

GY. SZABAD

KOSSUTH ON THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA

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From 1789, the year of Washington's inauguration onwards, almost without exception the best of Hungary's politicians fighting for the termination of the feudal system, for alterations in the political structure and in Hungary's international status, watched the American developments with an interest far exceeding an interest in the exotic. That the U.S. appeared to them more and more as the successful example was expressed by the leading publicist of the Hungarian enlightenment,<sup>1</sup> who, examining the French political ferment, formulated his own desires in the spring of 1789 as follows: "Since America cast off the English yoke, and became a free society, every nation has yearned for that same golden liberty."<sup>2</sup>

From Joseph Hajnóczy (1750-1795), the greatest figure of the Hungarian enlightenment, and a martyr of the first Hungarian republican movement, to Count István Széchenyi (1780-1860), the leading figure at the close of the 1800's and 30's in the initial stages of the Hungarian reform movement, those who recognized the necessity of Hungary's transformation could no longer do without the American example.<sup>3</sup> However, even before the Reform Movement was organized, there appeared differences in the actual judgement of the applicability of the "example". Széchenyi, great as his enthusiasm was — especially in his youth — for numerous American personalities and institutions,<sup>4</sup> on Dec. 8 of 1825 "complained", according to Metternich — presumably not least of all from tactical considerations — "of the excesses of some of his young comrades, whose ideal was the American republic, and whom ... he wanted to convert".<sup>5</sup>

In the second half of the 1830's a generation appeared which, already at the beginning of the 1830's, was to declare itself openly to be a generation

<sup>1</sup> Széchenyi, *in New England...* with his speeches and the addresses that were made to him... (Ed. Jován, Proctor and Worthington). Boston, Cleveland, Ohio, 1932, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted originally: Szabóczy Szabolcs (1752-1815).

<sup>3</sup> *Magyar Korszak (Hungarian Courier)*, 27 May, 1789. Quoted by: S. Bokor: *A francia forradalom magyar ábrázolása (The Ideas of the French Revolution in Hungary)*. Budapest, 1949, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Magyar Közlöny (The Papers of the Hungarian Jacobins)*, Ed. K. Benda, Budapest, 1927, pp. 43-45, 226; Gy. Bónis: *Hajnóczy János*, Budapest, 1924, pp. 63, 104, 105-106, 1. Cit. Széchenyi and U. S. A. in: *Hungarian Studies in England*. London, 1942, pp. 73-74.

<sup>5</sup> *Magyar Közlöny*, pp. 98-104, 114 et. G. Barany: *Széchenyi István és az Amerikai Egyesült Államok*, *Magyar Nemzet*, 1794-1880, 20. évf. 1881. évf., pp. 85-87, 94, 109, 113-114, 120.

<sup>6</sup> *Magyar Közlöny*, *Benedek Graf Széchenyi Magyarországi Utazásának (Introduction to the second volume of Count Stephen Széchenyi's Travels in America)*, Budapest, 1926, p. LXXXIX.



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