

HUNGARIAN COLLECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Laszlo Kovacs, St. Olaf's College, Emeritus

This paper will provide an outline of the extensive and valuable Szathmary collection about Hungary, which was deposited at the Special Collections Department of the University of Chicago Library in 1991. This will be based on the detailed inventory list, which is not arranged systematically by subject, although there are some groupings of titles by individual authors or general subjects. While several individual titles have been examined, the gift as a whole was not inspected.

The gift collection represents a wide range of subjects relating to Hungary, particularly of the 19th and 20th centuries. While there is no period or subject which is emphasized over the other, nevertheless, its strength is the Reform Period of the 1830s. Here one can find an entire selection of the most significant works by the authors of the period. Political writings, treatises on economics, agriculture and related industry, animal husbandry, national resources, and statistics, are all present.

There are also scores of significant titles on Hungarian intellectual, literary and cultural developments from the early part of the 19th century. One can identify the works of the most prominent authors of literature up to the present day, including an unusually high number of works by Jokai, translated into English during the last decades of the 19th century. These titles, published one hundred years ago, represent a significant set of works by themselves, that would be the envy of any library with Hungarica collections.

One must stress the depth of the collection in several subjects. The gift contains a treasure of works on Hungarian history since the period of the conquest, medieval history, the Turkish occupation and the Habsburg domination of the country. A wide range of titles on the constitutional relationship between Hungary and the Habsburg Dynasty should be noted here. The collection is rich in political and military history, and titles on international relations. An unusual number of titles on the celebrated War of Independence of 1848-1849 and its aftermath are particularly noteworthy. The uniquely valuable literature on Lajos Kossuth and his emigre circle should be mentioned. His tour of the United States can be traced by the many excellent titles (in both Hungarian and English) in the collection.

In addition to well-known authors, there are scores of titles on the post-Trianon (1920) period by lesser known writers. But the coverage of Hungarian history after the Second World War to the Revolution of 1956 and its aftermath is also very significant. American opinion and the ideological response to the 1956 event by the international political, intellectual and literary community are well represented. Titles on communism and the failure of the communist experiment in Hungary should be noted here as well. There are also a large number of unusual and hard-to-find titles on regional and local history, including many titles on Erdely (Transylvania), Kolozsvár, Debrecen, Sarospatak, Szeged, and other regions.

There is an entire range of titles on archeology, numismatics, folklore, folksongs, folk art, folk dance, ethnography, linguistics,

dialectology, serfdom and peasant studies, labor unrest, art, printing, book arts, book collection, newspaper publishing, children's literature, the theater, medicine, sport and sport clubs, and culinary science. Several titles on important Hungarian composers (e.g. Ferenc Liszt, Ferenc Erkel) and creative artists (e.g. Mihaly Munkacsy) of the 19th century should be noted as well. The performing arts, leading actors of the Hungarian theater, and works about 20th century Hungarian cinema are in the collection. Titles on education, educational reforms, physical education, the establishment of schools and universities are also present. One should also note titles on church history, church relations, and collections of sermons.

Of particular interest are the hundreds of titles on the Hungarian emigration experience in the United States. One can identify publications on sick-benefit societies and insurance agencies, regional organizations, church life, annual reports by local churches and denominations, and cultural organizations. Titles on the post-1945 Hungarian emigration are particularly noteworthy.

The collection includes monographs, multi-volume sets, handbooks, reference works, pamphlets and polemical writings, musical scores, art exhibit catalogs, as well as annual publications. Most materials, perhaps 60%, are in Hungarian. The second largest number of titles are in English, followed by a lesser number of publications in German, Italian and French. There are also a select number of classical, American, British, German, French and Russian authors' works in Hungarian translation.

This gift of over 11,000 volumes includes titles on subjects that one cannot find together in any other Hungarica collection in the United States. Taken as a whole, it is the most unique and unusually rich selection of titles in any American academic or research library in the country. Dr. Lajos Szathmary of Chicago assembled a carefully selected library on Hungarica subjects covering more than two hundred years of Hungarian life. The time and personnel resources invested in merging the collection into the library will be most rewarding for future use, providing the basis for scores of masters and Ph.D. dissertations into the next century.

-Newsletter. no. 11, 1995, pp. 72-74
Slavic and East European Section
Association of College and Research Libraries