

Survival and Revival of European Folk Cultures in America

THE ETHNOLOGICAL SURVEY of regional cultural units in the United States can throw light upon problems essential to the comprehension of the meaning of present day folk cultures. Each of the local groups is unique in itself, being an uprooted variant of the Old World mother culture that developed further by inside growth and outside impulses, interethnic contacts and modern technical civilization. The formation of American culture as a product of a gradual and continuous merger of different folk cultures (chiefly European) throughout the last centuries, offers a rare opportunity for an overview of the natural history of folk culture in general.

STUDIES AIMING AT SUCH GOALS preferred to concentrate on the investigation of the intercultural relationship of groups displaced or involved in an abruptly changing situation. These types of acculturative processes caused by colonization, migration and urban growth had been studied earlier, mainly in primitive societies¹. Since the last war, however, accelerated industrialization and a sudden mobility guided the interest of ethnologists toward folk societies in the process of critical transformation. European folk societies characterized by historical continuity and a succession of multi-ethnic contacts were the subject of research since the early thirties that was based on well established ethnographical fieldwork methods elaborated by generations of scholars². Following the initiatives of Redfield, Foster and other American anthropologists³, case studies of Latin American and Asian folk communities mushroomed as never before and led to a bridge building between the two trends, which,

1. B. Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*. New Haven, 1945; R. Redfield, R. Linton, M. J. Herskovits, Memorandum on the Study of Acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, vol. 38 (1936), pp. 149-152; R. Beals, Acculturation. In: Sol Tax (edit.), *Anthropology Today: Selections*. Chicago, 1962, pp. 375-395.

2. The cultural history of the European peasant is a long process of changing contact situations between the lower and the higher strata within the same culture and between different ethnic cultures (Å. Hultkrantz, *International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore. I. General Ethnological Concepts*. Copenhagen, 1960, pp. 243-247.) A general trend growing out of the "language island" research aroused interest in the study of inter-ethnic relationships on the basis of function and change. (A. Schultes, *Die Nachbarschaft der deutschen und Slaven an der March. Kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Wechselbeziehungen im nordöstlichen Niederösterreich*. Wien, 1954; J. Hanika, *Volkskundliche Wandlungen durch Heimatverlust und Zwangswanderung*. Salzburg, 1957; I. Weber-Kellermann: A magyarországi németek néprajzi vizsgálatának kérdéséhez. *Néprajzi Értesítő* (Budapest), vol. 40 (1958), pp. 29-36; I. Weber-Kellermann, Interethnische Beziehungen am Beispiel des Volksliedbestandes. In: A. V. Isačenko, W. Wissmann und H. Strobach (Herausg.), *Beiträge zu Sprachwissenschaft, Volkskunde und Literaturforschung*. Berlin, 1965, pp. 418-423; H. Bausinger et al., *Neue Siedlungen*. Stuttgart, 1959; H. Bausinger, *Volkskultur in der technischen Welt*. Stuttgart, 1961; L. Dégh, *Märchen, Erzähler und Erzählgemeinschaft*. Berlin, 1962; M. Pop, Caractères nationaux et historiques dans le style des contes populaires. *IVth International Congress for Folk Narrative Research in Athens*. 1964. Athens, 1965, pp. 381-390.

3. Redfield and A. Villa Rojas, *Chan Kom a Maja Village*. Washington, 1934; R. Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*. Chicago, 1941; G. M. Foster: *Empire's Children, the People of Tzintzuntzan*. Mexico, 1948; O. Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village. Tepoztlan restudied*. Urbana, 1951; M. C. Yank, *A Chinese Village*. New York, 1945.

though similar, had been separately shaped⁴. The growing interest of American anthropologists in contemporary European folk cultures⁵ and the problem of European ethnology will certainly be fruitful for future cooperation. A method of approach to folk societies in the United States should be worked out according to the conclusions reached by ethnic studies in Europe⁶.

Today it is commonly accepted that the United States is "a nation of nations," a country built by immigrants⁷. They were initially heterogeneous because of different ethnic backgrounds and continued to be heterogeneous in their different styles of adjustment to the American ideal, the ultimate goal they were striving for. This ideal, no matter how hypothetical, is a common target approached by similar efforts. The length of time elapsed since the settlement of a given group, of course, largely determines its distance from the attainment of this goal.

The discipline that deals with American folk cultures, however, must distinguish between two categories of immigrants on the basis of late or early arrival. American students of folklore and folk life⁸ speak of "immigrant folklore"⁹ that concerns the study of nationalities arriving in successive waves after the Civil War up to this day. These newcomers had to adjust to an already established framework of a rural and urban type of culture. The growing interest in the folk tradition of the newer settlers is justified because import, retention and modification can be observed even now as they occur before our very eyes within the span of a relatively short period. Thus con-

4. S. Erixon, *Regional European Ethnology. I. Main Principles and Aims with Special Reference to Nordic Ethnology II. Functional Analysis. Time Studies. Folk-Liv* (Stockholm), Vol. 1 (1937), pp. 80-108; vol. 2 (1938), pp. 263-294; S. Erixon: *An Introduction to Folk Life Research or Nordic Ethnology. Folk-Liv*, vol. 14-15 (1950-1951), pp. 5-15; A. Eskeröd, "Folk Society" and "Western Civilization". A suggestion for the Study of European Folk Cultures. *Folk-Liv*, vol. 17-18 (1953-1954), pp. 53-61; R. Redfield, *The Little Community*. First published in Sweden as vol. 5 of the "Gottesmann Lectures", Uppsala University, 1956; Å. Hultkranz, American "Anthropology" and European "Ethnology". A Sketch and a Program. *Laos* (Stockholm), vol. 2 (1952), 99-106; Å. Hultkranz, Some Remarks on Contemporary European Ethnological Thoughts. *Ethnologia Europaea*, vol. 1 (1967), pp. 38-44; T. Ishida *et al.*, European vs. American Anthropology. *Current Anthropology* (Chicago), vol. 6 (1965), pp. 303-318.

5. C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Culture and Community*. New York, 1961. pp. 74-94; E. C. Bainfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York, 1958; C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*. Gloucester, Mass., 1959; E. Friedl, *Vasilika, a Village in Modern Greece*. New York, 1962; R. T. and B. G. Anderson, *Bus Stop for Paris. The Transformation of a French Village*. New York, 1965; R. L. Warren, *Education in Rebhausen. A German Village*. New York, 1967.

6. L. Dégh: Approaches to Folklore Research Among Immigrant Groups. *Journal of American Folklore* (Richmond, Va.), vol. 79 (1966), pp. 553-554.

7. Two distinguished historians have commented on this phenomenon: "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history". (O. Handlin, *The Uprooted. The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that made the American People*. Boston, 1951, p. 3.) "Popular usage recognizes a distinction between those settlers who reached America before 1776 and those who came later. The former are described as 'colonists', the latter as 'immigrants'. In selecting ancestors for social reasons it is well to have a larger portion of the former among them . . . but in every practical respect the settlers, old and new, were much the same. The Puritan who landed in Massachusetts Bay with his blunderbuss and Bible was an immigrant. The peasant from Eastern Europe who twenty years ago passed through Ellis Island with a pack upon his back was a colonist. They were all colonists, all immigrants." (M. L. Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History*. New York, 1940. pp. 9-10.

8. The term "Folklore" is used in the same sense as "Regional Ethnology" or "Volkskunde".

9. R. M. Dorson, *A Theory for American Folklore. Journal of Am. Folklore*, vol. 72 (1959), pp. 206-208; Dorson, *American Folklore*. Chicago, 1959. pp. 135-165; R. Th. Christiansen, *European Folklore in America*. Oslo, 1962.

clusions can be drawn regarding earlier processes otherwise impossible to recapture. "Regional folklore" ¹⁰, on the other hand, denotes the folk culture of those immigrant nationalities of the colonial period that had settled down in regions in which they happened to be the first residents and there they established their own civilization as a perpetuated variation of that of the Old Country ¹¹. In the course of time, these nationalities were able to form regional ethnic units based on continuity and to split into subgroups with consciously preserved specific features. The North European element of the first settlers, or more precisely, the Anglo-Saxon immigrants, became the dominant and absorbing power in the formation of American culture.

Nevertheless, there is a feature common to all immigrants having set foot on American soil. They were agriculturists, the most conservative, tradition-minded stratum of American society ¹². Yet peasant existence became disastrous to them, undermined by catastrophic events. Poverty ridden and persecuted for political and religious reasons, they took a desperate step close to suicide when leaving their homeland, stable and secure for centuries. Migration to America for them was an attempt to restore peasant existence ¹³, and the first phase of acculturation set in when they gave up that illusion. The rest of the drama is well known to cultural historians, sociologists, linguists and educators, who in turn found the investigation of the immigrant condition most rewarding to their respective fields of interest. The scheme of ethnic integration was outlined by Park into a "race relation cycle" which demonstrated the succession of contacts between ethnic groups through human history ¹⁴. This outline can be applied to the subsequent waves of immigrants coming to the United States, the procedure comprising the following stages: establishment of contacts, competition, accomodation, formation of ethnic communities, assimilation and finally the dissolution of the ethnic neighbourhoods by complete integration into the dominant culture.

AS A FRAMEWORK, THIS PROCESS IS A UNIFORM ONE, but within it, there are countless subprocesses of transculturation and cultural fusion which develop into specific variables. The period involved is extremely short: the immigrant generation retains its original set of values and forms its own world by adapting them to the new environment. The first American born generation radically breaks away from the ways of the parental generation, creating a cruel conflict situation, while their children, reconciled with the past but fully Americanized, smoothly amalgamate with the dominant society ¹⁵. However, the immigrant cultures never fully integrate. Consciously or unconsciously, Americans carry their ethnic traits by retaining their foreign

10. R. M. Dorson, *American Folklore*, *op. cit.* pp. 74-134; Dorson, *Buying the Wind. Regional Folklore In the United States*. Chicago, 1964.

11. R. Th. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14, 25.

12. Handlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-36.

13. T. Shibutani and K. M. Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification. A Comparative Approach*. London-New York, 1965. p. 118; Dégh, *Approaches . . . op. cit.* p. 552.

14. R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*. (Ed. E. C. Hughes *et al.*) Glancoe, 111., 1950. pp. 138-151; Shibutani-Kwan, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-135.

15. Shibutani-Kwan, *op. cit.*, pp. 135.

sounding names, holiday customs and specific dishes and they are also conscious, no matter how vaguely, of their foreign ancestry ¹⁶. This intensity in ethnic consciousness is one of the most suggestive features inherent in American culture.

Despite the striking similarity in the general processes of integration of different folk cultures into the dominant pattern, varieties of assimilation are unlimited. Like the image of American culture, that of the individual variations of the Old World culture is a fictitious abstraction, almost impossible to describe. In a historical perspective, American culture itself is the result of various Old World cultures, and, as such, it undergoes continual change because of the uninterrupted flow of new ethnic impulses. Once set in motion, the process of acculturation never comes to a halt. In this atonal, polyphonic concert of chaotic sounds there is one relatively slow moving phase: the ethnic community, rich in tradition. The changing, infiltrating effects of such communities play a decisive role in the future development of American culture. Hence, the study of ethnic communities is, in my opinion, a key to understanding how American culture is being shaped.

The alienation of immigrant cultures from the Old Country ways commences as groups of the same ethnic origin establish their own regional nuclei in the United States. The formation of these sub-groups is a natural continuation of the Old Country affiliations. People of the same region, township, village — neighbours, friends, relatives — hold together and form the primary clusters within the greater national minority units established in America. The sub-groups are initially very similar to the transplanted language islands ("relic areas") in any other country. Gradually, however, they acquire a set of common conceptions about their national identity elaborated and institutionalized by official minority organizations. The acceptance of these ideas acts destructively upon the Old World values and develops a major pattern common to all sub-groups. This superstructure of ethnic solidarity, however, is filled in with distinct features, depending on inherent regional differences, occupation and intercultural conditions in the locality of each sub-group. These sub-groups are in between the Old Country ways and the American pattern, retaining and modifying the old as well as absorbing the new. Contemporary ethnic communities display different conditions depending on the degree of authority of the foreign born generation. A long series of case studies will help to determine the relationship of the Old World heritage to the new, the schedule of culture adaptation in local groups, what survives of the European heritage as instrumental factors, and to what extent it had to be modified in order to survive and incorporate into the dominant American culture.

In addition to certain theoretical and experimental analyses of ethnic stratification ¹⁷ there have appeared a wide variety of American ethnological-sociological studies which elaborated a method of approach to such folk cultures. Monographic

16. R. D. Tuck, *Not With the Fist. A Study of Mexican-Americans in a Southwest City*. New York, 1946. p. 118; I. D. Baltzell, *Immigrants and the Establishment*. In: P. I. Rose (ed.), *The Study of Society. An Integrated Anthology*. New York, 1967. pp. 417-418; M. M. Gordon, *Assimilation in America. Theory and Reality*. *Ibidem*, pp. 441-442. All students enrolled in my Introduction of Folklore course I offered each semester (1965-1968), were able to give account of their national ancestry as far back as their great-grandparents.

17. Shibutani-Kwan, *op. cit.*

studies of rural and urban communities in ethnic and progressive inter-ethnic situations¹⁸ are as important as the contribution of linguists interested in this extraordinary laboratory of language contacts offered by the ethnic variety of the New World¹⁹. It is as amazing as unfortunate that American anthropologists were too busy to continue their study in primitive and complex alien folk cultures and did not find enough time for field research in the multi-ethnic variables of their own country. The urgent necessity of the anthropological study in the United States was clearly expressed by an 1955 symposium report by sixteen scholars²⁰. Nevertheless, not much has been accomplished ever since²¹. There exist countless scattered publications of collected ethnic folklore data of different quality and some fairly good annotated collections have been issued within the past few years²². We know of one single scholarly assessment and evaluation of the subject that was attractive enough to arouse the interest of young folklorists in the folklore of ethnic communities²³. Our own ethnological study of a local group of the Hungarian-American minority has also grown out of this trend. Initiated first as a pilot study for the elaboration of a method of immigrant research in a highly industrialized urban area, we found the task challenging and hard. The first nine month period of field research concluded with the recognition that an ethnic culture as one segment of a conglomerate of ethnic cultures cannot be studied in isolation. The cities of the Calumet Region, an outstanding center of the steel and oil industry today, were established around the turn of the century and were settled by the continuous flow of immigration to the labour source. The flow still continues. The majority of the pioneer settlers came from Central and Eastern Europe as landless peasants, sharecroppers and farmhands. Here in a fortnight they became unskilled industrial labourers. They were the builders of the factories and they also built the cities. As they established their own imported culture in an uninhabited area as the colonial settlers had done once upon a time, their ethnic groups became firmly rooted and viable. Their affiliation and mutual cooperation with one another was also strengthened because they shared a common European experience as serf-peasants. Even closer interrelations were formed immediately between the former subjects of the multi-ethnic Austrian Empire and among the speakers of

18. To point out only some of the most significant: W. J. Thomas-F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. 5 vols. Boston, 1918; W. L. Warner and L. Srole, *The Social System of American Ethnic Groups*. New Haven, 1945; and one of the most recent: P. G. Rubel, *The Kalmyk Mongols. A Study in Continuity and Change*. Bloomington, 1967.

19. E. Haugen, *Bilingualism in the Americas. A Bibliography and Research Guide*. Alabama, 1956; U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems*. The Hague, 1967; J. A. Fishman, *Hungarian Language Maintenance in the United States*. Bloomington, 1966.

20. The U.S.A. as Anthropologists See it. (Special editor Margaret Lantis). *American Anthropologist*, vol. 57 (1955), pp. 1113-1295.

21. Stewart, Julian H., Comment to Despres, Leo A., "Anthropological Theory". *Current Anthropology*, vol. 9 (1968), pp. 21-22.

22. R. Th. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-55; S. P. Jakobson, The Folk Narratives of the Slavic Emigrants in America. *IVth International Congress... op. cit.*, pp. 185-190; S. Hoogasian-Villa, *100 Armenian Tales and their Folkloristic Relevance*. Detroit, 1966.

23. R. M. Dorson, *American folklore. op. cit.*, pp. 135-165. It is worth mentioning some unpublished Ph. D. dissertations prepared in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University: E. K. Kõngas Maranda, *Finnish-American Folklore. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*. 1963; R. A. Georges, *Greek-American Folk Beliefs and Narratives. Survival and Living Tradition*. 1963; J. K. Mintz, *The Legends of the Hasidim. A study of Folklore and Culture*. 1960.

Slavonic languages ²⁴. The integrity of these immigrant groups was more or less intact until southern Negroes and Mexicans began to press forward after World War I. These groups were responsible for the disintegration of ethnic locations that gradually changed the features of the cities. After the Depression the original European immigrants began to climb upwards on the social ladder and yielded their old neighbourhoods to the new arrivals after World War II. They moved into the suburbs built up according to American standards by the acculturated children and grandchildren of the immigrants. The immigrant generation at the same time remained the passive supporter of the culture it created and which it could not pass on because immigration had been discontinued shortly after World War I. While descendants of the original settlers integrated and disseminated into the respectable suburbs of the area, new ethnic colors were brought in by Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. They brought along their extremely vigorous peasant traditions (some of them are still in the "birds of passage" or migrant worker period), and they shaped extensive parts of the cities into Latin American patterns. Their cultural profusion overwhelms the desiccated monotonous uniformity of the proud suburbians still very careful to act out their role as perfect Americans.

THE SUCCESSIVE EMASCULATION OF FOLK CULTURES and their uniformization into the urban American mould can be easily measured in comparative degrees in this area. Neither the curriculum of individual ethnic groups nor the general evolution of the Calumet culture can be understood without the observation of their contact. The essence of the project into which the initial study had been concerted ²⁵ is the parallel investigation of contacts between the groups: to follow up their life history as reflected in oral literature, social customs, religion and behavioral patterns and as expressed in their transculturation with each other and native Americans.

Since I have nearly completed my fieldwork among the Calumet Hungarians ²⁶, I want to give a short account of the ethnic aspects of their present condition ²⁷. The dominant ethnic characteristics of the community might be elicited by starting out from two different questions: What is generally American in their way of life, how much do they correspond to the Hungarian-American model, and what is their contribution to American culture? We might also ask: What was originally Hungarian and what has survived of it after integration has been completed? In this short paper we prefer to review merely those facts we found as powerful ethnic values in the disin-

24. E. Haugen, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

25. A research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (Washington) made it possible to continue and expand the original collection.

26. The area is located in Northwest Indiana around the Calumet River on the banks of Lake Michigan. We did fieldwork in East Chicago-Indiana Harbor (the "Twin City"), Gary and Hammond as primary, Whiting, Highland, Griffith, Munster and Crown Point as secondary seats of the Hungarian population. We tape recorded materials from 112 informants.

27. Ethnic criteria were always one of the most attractive goals of ethnographic research: L. Vajda, A néprajzi anyaggyűjtés módszere és jelentősége. *Ethnographia* (Budapest), vol. 65 (1954), pp. 1-19; M. Weber, Entstehung ethnischen Gemeinsamkeitsglaubens. *Sprach- und Kulturgemeinschaft. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. 1947; P. I. Kushnier; The Method of Determination of the Ethnic Borders. [In Russian] *Sovietskaya Etnografiya* (Moscow), vol. 1946, pp. 12-14.

tegrating Hungarian community of the Calumet area at the time of investigation between 1965 and 1967.

Three local groups could be reconstructed as the nuclei of the Hungarian community in the East Chicago-Gary-Hammond area which are now in the last phase of their existence. Most of the successful settlers of the immigrant generation live today with their descendants in different suburbs of Lake County. The location of the original settlements was purely practical: within walking distance from the workshops, they clustered around the factories where the men found jobs. Originally they displayed ethnic heterogeneity since they came from different Hungarian groups between 1890 and 1922. Prior to World War I the Calumet and the adjacent South Chicago area were most attractive places for migrant workers from Austria-Hungary. Having been liberated from serfdom in the midnineteenth century, the former manorial servants and smallholders became bankrupt under the new system of free enterprise and migration after job opportunities became a way of life for them. Unlike the landed peasants, tied to their farms by ownership, they were extremely mobile. Work opportunities brought them easily to America²⁸. The typical Hungarian clannishness, however, held true only in a limited way for the Calumet area, as it was a secondary working place for most of the settlers who had first poured into mining places and industrial plants in the East. World War I stopped this mobility and converted the migrants into immigrants. Immigration had one last big wave before being completely blocked. Peasants suffering under poverty and the shocking experience of being enclaved into ethnic ghettos of the succession states after the dissection of Austria-Hungary, found their luck in joining their kin in America. New World experience shows that landless peasants were unaware of nationalism and did not pledge allegiance to states to which they formerly happened to belong. They did feel loyalty, however, toward their own small community to which they belonged by birth, but if life became intolerable in the old home, they broke away and laid the foundation of their new communities under better conditions²⁹.

The majority of the Calumet Hungarians belong to two main ethnic groups: the Transylvanian Szeklers and the Northern Palóc, both of which belong today to neighbour states of Hungary. The former, as the most archaic and traditionally minded among Hungarian folk cultures, retained its strong group solidarity as well as a rich oral lore³⁰. The latter, coming from an extended area and split up into smaller sub-units strongly intermingled with Slovaks, have far less continuity in tradition and stick together mostly because of their common background, common interests and their inability to adjust. Other sizable ethnic derivatives of the Calumet community are those of the Upper Tisza, the Southern Plains and West from the Danube. It is remarkable that Rumanians, Croatians, Ukrainians and Slovaks from pre-war

28. Handlin (ed.), *Immigration as a Factor in American History*. Engelwood Cliffs, 1959. pp. 14-19.

29. I. Kovács, *A kivándorlás*. Budapest, 1938; J. Kósa, *Land of Choice. The Hungarians in Canada*. Toronto, 1957. pp. 10-21.

30. The fact that they were the descendants of a privileged military tribe, political pressure and recurrent economic disasters made migration typical of the Szeklers. Enterprising and viable, they maintained their traditions through centuries without becoming incorporated into other cultures. Dégh, *Märchen, Erzähler . . . op. cit.*, pp. 11-44.

Hungary are also considered as Hungarians because of their similar cultural-regional educational background in the Old Country and their fluency in Hungarian. This fact points also to primary cross-cultural contacts originating in the Old Country.

In-group interference is best shown in the variety of Hungarian dialects. Even married couples keep their different dialects and pass them on to their children who preserve them in their broken Hungarian. Phonemic as well as semantic differences are passed on as long as the language is in use. On the other hand, a trend toward homogeneity, patterned on the Hungarian-American cultural model, has succeeded in eliminating essential inherent differences. Cultural similarities can be observed today within neighbourhood units not bigger than two blocks.

The reason for coming to the United States determined the fate and the nature of adjustment of the settlers for their next fifty years. They came to an empty place without any sign of earlier life and they continued living just as they had lived earlier, as migrant workers of peasant extraction used to live. The marshland around the Calumet river was favorable for the growing of vegetables and grain and the raising of poultry, pigs and cows for the needs of the household. The front garden was resplendent with the bright colours of fragrant flowers from the home country. Framed by the alleys, paved streets with sidewalks and sewers, the ethnic front garden today is moved to the backyard, cut off from the food supply area or shriveled up into a mere symbol of peasant origins. The benches at the house entrance are still there as late reminders of the time when they had an important social function in community life³¹. The center of the local communities were the two churches, Catholic and Reformed (Calvinist), and a restaurant with a bowling alley and a dance hall served the same purpose as the village tavern in the Old Country. This setting was favorable for the maintenance of Hungarian village practices: oral and performed art, communal singing, and the celebration of the rites of passage and of the calendar holidays. The division of labour between the sexes in two extremely different realms of production, heavy labour for unskilled workingmen and farming for the women, allowed a perfect continuation of Old Work folk religion. Small wonder that they could not and even did not have to assimilate. There was not even a model community near or far on the same level, and the "Sunny Side" where the bosses lived was a world out of their reach. Living within the ethnic ghettos, their communication with the outside world was restricted to similar ethnic groups, and was minimal and accidental with the dominant culture. Unskilled labourers could do their jobs through sign language communication. The original settlers made up a hard and resistant core of the immigrant culture. In the first period they had no desire to change and later they were unable to do so. Nevertheless, the process of assimilation got under way mostly through their children born into and educated by the dominant culture. These second-generation Hungarian-Americans played the role of an intermediary between the restricted realm of the parental generation and the complex outside world.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF THIS RESTRICTED WORLD? After a short casual meeting with informants, one has the strange sensation that despite their comfortable

31. Newcomer Latin Americans have today the same intensive community life.

living quarters, well equipped modern household, decorations and furnishings typical of lower middle class average American taste, elegant clothing, fashionable outfits and heavy use of cosmetics among the women, their way of thinking and behaviour is exactly the same as that of old style Hungarian peasants. Their interpersonal relationship with in-group members is based on common Old Country experience. People talk about old incidents of their former life at home and they discuss Old Country folks commonly known to them. Their home memory is also the point of departure for anything that happened to other acquaintances since in America. A trip to the Old Country would give them a new impulse to confirm their ethnic consciousness, but they refuse to add new experiences to their old stock of knowledge, which narrows down their comprehension of the outside world. They do not understand it, but this narrowness of experience does not create a conflict since the immigrant generation is unaware of any other kind of life. They are satisfied in their simple living and feel gratitude toward the country that admitted them and gave them rights and equality never known in the Old Country. The Calumet Hungarians often make cliché statements of their happiness and pride in being American citizens. Their status is still so important to them after these many years that the closest friends address each other as "Mr." and "Mrs." in Hungarian conversation instead of calling each other by first names as they would do in Hungary³². They cherish the memory of the Old Country and they are ready to help relatives back home for whom they feel compassion. They have a vague idea about Hungary under Communist rule, composed of memories about peasant misery and horror stories about the cruelty of Communism.

Judging by the relative affluence of Hungarians in the Calumet area, one may say that life is easy according to Hungarian peasant standards: more food and more clothing is available to them, the kitchen is perfectly equipped and overdecorated as is also the rarely used front room. In other words, plenty does not change the general mode of life. People are extremely careful in spending and do not waste leftovers of food and fabric and household implements, but rather save whatever they can for future use, whether they need it or not. They grow their own vegetables, supplying raw materials for the traditional diet. It is a principle to make wine, pickles, fruit preserves and pork sausages at home. They make their own noodles and they are proud that they have never tasted those sold in the store. The petrification of old ways and the ignorance of the outside world is well protected within the ethnic community through which there is only one door open for their children to come and go. The satisfaction with that narrow world is easy to understand if one is familiar with the original Hungarian folk culture as its background. Landless peasants were also protected from outside impulses by their illiterate traditionalism at the bottom of the social ladder. They took it for granted that the world of the masters was incomprehensible to them and it infiltrated their lives only through overheard and misunderstood utterances coming through the kitchen door.

The hardships of making contact with the outside world begin with the language problem. Among the European immigrants of the Calumet area, Hungarians stand

32. E. Lengyel, *Americans from Hungary*. Philadelphia, 1948. pp. 114-115.

alone with their non-Indo-European language, which makes it harder for them to learn English. They usually do not learn it except for the essentials. What they picked up by ear is a curious and specific illiterate speech used and misused daily according to their accidental understanding³³. The men communicate through this language with their bosses and fellow workers whose English is often no better than their own because they too are members of other immigrant groups. The women talk to the milkman, mailman and occasional repairmen, often Negroes whom they call Gypsies (*Cigány*), who had a very similar role in Hungarian rural communities. The Hungarian language the Calumet residents use, on the other hand, is full of distorted English loanwords, and semantic borrowings indicating the degree of their cultural adjustment. Generally used words for new phenomena beyond their small world are seldom fully understood. For example, a number of informants subscribing to daily papers claimed that they do not understand what they read, and the term "social security" having as many pronunciations as informants could not be explained by any of them.

ON BEING QUESTIONED ABOUT MOTION PICTURE PLOTS, informants improvised stories composed of traditional motifs, giving a faithful account of the visual action only. The same reaction was observed among peasants in Hungary, which indicates that the world of modern visual art cannot replace the world of traditional narratives³⁴. Women in the Calumet community regularly watch TV shows but they are unable to relate what they see. Half understood announcements, however, can have a tremendous impact upon their imagination. After having taken for granted the landing of U.F.O.'s from the morning news, an elderly lady phoned her friends to discuss the matter. Likewise, a parody broadcast on witchcraft helped to revive long forgotten incidents of witch belief. These examples, selected at random from a countless number, point to the fact that the dominant culture infiltrating the ethnic community does not act destructively upon traditional behaviour. In certain cases, the dominant culture might even confirm and prolong it.

The ethnic churches in America, as is commonly known, play a major part in the preservation of ethnic identity³⁵. People belonging to the same parish are closely affiliated through different social functions organized by the church. This affiliation explains the fact that Hungarians living in the same neighbourhood do not know each other because they belong to different churches, while people living thirty miles apart are acquainted because they follow the same faith. Services in the old ethnic churches today are still attended by the widely dispersed congregation. Not so much religious devotion as old ties and social activities keep the church members together. The church organizations follow the general pattern of American churches (Sunday School, ladies aid, diverse beneficial associations). Furthermore, ethnic customs esta-

33. A typical example is that of the only child born from the second marriage of an old couple and jokingly called "hefnehef". However, they do not understand the correctly pronounced word "half and half" and cannot recognize it written on paper.

34. K. V. Riedel, *Fernsehen und Volkskultur. Beiträge zur deutschen Volks- und Allertums-kunde* (Hamburg), vol. 9 (1965), pp. 23-37.

35. Handlin, *Immigration . . . op. cit.*, p. 76; Fishman, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16, 20-22.

blished by the Hungarian-American organization (observation of national holidays like March 15 and October 6 and vintage processions and dances) belong to the main church events. Reformed churches organize communal noodle and sausage making parties which are good opportunities for folk singing and traditional tale telling. Also carol singing groups visit the families on Christmas Eve, while the Catholic church gets the benefit of Nativity Plays performed from door to door.

Other celebrations characteristic of American community life are also interwoven with traditional ethnic motifs. Annual picnics are, for example, memorable get-togethers for the Hungarian community which they celebrate with traditional singing, dancing and game playing. There is not much retained of the peasant wedding, baptism and burial feast. However, the adapted American type became drastically modified because of outstanding features inherent in Hungarian folk culture. In contrast, Halloween customs were unanimously rejected by the Calumet Hungarians.

In conclusion, the ethnic community as a creation of the immigrant generation exhibits its rich complex culture in the clearest and simplest way possible. The merger of the different cultural trends of different quality and quantity allow certain generalizations about human experience: ". . . What is worth studying is human experience; not economic experience, not psychological experience, not religious experience, cut into segments and studied separately, but human experience understood as experience of life" ³⁶.

36. E. Wolf, *Anthropology*. Englewood Cliffs, 1964. p. 96.