

From the United States to Rural Europe: The New Immigration, Homecoming Migrants, and Social Remittances in Hungary

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A high number of migrants returned from their transatlantic sojourn to their native Hungary between the 1880s and the 1930s. Despite being pauperised and marginalised in the United States, they encountered norms and mechanisms of a democratic society and cultural patterns unknown to the rural society they hailed from. Upon returning, they implemented some of these practices. The paper investigates the durability of this cultural change and argues that the transatlantic transmission of norms was outweighed in significance by internal, regional movements.

Keywords: transatlantic migration, social remittances, cultural change, Americanisation, democratisation, Hungary, Czechoslovakia

Somewhere in provincial Hungary in the early 1900s, a district sheriff slapped a man who had approached him with a petty issue. The sheriff's outrage was caused by the impertinent behaviour of the applicant: he addressed the sheriff politely by taking off his cap but, instead of remaining discreet, he continued his plea while replacing the cap—a shameless act in the eyes of the sheriff, crying for immediate response in the form of physical assault. The humiliation of citizens of low social standing by state officials was an everyday experience in Hungary in the 1900s. This case is particularly interesting because the man who enraged the sheriff had just returned from a sojourn in the United States with his savings to start a new, improved life in his home village. The humiliated man, realising that no authority or courthouse would do him justice, left again for the United States, now with the intention to settle permanently there.¹

As insignificant as it seems, this incident took place in a transnational space. In Hungary, officials demanded respect from applicants of a lower standing, which included

being discovered through the entire encounter; in contrast to that, relations between an official and a citizen in the United States were far more relaxed. This applicant combined the Hungarian and the American norms: he showed due respect to the sheriff but at the same time demonstrated his own rights as a citizen of Hungary—a country which, at least in theory, sanctioned equality before the law. Drawing on his transnational experience, the applicant now could measure the behaviour of the sheriff against several yardsticks. The conclusions he drew were also transnational because the mobility revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries empowered him to determine his place of habitat, one where he could secure a living and find cultural, social, and political norms fitting his preferences best, even if this meant the transgression of national boundaries.

This man was one of the several million South, East Central, and East Europeans who tried their luck in the United States between the 1880s and 1920s. This mass migration created a vast transnational space between rural Europe and industrial North America (and beyond), connecting villages seemingly isolated and backward with a variety of locations overseas.² The global connections of these transnationalised villages endured well into the Cold War, despite many of them finding themselves behind the Iron Curtain.³ Social remittances as defined by Peggy Levitt—“ideas, behaviors and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities”—played a decisive role in forging these transnational spaces.⁴

Before the introduction of telephone and internet, let alone in an age of massive illiteracy, personal encounters shaped these transnational spaces far more than today. Despite the shrinking costs of seafaring, most permanent migrants could not afford to visit their native communities; hence homecoming migrants played the most critical role in the operation of the transnational villages of rural Europe, transmitting norms and patterns of behaviour more frequently than anyone and anything else. Homecoming migrants—regardless of whether they returned from the factories and mines of the East Coast and Midwest with sufficient funds to renew their lives in their native communities or came home failed, penniless, and with ruined health—would have encountered patterns of behaviour, material and immaterial culture, and values in politics, religion, and economics that sharply differed from their life-world back in rural Europe. When returning to their native environment, they carried more than their savings with them (the primary goal of most sojourns). With their trunks came also an invisible baggage: social remittances. What kind of social remittances homecoming migrants brought from the United States to Hungary, one of the countries most massively involved in transatlantic migration from the 1880s to the early 1920s, how these were implemented upon return, and how this transfer of norms did (or did not) transform their environment is the subject of this study.

Searching for Return Migrants

Transatlantic migration brought some 1 to 1.5 million Hungarian citizens to the United States between 1880 and the First World War, chiefly from the northeast of the country,

with smaller sending pockets scattered in the west and the south.⁵ How many of them returned to their native land and how many of the returnees then re-migrated to the United States is even less clear. The Hungarian Statistical Office estimated that a quarter of the Hungarian sojourners returned from their journey to the United States between 1899 and 1913 but admitted that the data was incomplete.⁶ For the years 1908 to 1910 (which included the Panic of 1907–8, manifesting in high unemployment and many unexpected returns), the United States' Immigration Commission found that 64 percent of the Magyar and 59 percent of the Slovak-speaking sojourners returned to their homes.⁷ Drawing on broader American statistical data, J. D. Gould concluded that slightly less than half of the Magyar, some 41 percent of the Slovak, and 40 percent of the Croat-speaking migrants returned home; nonetheless, counting not on the basis of the dubious classification of race but citizenship, the return ratio of Hungarians was 34 percent.⁸ Puskás's estimation of 40 to 50 percent returned migrants takes into account that some journeys were not recorded.⁹ What is sure is that Hungarians returned to their home far more often than the previous generation of migrants, called the Old Immigrants. The overwhelming majority of the Hungarian migrants acted as seasonal labourers and wished to return to their native villages in the "Old Country" after a sojourn lasting for a few years. Together with other, chiefly southern and eastern European migrants, they formed part of what contemporaries called, and many Americans demonised as, the New Immigration.

Despite the recently renewed interest in the history of transatlantic and global migration from East Central Europe with transnationality as its central approach, the impact of return migration on the sending societies in East Central Europe remains largely understudied. The lack of in-depth studies is not driven by ignorance but by lack of sources. Unlike overseas migrants, homecoming sojourners left few tangible traces, such as established organisations, press, or lobbies for their special interests. Hence, they rarely appear as a group upon their return—largely because they did not imagine themselves as a group. Yet return migrants shared experiences that others did not, and thus, unwillingly, did form a group. This group perhaps remained invisible for its members—in the words of Tara Zahra, it was an "imagined noncommunity," and as such, returnees are not unlike people indifferent to nationalism, the object of Zahra's study.¹⁰ Furthermore, not only did return migrants not produce sources of their own, they rarely triggered serious interest on the part of their contemporaries. The endless number of contemporary jeremiads equating migration with the downfall of the sending society repeated some rather uncomplicated commonplaces with little reference to the actual conditions (see several examples of the moral panic triggered by transatlantic migration below). Contemporary ethnographers, the most competent people to describe the rural society most migrants hailed from and returned to, were indifferent to migration-driven cultural change because their aim was to reconstruct the genuine peasant culture; they had little interest in foreign, let alone transatlantic, effects.

This study does not claim to overcome these challenges. What it offers is an interpretation of the scattered evidence of the social remittances transmitted by homecoming migrants, in contrast to the migration-related discourse and the migrants' actual overseas

experience. The sources analysed here—contemporary observations about migration and local press—allow investigation into political behaviour, to be accompanied in the second part by more fragmented examples of culture and economics. Each part starts with an examination of the *vistas* migrants adapted to in the overseas environment and then catches examples of the transplantation of these norms back in Hungary.

Hello, Mr. Dégenfeld: The Americanisation of Migrant Political Culture

Hungarians, like other New Immigrants, did not sail to the United States for political reasons; neither the Bill of Rights nor the Statue of Liberty, but rather the paydays in factories and mines lured them overseas. However, as an unintended consequence, Hungarian sojourners encountered the democratic political culture of the United States, though due to the low level of their integration into American society, this encounter was indirect and accidental.

The migrants from Hungary hailed from a traditional peasant society and found employment overseas as unskilled workers and miners. In the absence of skilled workers and professionals, they formed a “trunked working class,” as a contemporary sociological study’s title aptly characterised them.¹¹ The overwhelming majority struggled with English; hence they did not read American newspapers and their knowledge about American life remained spotty.¹² They rarely joined labour unions because they went to America to earn as much as possible and they identified unions with strikes: in other words, with failing income. Conversely, union members also stigmatised New Immigrants, holding them responsible for lower wages and strike breaking. Until 1914, only a few Hungarian migrants sought naturalisation (a trend which changed during and in the aftermath of the First World War), hence they did not vote either at local, state, or federal elections. These marginalised workers did “not live in America, they live[d] underneath America. America goes on over their heads. America does not begin till a man is a workingman, till he is earning two dollars a day. A laborer cannot afford to be an American,” a Greek Catholic priest told Emily Greene Balch, a social scientist and peace activist sympathetic to New Immigrants.¹³ Most New Immigrants thus acted as what Levitt calls *recipient observer*: “They do not actively explore their new world because their lives are structured such that they do not come into close enough contact with it. Instead, they take in new ideas and practices by passively observing the world around them.”¹⁴

However, evidence suggests that recipient observation was enough to embrace several norms of the democratic society of the United States. The ethnic press bridged the language gap between American society and migrants and emerged as the chief, though not exclusive, channel of the observation process. On the eve of the First World War, more than a dozen papers were printed in the United States in the various languages of Hungarian migrants (Magyar, Slovak, Ruthenian), whose editors fall into another type in Levitt’s taxonomy, the *purposeful innovator*: “They are sponges who aggressively seek out, select, and absorb new things. ... They creatively add and combine what they

observe with their existing ideas and practices, thereby expanding and extending their cultural repertoire.”¹⁵ These editors not only became instrumental agents in the making of the diaspora community; their papers also printed news from the United States, letting migrants learn about American political culture without the knowledge of English.¹⁶ The ethnic press quickly adjusted to the American and adapted its racialised language, firmly putting European New Immigrants on the white end of the racial scale.¹⁷

With the help of the press, migrants quickly understood that their American fellow workers paid far less in taxes than Hungarian villagers and were not drafted into the army, unlike the compulsory military service for able-bodied young men in Austria-Hungary—the United States was thus equated with the land of liberty. The democratic principles of American politics and society also found their way into the migrant grassroots organisations, the fraternal unions and the parishes.

Fraternal unions were established to compensate for the lack of social networks rooted in the village society, and provided members with social benefits in case of injuries, sickness, or death. While the goal of these fraternal societies largely overlapped that of the village society, they functioned in fundamentally different ways. Membership in the village society was established by birth and terminated by leaving the village permanently or by death. Wealth and prestige of the family determined the rights and duties of the villagers and also positions within the village leadership. In contrast to that, one acquired membership in a fraternal society by application, a voluntary act, and membership existed as long the person paid the membership fees. Each member had the same duties and the leadership was elected in a democratic way. Thus, despite the fraternal societies’ ethnic character, “their format was already ‘American,’” demonstrates Ewa Morawska, “with election, ballots, reports of proceedings, and contests, unknown to the peasant tradition of East Central Europe.”¹⁸

Parishes stood at the centre of village life in the Old Country. Once in the United States, migrants replicated this: they built a church and a parsonage. Protestants invited a minister, while Catholics pleaded with their bishop to assign them a priest. Parish leadership in the Old Country was conservative and autocratic; the final say in important matters was held by the village elite, in particular by the local nobility. In contrast to that, in the United States believers created the church by and for themselves, and since parishes had no other income but the fees paid by the flock, believers demanded a more fraternal and less autocratic approach from the priests. Furthermore, hardly any noblemen migrated to the United States, hence the parish leadership was usually in the hands of farmers turned miners and workers.¹⁹

The fraternal societies and parish leadership may be associated with Levitt’s third category, that of *instrumental adapters*, whose “interactions at work, on public transportation, or with medical or educational professionals force them to shift their reference frames. ... They adjust the way they interpret the world to equip themselves better to meet the challenges and constraints of migrant life.”²⁰ Studies on the ethnic press, societies, and churches confirm that the democratic norms of the United States were quickly adopted by the migrant elites.²¹

A well-documented case of Greek Catholic believers' controversy with a delegate from the Hungarian church authorities illustrates this point well. Greek (also called Eastern, Byzantine, or Uniate) Catholics represented a transition between Eastern and Western Christianity. Hungarian Greek Catholicism was created by the Union of Uzhhorod (1646), when some Orthodox priests pledged loyalty to the Holy See while at the same time keeping their traditions, which included married priests and the use of Church Slavonic rather than Latin as the language of liturgy. Greek Catholic Hungarians appeared in the United States in the 1890s in high numbers. Since there existed no Greek Catholic hierarchy in the United States, Greek Catholic communities were assigned to the Latin-rite church hierarchy. Latin-rite bishops were absolutely unknowledgeable about Greek Catholic church practices, such as the use of Church Slavonic and the right of priests to marry, hence they discouraged and sometimes even persecuted Byzantine-rite Catholics.²² As a response, some of the offended priests and their flock converted to Russian Orthodoxy, whose practices were virtually identical with the Greek Catholic ones.²³ The growing influence of Russia over Hungarian citizens immediately raised alarms in Hungary, whose political elite feared Russia more than any other foreign power. In 1902, the Hungarian government sent canon Andor Hodobay as apostolic visitor to take control over overseas Greek Catholic parishes. As customary in the Old Country, Hodobay appealed to his authority and demanded the almost complete subjugation of parishes and Greek Catholic fraternal societies. However, his subjects-to-be revolted. An article in *Amerikanskij Russkij Viestnik*, the paper of the Greek Catholic Union, claimed that believers:

built churches, rectories, schools for their money and are supporting the priests financially. It seems as if the people and the clergy gave up their rights, became his [Hodobay's] subjects as it is in the Old-country. These people's rights are to pay, support, be silent and obey, etc. ... In the Old-country if a lord or some person financially supported the church, became a Patron, he even had the right to have the priest of his choice appointed to a parish. ... In the land of the free it would be ridiculous to support and work for a cause without representation.²⁴

The opposition of the Greek Catholic Union was successful. Hodobay's mission spectacularly failed and the government had to withdraw their isolated agent in a few years.

The Hungarian migrants' changing understanding of social hierarchies is also demonstrated by their quick adaptation to American salutation standards. Back in Hungary, a complex and rigid hierarchical system of salutations was in custom, which mirrored the feudal legacy of nuanced divisions between different layers of nobility, state administration, and the ignoble masses.²⁵ In the United States, Hungarian migrants quickly adopted the American system and addressed everyone as Mr., Mrs., or Miss. As a correspondent of the widely read conservative daily paper *Az Újság* found, Hungarian workers "quickly embraced the principle of human equality," and when encountering a member of the Hungarian "better society," they immediately reminded him that "we are not at home [in Hungary]. Here I am a mister just like you."²⁶ So when some elders of Hungarian Reformed parishes in the United States addressed a representative of the Hungarian government, József Dégenfeld, simply as Mr. Dégenfeld, it was a conscious

choice to demonstrate democratic values but also a desperate insult, since Dégenfeld was a count, a close relative to Hungarian prime minister Count István Tisza, lord lieutenant of the city of Debrecen, and chief elder of the Transibiscian Diocese of the Reformed Church of Hungary, and as such, he should have been addressed as *méltóságos gróf úr* (Honoured Lord Count, equivalent to My Lord in English).²⁷

Anarchy or Democracy? Fears and Hopes in the Old Country

During the mid-nineteenth-century liberal fever in Hungary, American democracy was celebrated by the few Hungarians who had set a foot on American soil. By the end of the century, this enthusiasm evaporated, giving way to a conservative and moralising perception. While acknowledging the superiority of American technology and economic life, the democratic institutions and the principle of equality were criticised by Hungarians as being hypocritical and the emerging mass society was seen as uncivilised and egoistic.²⁸ This narrative shift provided the context for the reception of the Americanised political culture of Hungarian migrants around 1900, which did not go unnoticed in Hungary.

Confronted with the embrace of democracy by Hungarian migrants, two kinds of reactions, conservative-moralising and progressive-democratic, emerged. Hungarian conservatives believed that the implementation of democratic principles in Hungary could lead to disastrous effects: post-feudal Hungarian rural society—characterised by low literacy rates, small and ineffective farms, and poverty—was not ripe enough for democracy. These conservative voices saw peasants as people unable to comprehend their own interests and to act accordingly; hence, despite the formal end of feudalism, the traditional elite, the old nobility, had to govern the commoners' lives. Migration challenged this social order in a number of ways. Péter Legényei Bodnár, an official in Bodroghköz region in the northeast (home to a large number of transatlantic sojourners), asserted that the very fact that peasants left for America meant they had developed an agency in their own lives, allegedly risking economic, social, and national interests.²⁹ Sarolta Geőcze, one of the few women to reach the glass ceiling of the age (she directed a pedagogical training school), shared this opinion, too: due to migration, “the relation between the nobility and the commoners has completely lost its patriarchal character and indeed turned hostile.”³⁰ Peasants returning from America became not only conscious, but some of them also financially independent, which discouraged them from obeying the traditional rural elites. Furthermore, conservative authors were convinced that migrants would have learned about socialism and labour unions, hence upon their return, they would act as troublemakers.³¹

Conservatives' other fear centred on nationalism. Most migrants left from northeast Hungary, a region with a Slovak- and Ruthenian-speaking majority. In Hungary, the government was firm in pursuing a policy of ethnic nationalism whose core elements were encouraging the assimilation of Slavs with Magyars and the suppression of any Slavic nationalist project. While the north and northeastern Hungarians' identification with

the Magyar national identity remained largely fluid and situational (if there was any at all), the government proved rather successful at keeping Slavic nationalists at bay. However, the governmental control mechanisms were limited to Hungary. In the United States, fraternal societies, press, and parishes could flourish without any repression and Hungarian officials were alarmed to see that several ethnic leaders, mostly Slovaks, subscribed to a Slovak nationalist agenda (which, in turn, had limited success with the “ordinary” migrants themselves). In Hungary, reactions were largely exaggerated and hysteric: the Magyar nationalist public was convinced that homecoming Slavs returned to Hungary as enemies of the state.³²

Reform-minded intellectuals, on the other hand, had high hopes for homecoming migrants. Their arguments are aptly summarised by an article written by the Marxist journalist-sociologist Elek Bolgár and published in *Huszadik Század*, the most important progressive-democratic journal of the age. “Having encountered the industrial culture,” the homecoming migrants, asserts Bolgár, would fight for the freedom of speech and association, labour unions, a citizen-friendly bureaucracy, and fair wages that enabled comfortable and hygienic housing and the consumption of culture both in the countryside and the cities.³³

Other reform-minded intellectuals formed similar, though less radical, arguments. A Jewish lawyer, József Gerényi of Bardejov (a little town on the Galician border with significant migration numbers) expected that returning migrants had learned the value of literacy and would encourage their children to attend school and keep on informing themselves about the American democracy.³⁴ Another young Jewish intellectual, Bertalan Neményi, hoped that homecoming migrants would bring “a spark of democracy.”³⁵ The progressive intellectuals rarely addressed the sensitive issue of Slavic nationalism.

Contemporaries who either feared or hoped for the Americanisation of Hungarian political culture by homecoming migrants were certainly right to believe that such an effect was highly possible. In his classic study on return migration, Mark Wyman demonstrated that a vast number of political leaders and journalists pledging for democracy, socialism, or even anarchy in early twentieth-century and interwar Europe (mostly in Scandinavia but also in Poland and Italy) had lived earlier in the United States and encountered its political culture.³⁶

Three of them rose to particular prominence. The Finn Oskari Tokoi (1873–1963) was born to a farmer and horse-trader father, one of the few literates of his vicinity. At the age of eighteen (1891), he left for the United States to work as a miner and joined the Western Federation of Miners. Upon his return to Finland in 1900, he was involved in the labour movement and was elected to the Finnish Parliament as a representative of the Social Democratic Party (1907). In 1913, he became speaker of the Parliament and in the turbulent year of 1917, he headed the Senate, and thus was *de facto* the leader of Finland. Siding with the Reds in the Finnish Civil War, Tokoi had to leave Finland after the victory of the Whites. He found refuge in the United States, never returning to his native country.³⁷

Hailing from a well-off Latvian farming family, Kārlis Ulmanis (1877–1942) engaged in the dairy industry as a manager. At the age of twenty-five (1902), he went to study agronomy in Zürich and Leipzig. Back in Russian-controlled Latvia, he was arrested because of his participation in the 1905 revolution. Upon his release, he fled to the United States, earned a degree in agronomy from and worked for a while for the University of Nebraska, to be followed by a manager position in a dairy factory. In the United States, Ulmanis learned about the organisation of modern and highly effective agriculture and democratic politics that promoted the interests of farmers. He likely encountered the star of the Democratic Party, William Jennings Bryan, a talented orator who claimed to speak on behalf of the farmers of the Midwest. Upon the proclamation of amnesty to the revolutionaries, Ulmanis returned to his native Latvia in 1913. He affiliated with the Baltic Agricultural Society, gave talks to farmers on modern agricultural technologies, and edited the Society's publications. During the war, he became responsible for food supplies and later for refugees, followed by an appointment as vice-governor. In 1918, the newly formed Latvian National Council appointed Ulmanis prime minister. After securing Latvia's independence both from Soviet Russia and Germany, the most important event during his premiership was the land reform which redistributed latifundia to peasants and set a limit to individual land ownership.³⁸ "Ulmanis's call for a democratic country of small family farms," claims a biographer, "was clearly patterned on his personal observations of the American model of Jeffersonian democracy."³⁹ Ulmanis's belief in democracy, however, evaporated in the troubled 1930s, and after serving as prime minister several times in the 1920s and 1930s, he organised a coup in 1934 and installed an authoritarian regime which lasted until the Soviet invasion of Latvia in 1940.⁴⁰

A third example is less straightforward in a political sense, but nonetheless shows a strong cultural impact. Son of a Norwegian peasant and local labour union founder, Johan Nygaardsvold (1879–1952) left for Canada and the United States at the age of 23 (1902). During the five years he spent overseas, he educated himself in classic and contemporary English and American literature. Upon return to his homeland he joined the Labour Party and his political career advanced quickly: he won a seat in the Norwegian Parliament in 1916, became a local mayor, a minister, a speaker of the Parliament, and in 1935 was appointed prime minister, a post he retained in exile in London during the Second World War.⁴¹

A collective biography of these three men reveals several commonalities. They were all born in the same decade to rural, commoner families. Their fathers had above-average capital: as an organised worker, Nygaardsvold's father had social capital; Tokoi's literate father cultural capital, Ulmanis's family financial capital. They all migrated as young adults, though Nygaardsvold and Tokoi escaped poverty and lack of jobs, whereas Ulmanis embarked first on a study tour, followed by an involuntary political exile. Their experience abroad shaped their political trajectories decisively: Tokoi joined and learned about social democracy in the labour union, whereas Ulmanis idealised the rural society of the American Midwest as a possible role model for Latvia. Upon returning home, they started their political careers among the rural population, Nygaardsvold

and Tokoi as organisers of agricultural labourers' unions and Ulmanis as a promoter of agricultural reform. A key factor in each of their careers was universal male and female suffrage, introduced in Finland in 1906, in Norway in 1913, and in Latvia in 1918. This caused the traditional, male, middle-class and noble elites to increasingly lose ground, and empowered a new political class that needed to impress an electorate of lower social standing. It seems that worldliness gained by transnational experience was an apt means.

Homecoming Migrants, Democracy, and Nationalism in Hungary

Social conditions in antebellum rural Hungary were to a large extent similar to northern Europe: the legacy of feudalism and the low efficiency of farming cried for agricultural reform; the poverty of rural workers stimulated the emergence of labour unions; and rural Hungarians, like those to the north, also engaged in to-and-fro overseas migration. Yet, one searches for a similarly high-profile Hungarian politician representing rural commoners and shaped by overseas experience in vain.

In antebellum Hungary, the restricted franchise and manipulated elections effectively prevented mass parties with a democratic agenda from entering the Parliament. Established in 1890, the Social Democratic Party of Hungary could not claim any seat in the Parliament. Agrarian parties performed slightly better. A farmer, István Nagyatádi Szabó, won a seat in 1908 and an agrarian party founded by him secured two more seats in 1910.⁴² In contrast to the trio discussed above, none of these three peasant politicians claimed any transnational experience, a fact which may be explained by chronology and geography. Nagyatádi Szabó and his two fellows were born in the 1860s and hailed from southwest Hungary; they became young adults in the 1880s when transatlantic migration from this region had yet to start.⁴³ A fourth representative in the 1910 Parliament was the radical socialist peasant leader András L. Áchim. Áchim was a native of Békés County, a region with virtually no transnational migration; furthermore, he came from a family of midsize landowners, a social group nearly absent among transatlantic migrants.⁴⁴

Whether return migrants tried to implement American political principles in counties and villages remains an open question. A handful of farmers were able to secure a seat in county assemblies (Nagyatádi Szabó was one of them in his native Somogy County) but I have not been able to find any that could claim American experience. Village judges (a position approximately equal to a mayor) were elected by villagers themselves, but the candidates were selected by the district sheriff; this preselection guaranteed that respected and well-off villagers with little affinity for challenging the social order were chosen. In neighbouring Galicia, a sense of worldliness (work in a distant location or army service) was seen as an asset by villagers when choosing their elders.⁴⁵ Years spent in America, in particular if the sojourn was successful and the returnee cemented his high position in the village society, certainly also increased a Hungarian villager's chance to earn the support of the community. This was the case in 1914 in the village of Űipar, whose inhabitants insisted on the election of a homecoming migrant while

the district sheriff proposed other candidates, causing considerable tension within the community. The exact motivation of the district authorities and the political position of the judge-to-be, however, are unclear.⁴⁶

Social hierarchies were rarely challenged in softer ways either. Ethnographic research based on interviews with homecoming migrants and their offspring recorded that sojourners in the United States appreciated the equality-based norms of America, including its relaxed salutation and communication culture, but this was not implemented upon their return.⁴⁷ Incidents which fall into the category of purposeful innovation, such as the one cited in the introduction, were rarely reported. A socialist paper printed in Košice reported on one of these occasions: a return migrant allegedly addressed a district sheriff in the informal, leading to his incarceration.⁴⁸ In fact, the rigid and nuanced code of salutations in Hungary prevailed until the Second World War and vanished only during the short postwar democracy and finally during Communism. While the moralising conservative voices feared the disintegration of social discipline, when interviewing local officials in the village of Cicir shortly before the First World War, sociologist Róbert Braun found that return migrants did not change their behaviour at all.⁴⁹

Nor does the other concern of Hungarian nationalists and conservatives, Slavic nationalism, seem to be better grounded. While some returning Slovak-speaking migrants did carry with them foreign publications and reported on the free organisation of the overseas civil society, evidence suggests this had hardly any impact on the conditions in the Old Country.⁵⁰

The virtually nonexistent impact of homecoming migrants on political norms and hierarchies suddenly changed in the autumn of 1918, when the war-torn, hungry, and desperate Austria-Hungary revolted. National councils were formed throughout the country claiming to represent the entire populace on democratic principles. A democratic republic was proclaimed and universal male and limited female suffrage were introduced. The republic was headed by Count Mihály Károlyi, who shortly before the war had toured the United States to secure the support of overseas Hungarians and thus counted on the homecoming migrants. The Hungarian National Council—practically an interim parliament—was presided over by János Hock, who recorded the anecdote cited in the introduction and was a sincere admirer of American democracy. On a local level, homecoming migrants often were active in “supporting the Left,” claims Juliann Puskás, though unfortunately without citing evidence for her argument and making no distinction between the democratic republic and its successor, the Bolshevik-style Republic of Councils.⁵¹

Starting in Prague on 28 October 1918, several national councils proclaimed their independence from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the formation of new, democratic republics. While these national councils could claim wide popular support, their impetus, in particular in the Czechoslovak case, was crafted in the United States. Czechoslovakia, in fact, was proclaimed first not in Prague but in Washington, D.C., on 18 October by the Czechoslovak National Council, headed by the Austrian-born intellectual in exile Tomáš G. Masaryk, who became the first president of the new state. This declaration was preceded by the Pittsburgh Agreement in May 1918 which stated that the

Czechs lands of Austria and the Slovak-speaking north Hungary would form a joint state; the agreement was signed by Czech and Slovak migrant organisations in the United States.⁵²

A similar process, with even more contribution from migrants in America, unfolded in northeast Hungary, where several national councils emerged to represent the Ruthenian-speaking population. Within a few weeks, a national council convening in Prešov entertained the idea of self-determination, but soon it changed its mind in favour of nascent Czechoslovakia and rejected a Ukrainian identity; the national council in Uzhhorod demanded autonomy within Hungary (and the democratic Hungary now hastily granted this autonomy and set up a short-lived provincial government); and a popular assembly in Khust declared for joining the short-lived West Ukrainian People's Republic. The fate of northeast Hungary, however, was decided neither by the chaotic local power relations nor by a local plebiscite but by the American Ruthenian diaspora. Earlier in 1918, with the merger of two overseas Ruthenian umbrella associations, an American National Council of Hungarian Ruthenians (in their parlance, Uhro-Rusins) was established, and elected the lawyer Gregory Zhatkovych as a speaker. Zhatkovych was born in Hungary but at the age of five emigrated with his family to the United States. His father belonged to the American Ruthenian elite and edited the paper *Amerikanskij Russki Viestnik*. Zhatkovych earned a degree in law from the University of Pennsylvania and became one of the few Ruthenian American professionals in the prewar United States. Under the leadership of Zhatkovych, the Council first entertained the idea of independence for Hungary's Ruthenian territory; if that was not possible, it preferred unity with Galicia and neighbouring Bukovina, provinces with substantial Ruthenian populations; should that not be possible either, it demanded autonomy within Hungary (1 October 1918). In a few weeks, however, the council leadership changed its mind and endorsed accession to Czechoslovakia. The Council also organised a plebiscite among Ruthenians residing in the United States, regardless of their citizenship. The plebiscite resulted in a solid endorsement of Czechoslovakia over the other possible options. This resolution was presented at the peace negotiations in Versailles and earned the support of the Entente Powers. The territory, now under the name of Subcarpathian Rus', went to Czechoslovakia with Zhatkovych, who returned to his place of origin as its first governor.⁵³

All this meant that the Hungarian national conservatives' worst nightmare materialised: as Hungary went democratic and Austro-Hungarian-born Slavic nationalists returned from abroad, the country disintegrated. Their fear of a large-scale America-driven democratisation, however, proved largely unfounded. Elections in the now severely truncated Hungary were held in 1920, after the failure of the republic, an aborted attempt to introduce communism, and the subsequent victory of a right-wing counterrevolution led by Rear Admiral Miklós Horthy. The reorganised Smallholders and Farmers Party, under the leadership of Nagyatádi Szabó, secured a majority in the Parliament in 1920, though now a mere third of its representatives were farmers and none of them claimed American experience; the other two-thirds were lawyers, professionals, and other representatives of the so-called Christian middle class, that is, the

traditional leaders of the country (excluding the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie). The few peasant representatives were marginalised in the Parliament and, unlike most states in early postwar East Central Europe, Hungary did not turn into a democratic farmers' republic. Instead, the authoritarian counterrevolution stabilised; the Smallholders and Farmers Party merged with the conservative Christian National Unity Party to form a solid parliamentary majority and secure Horthy's power.⁵⁴

The hope of antebellum leftist intellectuals concerning the democratising effect of homecoming migrants materialised in a single member of the Parliament, the social democrat János Esztergályos. Born in 1873 into a humble family in the vicinity of Budapest, the young Esztergályos became an ironworker, and after apprenticeship moved to Germany and Italy, returning to Hungary as a labour union leader. Between 1908 and 1911, he worked in New York; upon his second return to his native land, he continued his activity as a labour leader and won a seat in the Parliament in 1922 and in subsequent elections.⁵⁵ The American experience was even more formative for another social democrat, Imre Pásztor. Born in 1880 in east Hungary, Pásztor was trained as a fitter; at the age of twenty-five, he departed to the United States and joined the American Federation of Labour. After spending nine years overseas he returned to Hungary and became a union leader. In 1922 and in 1927, he was elected as reserve member to the Parliament.⁵⁶ Yet, as the Horthy regime tolerated but severely restricted social democracy, their political influence was virtually zero. These biographies strongly resemble that of Tokoi: they were born roughly in the same years, became organised workers abroad, acted as social democrat leaders upon their return, and upon the establishment of the right-wing authoritarian regimes, were marginalised.

At the same time, an American experience was indeed claimed by several high-ranking conservative politicians. The economist Gyula Pekár, member of the Parliament between 1901 and 1935 and minister of religion and education between 1919 and 1921, attended high school in Boston;⁵⁷ Loránt Hegedüs, MP between 1898 and 1918 and minister of finance in 1920–1921, had studied transnational migration and done extensive fieldwork in the United States in the 1900s; and several other politicians undertook shorter study trips to the United States. While they certainly valued American technology, they did not support American democracy and did everything to prevent it from making any inroads into conservative and autocratic Hungary.

Returning migrants in Subcarpathian Rus' also failed to bring democracy back from the United States with them. In Subcarpathian Rus', the central government of Czechoslovakia, which celebrated itself as the most democratic state of East Central Europe, failed to establish the promised regional autonomy, and elections to the regional assembly did not take place until 1939. Instead, Subcarpathian Rus' was regarded as an inner colony and governed in a paternalistic manner directly from Prague.⁵⁸ As a result of this, the disappointed Zhatkovych renounced his position and returned to the United States in 1921. Similarly, several Slovak-speaking migrants who returned to Czechoslovakia in the immediate aftermath of the First World War departed back to the United States within a few years, though the documented cases can be explained more by economics than by political reasons.⁵⁹

The Hungarian Yankees: A Hybrid Culture?

Living in pauperised ethnic ghettos, the Hungarian “trunked working class” started its life in America under miserable material conditions; Emily Greene Balch’s remarks about the New Immigrants living “underneath America” and not being able to “afford to be an American” related, in fact, more to consumption and housing than politics. Since the New Migrants went to the United States to improve their financial conditions, they were far from blind to the American material culture. Upon their arrival, the first change often unfolded in clothing, replacing peasant costumes with clothes more fitting to an urban and industrial environment. Later, and in particular before returning, migrants often acquired pocket watches and clocks, kitchen utensils, and other practical products of industrial America that were not entirely unknown in rural Hungary but certainly hard to access and uncommon in traditional peasant households.⁶⁰ Beyond material culture, whose change is rather easy to document, intangible cultural practices, such as in hygiene, also took root among migrants that are more challenging to furnish with evidence.

Contemporary observers believed that the impact of America on life in the rural Old Country would appear in altered norms and cultural practices. Without using the word, they believed that the transnationalisation of the village would manifest in a hybrid culture, reinforced by the return of sojourners. Similar to the political discourse, this imagined cultural hybridity triggered fear in conservatives and hope in reform-minded contemporaries.

For conservatives, a less traditional, more urban and cosmopolitan mode of consumption posed a threat because it allegedly disintegrated peasant morality and also prompted peasants to believe they were equal to provincial elites. Pedagogue Sarolta Geőcze pushed this widely shared argument to the very extreme: “Luxury and the consumption of delightful goods spread apace; in village shops, parasol, umbrella, gaudy hat, cognac, and even crayfish became saleable products,” and she directly linked this change to deteriorating morality, alcoholism, and infidelity.⁶¹ For the director of the elementary school in Medieșu Aurit, Kornél Marosán, “international rags” worn by return migrants symbolised the immoral and unpatriotic spirit that necessarily captured the otherwise decent and loyal peasants.⁶² The agronomist and economist Andor Löherer, who sat on the board of the National Economic Association, the major lobby organisation of the great landholders, warned of feminisation of Hungarian males in the United States, where “the cult of woman, her prerogatives, the absolute female rule over men, her pamperedness, for instance, a miner going to work first serves coffee to the woman in the bed, the sacredness and even untouchability of the women are all secured.”⁶³ The fear that return migrants would change traditional gender roles in the Hungarian countryside was furthered by observations that, due to the absence of able-bodied men in the villages, women had to perform hard labour in the fields,⁶⁴ and that traditional male spaces, such as post offices and courthouses, were now shared with females, and valued positions in rural society, such as the village drummer and the bell-ringer, became available for women, thus “little feminist societies” emerged.⁶⁵

Reform-thirsty intellectuals, on the other hand, believed that homecoming migrants would bring a demand for the higher material culture and hygienic standards they enjoyed in the United States. This was claimed not only by left-wing radicals like Elek Bolgár. Oreszt Szabó, a state secretary in the conservative Tisza government with a Ruthenian background and an important advocate of northeast Hungarian interests, also believed that the social, cultural, and material improvement of the pauperised Ruthenians would begin in the United States and materialise only upon the return of the sojourners.⁶⁶

Neither the fears nor the hopes of contemporary observers were unfounded. Homecoming migrants throughout Europe were often associated with a more individual and conscious lifestyle. Changing consumption patterns were also reported from various corners of the continent.⁶⁷ In South Italy homecoming migrants from the United States played an important role in promoting education and associations.⁶⁸ In neighbouring Galicia, homecoming migrants looked down on immobile villagers who walked barefoot and did not bath.⁶⁹ In the following, a few Hungarian examples of hybridity in different cultural practices will serve to illustrate, to be followed by an investigation into their durability.

Once in the United States, Hungarian ex-farmers and ex-farmhands quickly abandoned their traditional apparel and adopted the dress-code of the American working class. One hardly can distinguish between the Sunday best urban-style suits of the elders of Hungarian American Reformed parishes and the suit of Count Dégenfeld.⁷⁰ Upon return to their native village, the American clothing and shoes could signify worldliness and an improved social standing. A return migrant in the northeast village of Cigánd surprised his children with American dress and let the family be captured by a photographer dressed as an American family.⁷¹

A transfer in hygienic culture was claimed by Edward Steiner, a professor of theology in Grinnell College, Iowa, with a Jewish background in northwest Hungary, when visiting his native village. Steiner was satisfied to learn that return migrants brought respect for hygiene and contrasted that with the genuine suspicion of peasants towards modern medicine. Not only did homecoming migrants visit the local doctor in case of illness, but they also had their teeth filled; indeed, filled teeth became fashionable and symbolised a higher status in the village (and made men more attractive in the eyes of their wives, added the highly partial and emotion-driven Steiner).⁷² Several observers, including Steiner, claimed that return migrants built solid stone houses which could be kept tidy, unlike the miserable huts typical for north and northeast Hungary.⁷³

A change in economic behaviour was reported from Őse, where return migrants not only bought land and modernised farms with their American savings but also started small-scale industries. One of them, a well-off farmer, built a brickyard, utilising his experience in an overseas cement factory—a prime example of *purposeful innovation* in the taxonomy of Levitt. His highly disciplined work ethic impressed the journalist reporting on this village, who labelled him a “Hungarian Yankee.”⁷⁴ Sojourners from the northern village Háj developed their financial knowledge during their stay in the United States.⁷⁵ Once back, people having some capital started to act as local bankers

and made loans to co-villagers. Villagers whose family members died in overseas factory accidents received benefits from American insurance companies.⁷⁶ U.S. dollars, and more importantly, the notion of life insurance (a modern financial product hardly known in villages⁷⁷) thus became customary in this remote community even for villagers who had never been to the United States.

Migrants, while in the United States and upon return as well, frequently donated to their village parishes; this practice was rooted both in traditional pietism and American-style self-support by the congregations. While the donations were widely praised in the church press, both progressive and conservative voices recognised return migration's potentially broad impact on Hungarian religious culture. The Jewish József Gerényi of Bardejov, for instance, expected that returning migrants would reinforce the separation of church and state and depoliticise the Hungarian church.⁷⁸ An article in a Calvinist press emphasised a rather different aspect of American religious culture: in the United States, ministers advertised their speeches in advance to attract audiences and the sermon speeches were not Biblical but addressed mundane topics, claimed the author; return migrants would also demand a commercialised church culture and cherry-pick among the ministers instead following their teaching unconditionally.⁷⁹ However, I have not been able to find any evidence either of Gerényi's hope or relaxing church hierarchies.

At the same time, several migrants in the United States learned about religions not present in their home villages and found them more attractive than their traditional and rather rigid religious life. Leaders of the two established Protestant religions in Hungary, Calvinism and Lutheranism, feared the spread of "dangerous sects" of Baptists and Adventists and in some church presses, re-migrants were identified as proponents of these religions.⁸⁰ The most alarm was caused by the conversion of some Greek Catholic priests and their flocks to Russian Orthodoxy. When these Orthodox returned to their native villages, some of them re-joined their native Greek Catholic parishes because they did not conceptualise their Orthodox affiliation overseas as a substantial difference to Greek Catholicism. Some others, however, sharply differentiated between the two and started to agitate their home fellows to convert to the "true religion," Orthodoxy, by spreading a pamphlet printed overseas by a converted priest and some other religious materials published in Russian. The conversion movement proved relatively successful and some hundred villagers in northeast Hungary sided with Orthodoxy. Hungarian officials reacted with hysteria, assuming that conversion to Orthodoxy immediately meant Russian influence over Hungarian citizens and thus challenged national security.⁸¹ These reactions were largely exaggerated: while conversions to Orthodoxy were indeed welcomed by Russia, the nationally indifferent peasants of northeast Hungary certainly did not become agents of Russian influence; if anything undermined their loyalty to Hungary, it was their persecution by the Hungarian authorities. Despite all persecutions, some Orthodox communities endured and remained Orthodox in the interwar era, now under a more tolerant Czechoslovak authority. Oddly enough, their American conversion to Orthodoxy anticipated the liquidation of

Greek Catholicism and its forced merger into Russian Orthodoxy upon the Soviet take-over in Subcarpathian Rus’.

While a handful of similar stories demonstrate the existence of migration-driven transnational hybridity, at least as many observers claimed that these hybrid cultural practices vanished over time, and this time frame could indeed be very short. A migrant from the village of Átány, while still working in a Chicago factory, instructed his wife back in the village to build a new house with an American-style veranda and a stable with a hayloft, and sent enough money to cover the costs. When he returned to the village, the house was in fact built, but the wife had abandoned the veranda because coffins could not be carried through the American-style porch, in accordance with the village customs. The return migrant, now an ex-factory worker and a farmer once again, had to be content with the other innovation, the two-storey stable; however, a mere two years passed and he returned to feeding the animals from a haystack as was the custom in the village.⁸² A similarly aborted hybrid culture was recorded in Cicir, whose American sojourners brought back fashionable American-style clothing, but once it was worn out, they wore it during physical work until the clothes were ruined completely.⁸³ In Bodony, return migrants rarely wore their American clothes because local peasant costumes were considered far more impressive; if someone did “fashion” in American dress, he was ridiculed and said to look like the local Jewish shopkeeper, who was the most obvious Other for the villagers. A villager summarised the long-term impact of transatlantic migration in his community:

When [return migrants] got a bit tipsy, the pub was full of English cursing. ... From the savings brought home, they bought the land which those who stayed back lost due to the recession. They bumped back into the middle of backwardness. They had no desire to leave the village. Perhaps they visited the pub more often and wore American-style loose trousers. And once he ran out of money, no one could tell that he spent 20–25 years in America.⁸⁴

The abortion of hybridities was reinforced by the fact that sojourners returned from an industrial-urban environment to a rural-agrarian one, where several practices adopted in the United States were either impractical or could not be implemented at all. Regardless of how advanced the technology a sojourner encountered in a factory, this experience could hardly translate into a local farming practice. Similarly, villagers rarely felt the need to establish fraternal unions in their home villages—the overseas associations and the methods of their operation were seen as an ersatz in the absence of the village society.

Conclusion: Return Migrants as a Shortcut to Modernity?

Rural Hungary, though it seemed backward and immobile to many contemporaries, in fact underwent a dramatic transformation in the decades leading to the First World War. This transformation was facilitated by several actors. State officials initiated several modernisation projects in the peripheries, such as river regulation, domestic colonisation programmes, and comprehensive regional development projects.⁸⁵ The landed gentry and professionals, often Jewish, were a source of innovation as well.⁸⁶ Contemporaries

agreed that farmers and farmhands trying their fortune in the United States developed an agency in their lives unknown to former generations. Depending on their political position, they either feared or had hopes for return migrants who were believed to use this agency to join the facilitators of transformation in rural Hungary.

The means returning sojourners could employ to join the rank of transformers arrived in their trunks and in their minds. Of these two, the former materialised soon and outweighed the significance of the latter. Though the aggregate amount earned overseas and transferred or brought as cash to Hungary is not known, sources unanimously claim that overseas savings definitely improved the lives of many returnees. Sojourners finding success in America paid off their debts and taxes, invested in new lands, built new houses, and donated to the church. Yet purposeful innovation inspired by the sojourn in the United States was rarely reported.

The invisible baggage is far more elusive. On the political scene, virtually no impact can be traced. Norway, Finland, and Latvia all gained independence and turned democratic in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and this opened new vistas for classes that earlier could not participate in politics; hence American return migrants could embark on a political career and encourage democratic practices—though as Ulmanis showed, democratisation was by no means a one-way street. In contrast to that, democracy replaced the elitism of antebellum Hungary only for a few months when the uproar of the First World War triggered collapse. The Hungarian political system became formally more inclusive but the authoritarian regime practically marginalised the representatives of peasants and workers, hence preventing the transmission of norms appropriated in the United States by a few political actors. On a lower and everyday level, the homecoming migrants' few purposefully innovative initiatives to challenge the social order failed, too, like the man talking to a district sheriff with his hat on. Ironically, the most durable change inspired by the experience of the United States was conversion from Catholicism to Orthodoxy, a practice with high significance in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era but less important for the Great Transformation.

All this means that both the hopes of the reform-minded Hungarians, mostly on the left, and the fears of the conservative right were largely exaggerated. Homecoming migrants, most of them acting as recipient observers in the United States, quickly returned to their pre-emigration routines. However, this does not mean that villagers did not claim an agency in the massive transformation of their environment. Instead, inspiration and agency would be sought somewhere else. Braun identified the source of change in Cicir in army service, encounters with a better-off neighbouring village (a German-speaking community, in contrast to Romanian-speaking Cicir), and visits to the nearby city of Arad.⁸⁷

This observation coincides with the recent claim of Annamarie Steidl, who demonstrates that the dominant form of mobility in antebellum Austria-Hungary was not the spectacular America-bound migration but the internal, short-distance routes, and also draws attention to the deep entanglements among internal European and transatlantic mobilities.⁸⁸ The findings of this paper confirm her results and also add political and cultural aspects to her heavily demographic study. Migrants were indeed crucial in the

bottom-up change in mentalities in rural Hungary, but contemporaries were less than enchanted by the sensational transatlantic migration. What shaped rural societies more were the villagers' interactions with different, but not *too* different, life-worlds in their proximity, and this closeness forged a more persistent bridge in the diffusion of norms than the faraway America.

Acknowledgements

Research for this study has been funded by the Richard G. Plaschka Scholarship (University of Vienna); the Botstiber Fellowship of the Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University; and the Premium Postdoctoral Grant of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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Notes

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- 1 “A szabadság országa,” *Pápai Hírlap*, May 13, 1905. The anecdote was recorded by János Hock, a Catholic priest and member of the Hungarian Parliament between 1887 and 1918 with an increasingly

democratic agenda. He identified neither the place, time, or the two people involved in the event, hence the accuracy of the story cannot be double-checked; nonetheless, no feature of this incident seems implausible.

- 2 A comprehensive overview of the transatlantic migration of the Habsburg Empire is provided by Steidl, *On Many Routes*, 101–62.
- 3 Fejős, “*Mert abban az időben lehetett vándorolni*”; Kaltenbrunner, *Das global vernetzte Dorf*.
- 4 Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 11.
- 5 For an overview of the volume of the Hungarian transatlantic migration and the sending regions, see Puskás, *Ties That*

- Bind*, 18–35; for the northeastern region in particular, see Segeš, “Die magische Anziehungskraft”; for the larger regional context of the Hungarian migration, see Brunnbauer, *Globalizing Southeastern Europe*; Zahra, *The Great Departure*; Steidl, Fischer-Nebmaier, and Oberly, *From a Multiethnic Empire*; Steidl, *On Many Routes*.
- 6 *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak kivándorlása és visszavándorlása 1899–1913*, 39*.
 - 7 Dillingham, *Statistical Review*, 383.
 - 8 Gould, “European Inter-Continental Emigration,” 57, 60.
 - 9 Puskás, *Ties That Bind*, 23.
 - 10 Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities.”
 - 11 Hoffmann, *Csonka munkásosztály*.
 - 12 The first generation of East European migrants to North America rarely learned English, regardless of the intention of return or permanent settlement. See, for instance, the case of Ukrainian settlers in Canada: Kaltenbrunner, *Das global vernetzte Dorf*, 151.
 - 13 Balch, *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, 419.
 - 14 Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 57.
 - 15 *Ibid.*
 - 16 On Slovak papers, see Glettler, *Pittsburgh-Wien-Budapest*, 57–78; on the Magyar press, Puskás, *Ties That Bind*, 164–72; on Ruthenian, Magocsi, “The Carpatho Rusyn Press.”
 - 17 Zecker, *Race and America’s Immigrant Press*.
 - 18 Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*, 179–80.
 - 19 Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 78–85.
 - 20 Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 57.
 - 21 Bucki, “Workers and Politics.”
 - 22 Kaszszak, “Bishop Soter Stephen Ortynsky,” 1–6.
 - 23 Brady, “Becoming What We Always Were.”
 - 24 Slivka, *Historical Mirror*, 32. See also the lengthy circular of the Union’s leadership to its chapters contrasting democracy in the church and the deeds of Hodobay at pp. 32–6.
 - 25 Kövér, “Ranglétra és középosztályosodás.”
 - 26 “Magyarok közt,” *Az Újság*, July 27, 1913. Return migrants in the Transylvanian village Eliseni were also nostalgic about the relaxed salutation culture of the United States: Egyed, *A megindult falu*, 153. Beside the principle of equality, the other reason New Immigrants compared themselves to the lords of the Old Country was their improved living standard, which enabled the consumption of goods scarce in their genuine environment (for instance, meat on a daily basis): Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*, 137.
 - 27 Dégenfeld had to tolerate this disgrace because he was on a sensitive mission: he had to convince the Reformed congregations to secede from the American churches they had been affiliated with and to join the Reformed Church of Hungary, i.e., his task was to extend Hungarian governmental control over overseas communities. On Dégenfeld’s mission and the growing control of Hungarian government over the Hungarian Reformed communities in the United States, see Komjáthy, *A kitántorgott egyház*, 79–110; on addressing Dégenfeld simply as Mr., 81.
 - 28 Vári, “Fenyegetések földje.” At the same time, the fear of the United States as a global power endangering national geopolitical interests (a widely shared trope in contemporary England, Germany, and France) was absent in Hungary because her Atlantic political involvement remained insignificant. On the fear of America in west Europe around 1900, see Marin, “Did the United States Scare the Europeans?”
 - 29 Legeney Bodnár, “Bodrogköz a kivándorlás szempontjából,” 934–5.
 - 30 *A Felvidéki Kivándorlási Kongresszus tárgyalásai*, 240.
 - 31 Poznan, “Return Migration,” 660.
 - 32 Glettler, *Pittsburgh-Wien-Budapest*, 273–335; Poznan, “Return Migration,” 659–60.

- 33 Bolgár, "A kivándorlás," 498–9.
- 34 Gerényi, *Az amerikai kivándorlás*, 97, 108–10.
- 35 Neményi, *A magyar nép állapota*, 95. His political views are not known but his family was well connected and several family members claimed high administrative position.
- 36 Wyman, *Round-Trip to America*, 151–68.
- 37 Haapala, "The Expected and Non-Expected Roots of Chaos," 42–6.
- 38 On the significance of land reform for the nascent democracies and their nation-building projects in East Central Europe, see Richter, "An Orgy of Licence?"
- 39 Kuck, "The Dictator without a Uniform," 211.
- 40 On the authoritarian regime of Ulmanis, see Hanovs and Tēraudkalns, *Ultimate Freedom*.
- 41 Berntsen, *I malstrømmen*, on his American experience, 71–9.
- 42 Nagy, "Földműves képviselők," 181–4.
- 43 Szili, *Kivándorlás a Délkelet-Dunántúlról*.
- 44 See the biographic details of all four at Vásárhelyi, *Magyar Országgyűlés 1910–15*.
- 45 Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village*, 148–51.
- 46 "Jelölés a nép ellenére," *Délmagyarország*, 9 January 1914.
- 47 Fejős, "Kivándorlás Amerikába," 322–3.
- 48 "Tegezte a főszołgabíró," *Kassai Munkás*, 10 June 1911.
- 49 Braun, *A falu lélektana*, 47.
- 50 Glettler, *Pittsburgh-Wien-Budapest*, 158–87, 341–88.
- 51 Puskás, *Ties That Bind*, 77. Rural national councils often had a wide membership as an indication of their mass basis but the actual business was often in the hands of locals with high prestige, such as priests, teachers, well-off peasants (Egry, "Közvetlen demokrácia, nemzeti forradalom," 100–2). One may speculate that successful homecoming migrants had good chances to find themselves as council members. Whether these people fostered a more democratic agenda than others, however, cannot be determined.
- 52 Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 33–4.
- 53 Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains*, 177–90.
- 54 Nagy, "Földműves képviselők," 190–207.
- 55 Varga, *A magyar szociáldemokrácia kézikönyve*, s.v. Esztergályos János.
- 56 Deák, *Magyar országgyűlési almanach 1927–1932. évre*, 451–2. Reserve members were elected but summoned to a seat only if the actual member died or renounced his seat. In the case of Pásztor this did not happen, hence he did not become a member of the Parliament.
- 57 Deák, 294–5.
- 58 On the flaws of Czechoslovak democracy and its Czech nationalist character, see Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, chapter 3; on Subcarpathian Rus' as Czechoslovakia's inner colony, see Holubec, "We Bring Order"; Ramisch-Paul, *Fremde Peripherie*.
- 59 Jakešová, "The Impact of Emigrants and Reemigrants," 33–9.
- 60 Horváth, "Adatok Detk község," 177.
- 61 *A Felvidéki Kivándorlási Kongresszus tárgyalásai*, 240. Ágoston Hegedűs, a Greek Catholic dean, made a similar point when explaining decaying morality with the consumption of coffee, figs, and chocolate truffles, introduced by return migrants: "A kivándorlás," *Zemplén*, 3 March 1901.
- 62 "Pusztuló nemzeti erkölcsök és szokások," *Szamos*, 24 May 1903.
- 63 Löherer, *Az amerikai kivándorlás*, 116.
- 64 Majzik, *Hevesvármegye alispánjának jelentése*, 26.
- 65 Gerényi, *Az amerikai kivándorlás*, 47.
- 66 Szabó, *A magyar oroszokról*, 248–50. At the same time, he also feared that the baggage Ruthenian migrants carried back would contain conversion to Orthodoxy and Russian nationalism.
- 67 Wyman, *Round-Trip to America*, 147–8, 183–6.
- 68 Cinel, *National Integration*, 91–5.
- 69 Stauter-Halsted, "Return Migration," 47–8.

- 70 See the photo capturing their meeting in New York at Komjáthy, *A kitántorgott egyház*, unpaginated appendix.
- 71 Fejős, "Mert abban az időben lehetett vándorolni," 94.
- 72 Steiner, *The Immigrant Tide*, 69–71, 93–101.
- 73 Steiner, 67, 71; Szabó, *A magyar oroszokról*, 248; "Haraszthy főszolgabíró jelentése," *Zemplén*, 13 May, 1913; Horváth, "Kivándorlás," 82.
- 74 "Amerika Magyarországon," *Délmagyarország*, 20 September 1911. Migration expert Loránt Hegedüs also found farmers who, inspired by their American experience, invested in threshing machines and offered this service to other farmers: Hegedüs, "A dunántúli kivándorlás," 328.
- 75 On embracing financial knowledge, see Esch, "Migration," 176–8.
- 76 Vargyas, *Áj falu zenei élete*, 82–3.
- 77 In 1900, 278,000 people, less than 2 percent of the population, had life insurance in Hungary (though the number was increasing dynamically). Presumably this product was more popular with middle- or high-income urban dwellers. Milhoffer, *Magyarország közgazdasága*, 2:464.
- 78 Gerényi, *Az amerikai kivándorlás*, 95–6.
- 79 "Az amerikai prédikátorok," *Sárospataki Lapok*, 20 July 1885.
- 80 On the Hungarian Protestants' fears, see Szigeti, *És emlékezzél meg az útról*, 13–30. A warning of returning migrants affiliation with Adventism: "Figyelmeztetés," *Dunántúli Protestáns Lap*, 8 March 1914, 83; with Baptism: "Egyházi élet a Felvidéken," *Sárospataki Református Lapok*, 14 May 1922, 85.
- 81 Brady, "Transnational Conversions," 253–73.
- 82 Hofer and Fél, *Proper Peasants*, 300–1.
- 83 Braun, *A falu lélektana*, 46.
- 84 Horváth, "Kivándorlás," 82.
- 85 Nemes, "Ravaged Empire"; Balaton, "The Role of the Hungarian Government."
- 86 Nemes, *Another Hungary*.
- 87 Braun, *A falu lélektana*, 35.
- 88 Steidl, *On Many Routes*.