

HUNGARIAN STUDIES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

For the time being a full-fledged Hungarian program, i.e., Hungarian language teaching complemented by appropriate area courses is offered by two universities in the United States: Rutgers University in New Jersey and Indiana University at Bloomington.

The origin of the Hungarian Studies Program at Indiana University goes back to the time of World War II. Before the war Hungarian language, history, culture or civilization were never taught in post-secondary educational institutions in this country. Soon after the war started the administration in Washington realized that the country lacked experts in foreign areas and languages. This problem was recognized by U.S. Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, who in 1942 created an Army Specialised Training Program. On different university campuses this program provided intensive training in dozens of languages. Indiana University was selected as a center for teaching several Eurasian languages including Russian, Turkish, Finnish and Hungarian. A young Hungarian linguist Thomas A. Sebeok was hired to be in charge of the Hungarian and Finnish groups. Eventually he was made responsible for the entire operation.

Teaching Hungarian at Indiana University continued after World War II. Due to the work of Professor Sebeok, backed by the internationally-minded President of the University Herman B. Wells, a global variety of area-and-language programs took root. One of them was the Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies, including Finno-Ugric languages and linguistics. By the mid-1950s Professor Sebeok's attention turned to other fields of study; and Uralic and Altaic Studies were left to his colleagues. In the following years Hungarian language teaching and linguistic studies continued under the guidance of Professor Alo Raun, an Estonian refugee, who had studied at the Eötvös College in Budapest in the early 1930s and was a fluent in Hungarian.¹

Following the arrival from Cambridge University of Professor Denis Sinor during the academic year of 1962-1963, the Hungarian Studies Program at Indiana University witnessed a new upturn. In 1965 on Sinor's initiative the

* Presented at the 21st annual conference of the American Hungarian Educators' Association, Montclair State University, April 25-28, 1996

Program of Uralic and Altaic Studies was recognized as a graduate department with a full range of privileges. Denis Sinor was appointed the first Chairman of the Department and he held this position until 1981. Under his guidance the Hungarian Studies Program became a foundation stone of the curriculum in the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies (since 1993 Department of Central Eurasian Studies) and an organic part of Indiana University's curriculum. In addition to the teaching of language, the program has consisted of various history and literature courses, such as *History of Hungary up to 1526*, *History of Hungary after 1526*, *Hungary in the 20th Century*, *Hungarian Literature up to the 19th Century*, *Hungarian Literature in the 19th Century* and *Hungarian Literature in the 20th Century*. The history courses were taught by Professor Sinor himself, while teaching literature belonged to the duties of Professor Gustav Bayerle, who joined the Department in 1966. Although Gustav Bayerle's main professional fields have been Ottoman Turkish and Ottoman History, his involvement in the Hungarian Program was quite natural since he was not only a native Hungarian, but before leaving the country in 1956, he had studied Hungarian history and literature in Budapest as well. The third person who contributed to the development of the Hungarian Studies Program was Professor Gyula Décsy, who joined the Department in 1978. Aside from Finno-Ugric languages he offered courses in Hungarian linguistics focusing on the history of the language. Hungarian offerings on this scale had never existed and do not at present exist at any other university in the United States.

Although the relations between the United States and Hungary were far from friendly at that time, through the innovative efforts of Denis Sinor, the Department, beginning with 1968, regularly employed Hungarian language teachers directly from Hungary. Since that time the Hungarian language has been taught on three levels in Bloomington: elementary, intermediate and advanced. An important side benefit of this policy was that many young Hungarian men and women were thus offered the opportunity directly to experience American life and were also able to improve their knowledge of English in the last thirty years. Several of these language instructors have made good use of this opportunity; they have pursued excellent careers and at least one of them served Hungary abroad as an ambassador.²

The Hungarian Studies Program reached a new level in 1979 when an agreement was signed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Indiana University on the establishment of a Hungarian Chair. It was agreed that the Chair was to function within the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies and that the holder would have full professorial rank. In 1980, to create and sustain the Chair, the Hungarian Academy transferred to the University Foundation

a sum of 250,000 USD for the basic endowment. This action was, and remains, unparalleled in the relationship between the United States and any formerly socialist country. As for the university, it undertook to contribute to the operating budget of the Chair an annual amount not less than the earnings of the endowment for the same period. In fact, ever since that time the university has overfulfilled its obligation. The agreement also specified that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences would continuously contribute to the library of the Chair. The appointment of the Chair was assigned to a special search committee consisting of five members, two designated by the Hungarian Academy, two by Indiana University, and Denis Sinor the ex-officio Chairman.³

The first holder of the Chair Professor György Ránki, Deputy Director of the Institute of History and Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, began his work in the spring semester of 1981. Up to 1986 György Ránki spent both semesters on the campus. From 1986, however, when he was appointed Director of the Institute of History, until his unexpected death on February 19, 1988 Ránki was able to be in Bloomington only one semester in every year. In his absence Professor Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (1986), Professor Kálmán Kulcsár (1987) and Professor Tamás Bácskai (1988) taught courses. Since that time Professor Sinor has served as the coordinator of the Chair's activity.

After his arrival in Bloomington, György Ránki took over the teaching of Hungarian history from Denis Sinor. As Professor Sinor, he divided Hungarian history into three chronological sections: up to 1526, from 1526 to 1918, from 1918 up to the present. Moreover, he offered different, more specialized seminars on modern Hungarian history, culture and civilization. Since 1981, when he was appointed Chairman of the Department, Professor Bayerle has ceased to teach Hungarian literature. His job was partly and temporarily undertaken by a former graduate student: András Boros-Kazai.⁴

One of the main goals of Professor Ránki was to make Bloomington an internationally recognized conference center for Hungarian topics. During his tenure he organized a number of forums and symposiums - each with a clearly focused topic. He was able to gather on campus distinguished scholars from Hungary, the United States and other countries. The first such conference held in the spring of 1981, and its topic was *Hungarian History - World History*. The second one, held in the spring of 1982, focused on *Bartók and Kodály*. In order to make Hungarian topics and researchers better known in the United States, Professor Ránki launched the series *Indiana University Studies on Hungary*. The first volume, which contained the papers of the first conference, was published in 1984. The second, which appeared in 1987, included the presentations of the *Bartók-Kodály Symposium*. The third, published in 1989,

concentrated on Hungary's role in European civilization. All of these volumes were edited by György Ránki, published by the Hungarian Akadémiai Kiadó and supported by the Hungarian Chair. After Professor Ránki's death the series ceased to appear.⁵ We must not fail to mention, however, that the *Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series*, edited by Professor Sinor, has published several volumes on Hungarian topics as well, such as the English translation of Thuróczy János' *Chronicle of the Hungarians*.

After György Ránki's death in February 1988 the Chair was renamed the György Ránki Hungarian Chair. In the summer of 1988, Professor Sinor on behalf of Indiana University and Professor Kulcsár on behalf of the Academy agreed that the Chair be occupied by Professor Mihály Szegedy-Maszák of Eötvös Lóránd University, who - as mentioned above - had already spent a semester at the university. He stayed in Bloomington for three academic years. During his tenure the offerings of the Hungarian Studies Program underwent some modifications. As a distinguished literary scholar he placed more emphasis on literature and culture. He introduced new courses such as *Hungarian Literature to 1900*, *Modern Hungarian Literature*, *Hungary between 1890 and 1945*, *Hungary from 1945 to the Present*. A traditional part of the program, teaching Hungarian history, was shared between himself and Professor Bayerle, who rejoined the Hungarian Program by offering every second year a history course entitled *Hungarian History and Civilization to 1711*. As before, the offerings of the Hungarian Program have been enriched by the linguistics courses given by Professor Décsy. Since 1989 Professor Jeffrey Harlig has also taught Hungarian linguistics courses.

Mihály Szegedy-Maszák successfully continued the traditional organizational activity of the Chair. He was able to obtain significant subsidies for the program which made possible the organization of new conferences such as *National Identity and Culture: Hungarians in North America (1990)* and *The Life and Times of Ernő Dohnányi (1991)*. The presentations of the 1990 symposium were published in *Hungarian Studies*, a periodical of the International Association of Hungarian Studies, of which Professor Sinor has been member of the Board of Editors since 1985 and Professor Szegedy-Maszák has been editor since 1985, and editor-in-chief since 1988.⁶ The journal, which is now in its 12th year of publications, has occasionally been subsidized by the Hungarian Studies Program as well.

Another outstanding achievement of Mihály Szegedy-Maszák was to secure important private libraries of Hungarica for the Chair's library. The collections donated by the widow of Ambassador Aladár Szegedy-Maszák and Mr. Lajos Szathmáry are especially valuable. The Szegedy-Maszák Collection contains 4,500 volumes specializing mainly in the history of the Second World

War and American foreign policy. The Szathmáry Collection contains 5,000 books including many volumes of early twentieth-century Hungarian literary journals such as *Nyugat* and *Új Idők* and some rare Hungarian language cookbooks. Additionally, the Paul Marer Collection (about 3,000 items focusing on the Hungarian economy during the socialist period) and a 3,500 volume collection obtained from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and built continuously by Hungarian Chair Professors, deserve mention. The total holdings of the Hungarian Library now amount to 17,000 items and constitute an impressive research collection for Hungarian studies. The library is located in the Hungarian Institute, which was established in 1991 under the directorship of Professor Gustav Bayerle.

The University was so impressed by the teaching, scholarly reputation and achievements of Mihály Szegedy-Maszák that in the spring of 1991 he was offered a tenure full professorship by the Department of Comparative Literature. Professor Szegedy-Maszák accepted this offer, which meant that the Chair's budget no longer had to provide his salary. Since that time he has taught courses within the scope of the Department of Comparative Literature and the Department of Central Eurasian Studies as well.

In 1991 a new period began in the history of the Hungarian Chair. Unlike the previous practice, a one-year rotation was introduced. In the academic year of 1991-1992 the Chair's holder was Professor Csaba Pléh, a psycho-linguist and in 1992-1993 Professor László Csorba, a historian. In the fall of 1993 they were followed by Ignác Romsics, a historian, who arrived for one year, but remained 3 semesters and, after half a year break in the spring of 1995, returned for one more year in the fall of the same year. All three came from Eötvös Loránd University and taught *Hungarian History between 1890 and 1945*, and *Hungarian History from 1945 to the Present*. In addition to these basic courses they offered several more specialized seminars on different Hungarian or East European topics in accordance with their interests and specializations. Their teaching activity was complemented by the usual contributions of the Department's above mentioned Professors such as Gustav Bayerle (*Hungarian History and Civilization to 1711*), Gyula Décsy (linguistics) and Jeffrey Harlig (linguistics). Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, who has spent three semesters on the campus in the last five years, enriched the offerings of the Hungarian Studies Program as well. Beside some specialized subjects he usually taught modern Hungarian literature and culture. And there has always been, of course, a Hungarian language instructor from Hungary, who has continued to teach the Hungarian language on three levels.

During the last five years the Hungarian Chair has hosted three international conferences. The first one, held in April 1992, focused on modern Hungarian linguistics. Most of the papers presented at this conference were collected in a volume of the series called *Approaches to Hungarian*.¹ The second conference entitled *Religion and Churches in Modern Hungary*, was held in April 1993. The papers presented were published in 1995 in a special issue of *Hungarian Studies*.⁸ The third conference took place in March 1994 and its participants lectured on different aspects of the theme *20th Century Hungary and the Great Powers*. The papers of the conference were published in two separate volumes; one in Hungarian and one in English in 1995. The English version appeared in a series of Atlantic Research and Publications, the Hungarian version in a series of the Teleki Foundation in Budapest.⁹

Since its foundation, the Department of Central Eurasian Studies has been a graduate department and, as such, an independent degree-granting academic unit. This means that it offers the degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, but does not offer B. A. or B. S. C. degrees. Nevertheless some of its courses, including all of the language courses, are open to undergraduates. This applies to all of the area studies programs within the Department including the Hungarian Studies Program. The requirements at the M. A. level combine two key features: knowledge of language and knowledge of various aspects of Hungarian Studies. Courses, which satisfy these requirements, include at least two Hungarian language courses (3 + 3 credit-hours) and at least three courses on Hungarian history, culture or civilization (9 credit-hours). Among the other required courses are an area survey course *Introduction to Central Eurasian Studies* (3 cr.), a professional research methodology course (3 cr.), and two électives or open courses (6 cr.). The total (minimum) credit-hours at the M. A. level are 30. The M. A. program is completed by the acceptance of a thesis, which should be not less than fifty and not more than seventy double-spaced pages of text and notes.

A candidate for a Ph. D. degree must have an M. A. degree in Hungarian Studies or fulfill the course requirements leading to that degree. In the latter case, the student must complete the Hungarian Studies Program's M. A. requirements for a total of 30 credit-hours. The total (minimum) credit hours at Ph. D. level are 60. To fulfill these requirements the candidates must take at least 7 relevant courses on Hungarian Studies (21 credit-hours); 4 focusing on history, culture or civilization and 3 dealing with language and/or linguistics. The Ph. D. program is completed by written and oral examinations, and by the defense of a dissertation.¹⁰

From 1965 to 1995 the Department granted nineteen M. A. degrees in Hungarian Studies (out of a total of 124) and six Ph. D. degrees (out of a total of 60). These figures indicate that in regard to M. A. theses the Hungarian Studies Program is second only to the Tibetan Program which awarded

twenty-three degrees; and in regard to Ph. D. dissertations to the Tibetan and Mongolian Programs with thirteen degrees each.¹¹

Of course most of the students involved in the Hungarian program have obtained neither Ph. D. nor M. A. degrees. Referring only to my personal experiences in 1993-1994 I had 30 enrollments in my courses, but only 3 of the students prepared an M. A. thesis under my guidance. In this academic year I have 20 enrollments, but I serve as thesis adviser for only two students. To these figures must be added the enrollments for the three language courses (10-15 students per semester) and the enrollments for the other courses offered by the Hungarian Program. All in all, the number of students involved in the Hungarian Studies Program (taking into account some overlaps) varies between 20 and 30. Some years ago, during the Golden Age of the Program, this figure was higher and we hope that it will be again.

Notes

1. Thomas A. Sebeok, "Uralic Studies and English for Hungarians at Indiana University: A Personal View," *Hungarian Studies* 7/1-2 (1991-1992): 149-152.
2. Based on interviews with Distinguished Professor Emeritus Denis Sinor and Professor Gustav Bayerle.
3. Megállapodás az Indiana Egyetemen létrehozandó Magyar Tanszékről. Cf. Sinor Dénes, Fókusz. *Magyar Tanszék az amerikai Középnnyugat szívében*, in *USA* (37/1982) 81-88.
4. Ibid.
5. György Ránki, ed., *Hungarian History - World History*, Indiana University Studies on Hungary 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984); György Ránki, ed., *Bartók and Kodály Revisited*, Indiana University Studies on Hungary 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), and György Ránki and Attila Pók, eds., *Hungary and European Civilization* Indiana University Studies on Hungary 3 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989).
6. *Hungarian Studies* 7/1-2 (1991-1992).
7. István Kenései and Csaba Pléh, eds, *Approaches to Hungarian*. Volume Four: *The Structure of Hungarian* (Szeged: J ATE, 1992).
8. *Hungarian Studies* 10/1 (1995).
9. Ignác Romsics, ed., *20th Century Hungary and the Great Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and Ignác Romsics, ed., *Magyarország és a nagyhatalmak* (Budapest: Teleki Alapítvány, 1995).
10. *Description of the Graduate Program of the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University* (Manuscript, 1994).
11. Greg Rogers "Breakdown of Ph. D. Dissertations and M. A. Theses in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies from 1965 to 1995" (Manuscript, 1996).