in it. After all, why should the grown-ups give up their right to the dance which they had known since early childhood? In 1928 an "older group" was started by Mrs. Ny and two older men. Ever since, they shared the fun with the young. They even have different teachers: "First it was Pete Pfiffner and Anna A. (a French woman) who taught the youngsters. Louise Good is in charge of the younger group, the older couples are my responsibility", says Mrs. H. Ny. And she adds: "When this Árpádhon Association was started to try to keep the settlement going in 1976, we got the older group going." Understandably, it was a great disappointment when the organizers of the Washington show decided to pick the 16 dancers from the young group, and to exclude older people. Is there any difference between the dance of the two groups?, I enquired. "Oh yes," was the answer, "there are two versions. We older couples do the waltzes and the polkas, the young kids don't. They did not care too much for the waltzes but do the regular Harvest Dance, there is a lot of jumping in that and there are too many of us who are fairly heavy and can't do it because it is fairly strenuous".

Although the performance limits participation to strictly ten to twelve couples, it was my impression that the rehearsals are far more important in terms of an act of ethnicity reassertion. The turnout exceeds greatly the number of those who will be picked for the performance. This was the case at the rehearsal I attended on a Tuesday evening in March, 1978. The dancers did not prepare for next October's traditional occasion but for the reception of visiting notables from Hungary a week later. The teachers — one for the younger and one for the older group — did not have much to do. The dancers seemed to know how to dance, sing, jump, clap and tap. As soon as the jazz band tuned in, the popular melodies guided newcomers in easily following the lead of the more experienced dancers. Actually, the participants were of all ages: gradeschool children, teenagers, newlywed couples and adults up to sixty-five. They all seemed eager to take this extra opportunity to enjoy the dancing, looking forward to the forthcoming de-

monstration of their commitment to Árpádhon ethnicity. No Hungarian speech could be heard during the pauses when the dancers relaxed and drank their cokes while engaged in animated conversation. Most of the dancers, teachers and musicians did not speak Hungarian, indeed, many were of non-Hungarian extraction, married to or befriended with Árpádhon people. Árpádhon Hungarians who speak the language, do not use it in in-group conversation. In this advanced stage of acculturation they reserve their limited language to addressing outsiders in demonstration of their ethnicity. What everyone knows with or without the knowledge of the language are the Hungarian song texts which they make children memorize.

Summarily, on the basis of observation and interviews, the Harvest Dance can be considered a peculiar string of dances identified by the informants as *csárdás*, *polka*, *waltz*, and *mazurka*. Music wise and quantitatively the majority of the dances fall into the *csárdás*-category, such as the introductory "march", during which the dancers walk in, meet and join hands, singing: "Megérett, megérett a fekete szőlő . . ." (The black grapes had ripened), and four more new style folk-songs, such as "Az a szép, az a szép akinek a szeme kék" (Pretty is whose eyes are blue), "Ritka árpa, ritka buza, ritka rozs" (Thin barley, thin wheat, thin rye), "Sárga a csikó, sárga a nyereg rajta" (Yellow filly, yellow saddle) and the finale: "A csőszkislány minden este kiáll a kapuba" (Ranger girl every evening waits at the gate). Among the *csárdás* tunes there is also a favored old pop-song generally known as "Zöldeerdőben jártam" (I walked in the green woods), but locally known with a different text: "Nagyvárad dombon füttyöl a zsidó" (The Jew whistles on the hill of Nagyvárad) and identified as a "waltz". The rest of the melodies are only for instrumental music without text. Dance number two and number eight are popular European contra dance melodies which were probably mediated through dance schools with stock figures of the square dance as well as the polka, whereas the last two (number five and ten) are operetta pieces, one of which is particularly interesting and known locally as Matusicki-polka. It is from Imre Kálmán's famous musical, *Tatárjárás* (Tartar invasion) and has as little resemblance to a polka as those referred to as waltzes. According to Mrs. M. "the Matusicki polka is a Hungarian polka, something that all Hungarians enjoyed. They all went in a circle. It was so pretty and it's one of my favorites". Although the complete dance suite is based on essential *csárdás* figures, the change of emphasis and the exaggerated syncopation dictated directly by the band take the characteristic unevenness of the Hungarian dance away. The general interlinkage, and the use of space suggests square dance rules. The dancers, holding hands, then form arches and circles, break up in pairs, do the "basket step", form a "cartwheel", pairs "hug", twirl around, clap and stamp. For the coda "they *csárdás* in a big circle in which the whole audience participates. They yank off the fruits from the rafters and a big dance follows. They do American dances for everybody, just to have a good time". Brown writes that "All of the harvest dances are *csárdás* except one which is a waltz" and Groene, taking oral

information for granted, lists polkas and mazurkas with the csárdás. However, despite non-Hungarian and non-folk musical adaptations, no waltz, polka or mazurka is included in the dance suite.

FOR THE FOLKLORIST it would be easy to say that here, once again, we have a case of disfiguration of folk art, progressive degeneration and loss of ethnic traits. It is also likely that some folklorists would label the Harvest Dance as a symptom of fakelore or folklorism³³, a product of manipulation from the inside as well as from the outside. If, however, before making this diagnosis we would measure this phenomenon against the most conservative determinants of folklore, we might be surprised to realize that they are satisfactorily represented in this confusing miscellany of different traditions.

Admittedly, the whole Harvest Dance suite as well as its details are the product of an error. The music is only to a minimal degree related to folk tunes, the dance steps have even less to do with Hungarian folk dancing. They are closer to a blend of common European contra- or square-dance motifs disseminated over the ages through provincial dance teachers. Some might have been known already by the emigrants back in their old country villages, others might have been picked up in the urban ethnic neighborhoods or in Árpádhon through contact with other national groups. Characteristically, the five genuine folksongs in the sequence are the most popular repertory pieces of Hungarian-American settlements in general. They were not imported through immigration, they were not preserved in oral tradition but learned from records broadcasted by Hungarian radio stations across America or learned from notes and played by Hungarian bands. The costume was fabricated faraway from the folk, out of faint, nostalgic reminiscences, and the musical instruments, except for the violin, are unknown to Hungarian musicians. In sum, the Harvest Dance can be considered as a Hungarian folk custom that is based on an error. Nevertheless, this error was first committed at least seventy years ago. This much time, in the course of which an uninterrupted slow process of change, and the merge and blend of different traditions occurred, according to the strictest rule of folklorists, is enough to convert an originally erroneous illusion into folklore. I did not use the word falsification because the error was unintentional. The Árpádhon people cannot be accused of fakery. Even if we cannot trace the exact origin of the production, we certainly can assert that those who cherish it with pride and deep devotion, who almost passionately love it are convinced that they were successful in preserving an ancient national folk tradition passed on to them by generations of forbears. In other words, the agrarian folk of Árpádhon, descendants of peasants of mixed ancestry from historic Hungary, acknowledge the Harvest Dance as their own folklore, their own tradition, their own art. Actually, this awareness symbolized by the

33. Hermann Bausinger, "Folklorismus in Europa. Eine Umfrage . . . Mit Beiträgen aus Polen, Ungarn, Jugoslawien, Schweiz, Portugal; Richard M. Dorson, "Fakelore", *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 65 (1969) 1-64.

dance acted as cement molding alien ethnic elements into the main Hungarian culture. If the emigrant ancestors were Slovaks or Croats, they surely became Hungarians on American soil. Would it not be a narrow-minded pedantry then, to emphasize the suspicious origin of the dance? Is there any more authentic judge of folk art than the folk itself?

Taking orality as an essential feature of folklore definitions, the choreography, order, text, and music of the Harvest Dance have never been recorded in script, but have always been passed on through word of mouth and observation to generations of Hungarian settlers, their friends and affiliated kins of other ethnic origins. "Only lately have they tried to record the music to transcribe by a music teacher," said Mr. S. R., "but there are difficulties. This is our heritage, how will the *móc* learn it? They tried to transpose it for a *móc* band, they paid \$ 80, but it could not be translated. Alas, only Hungarians know it".

Furthermore, the performance of the dance is voluntary without outside imposition. The Árpádhon people were not taught the dance by outsiders and do not participate in it for anything but their own pleasure. This consistency and conscious foregrounding of the custom as symbol of ethnicity in due course made it possible to attract the attention of other folks in the region of Southeastern Louisiana and eventually to make the way for Árpádhon settlers to Washington where they could display their unique version of Hungarian-American ethnic culture for an international audience.

WASHINGTON GAVE THE TROUPE of seventeen performers an experience of a lifetime. It strengthened considerably their ethnic pride and belief in the superiority of their way of tradition-preservation. Washington has officially and authoritatively put the stamp of authenticity on the Árpádhon production above all other Hungarian folk ensembles in the nation. Inevitably, there is something ironic and pathetic in all this. Had it increased the authenticity of the innate folklore of Árpádhon, if the performers had realized their mistake of using "phony" materials? Would it be better if they had replaced them with genuine, folklorist-approved traditions alien to them, not fitting their meaning of tradition? For the Árpádhon community, this would have been the fake, alien to their conviction, knowledge, and indeed, to their folklore.

Two encounters with other groups in connection with the Washington show elevated the self-esteem of the Árpádhon people even more. First, there were Hungarian-Americans from other parts of the country who came to admire and comment on their performance. Second, there were the members of the Hungarian folk dance and music ensemble, invited to match their old world art to that of their new world counterparts.

In the first case, meeting fellow Hungarians who visited the festival boosted the Árpádhon pride especially in their language and cultural value preservation. Mrs. S. R. demonstrated her cooking skills in front of the crowd. While she was at work, she overheard a respectable looking man ("he was a judge from Phila-

delphia") telling his son in Hungarian: "I betcha five dollars that this lady doesn't know one word of Hungarian." "You lost, mister, you better pay," she rebutted him, and the amazed judge happily kissed her on both cheeks: "Thank God, there are still good Hungarians in this country." At another occasion, when she made thickening for the soup, one of the onlookers exclaimed in admiration: "Hi, cookie, where are you from?" "From God's Country, of course." She took a good look at him: "Can you talk Hungarian? What's your name?" He said: "Jóreggelt kívánok" (Good morning). "Well, where were you raised?" "In Indiana". So she asked: "Don't they do the Harvest Dance in Indiana?" "No," he answered, "there is no such thing, those people are all dead and gone."

Meeting with other Hungarian-Americans was not so pleasant, particularly with the latest generation of immigrants who did not loose contact with old country folklore and consciously maintained song and dance tradition. An authentic performance on the basis of recently collected, professionally transcribed Hungarian peasant dances by young emigrants made the Árpádhon dancers confused and angry: "We don't want them to brainwash our children," was the response, "We don't need them. The *móc* love us, we live together. I don't even understand what they are dancing, it is so extraneous. It is a gymnastic dance to me, that's what it is . . ." said Mrs. M. I.

Reaction to the superb ensemble from Hungary was even more critical. First of all, Árpádhon people viewed the Hungarians with grave suspicion on the basis of political bias founded on obscure extremist propaganda. According to the Árpádhon belief, Hungary was completely saturated with Russian influence, in fact, they had become more Russian than Hungarian. During the two weeks spent together, the Árpádhon group carefully observed behavior and demeanor of the Hungarians. They compared those to their ways. The Hungarians made creamed chicken ("Chicken *paprikás*, same thing") but it was not good: "This is Russian, not Hungarian. Come, I'll teach you." said Mrs. M. N., "Oh were they grateful for showing!" The young dancers had another greeting formula which dismayed older women. "They said, '*csókolom, csókolom*' (I kiss you) all the time. Look, you are in America, here we say *jóreggelt* (good morning). You can kiss elsewhere, wherever you are going from here, only don't come back. In America it is customary to say *jóreggelt*. From then on, they all said *jóreggelt*." Even the Gypsy musician was no good. When he played, Mr. I. R. said to him: "What is this? This is not Hungarian. This is not *csárdás*. And then he played the real one. And he cried, this man, this Russian. Come on, man, why don't you revolt?"

But the greatest outpour of anger was directed against the dances which were so very different from everything they knew as their own brand of Hungarian dance. The figures in traditional solo male dance were criticised as "hopscotch", the girls dance was like "staggering" and the tempo they took was uneven, "once too slow, once too savage". The band played wild, foreign (evidently pentatonic) melodies, and so forth. When the peasant dancers from Hungary offered to teach them "their way" of the Harvest Dance, the Árpádhon leaders passionately re-

