



# FACT SHEETS ON HUNGARY

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## Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894)

Lajos Kossuth was born in Monok, Zemplén County, Hungary on September 19, 1802. The Kossuth family was one of the oldest gentry families of Upper Hungary, with a documented lineage going back to 1263. Lajos Kossuth's father, László Kossuth, was born in Turóc County in 1763 and moved to Zemplén in the 1780s where he became registrar of the Comitat, before being appointed by the Andrassy's as domanial procurator for the family's estate in Monok. The elder Kossuth married relatively late, in 1800 or thereabouts, taking as his wife the daughter, Karolina, of András Weber von Tyrling, the Lutheran postmaster of the village of Olaszliszka.

Educated in Sátoraljaújhely, Eperjes and Sárospatak, Lajos Kossuth excelled at his studies. Later he worked as a candidate lawyer in Eperjes and also in Pest, where he first came into contact with politics. In the course of his studies, he set about learning English having already mastered Latin, German and French. In September 1823 he finished his term of candidacy and returned to Zemplén to set up his own practice. In 1828-29 he participated in the census of taxpayers of Comitat Zemplén. As early as 1830-31 Kossuth frequently rose to speak at the General Assembly of the Comitat as a member of the reformist opposition. He also took a key role in suppressing the riot that broke out in the wake of the cholera epidemic during those years by taking a firm stand to head off rebellious peasants bent on devastating the town of

Sátoraljaújhely. By this time he had already been marked out as a potential adversary by local conservatives. However, in late 1831, early 1832 his negligent handling of an estate case deprived him of any further opportunity to advance at the local level.



As the representative of some leading aristocrats of Comitat Zemplén, he took part in the work of the Diet of Pozsony during the parliamentary session of 1832-36. He was a member of the Lower House of the Diet as legate of absents (ablegatus absentium) where he delivered several speeches. This was when he launched his manuscript journal "Országgyűlési Tudósítások" (Parliamentary Reports) for the information of those who delegated him and then for anyone interested in politics. Distributed by post, the handwritten paper was the first of its kind to convey reports in detail on the parliamentary work by eluding censorship. By so doing, Kossuth managed to irritate those in power while at the same time gaining nation-wide recognition, as well as making the acquaintance of key figures of the opposition such as Ferenc Kölcsey (1790-1838) and Miklós

Wesselényi (1796-1850). However, the most eminent politician of the opposition, Count István Széchenyi (1791-1860), had an aversion to him from the very beginning.

After the conclusion of the parliamentary session Kossuth launched another manuscript journal under the title "Törvényhatósági Tudósítások" (Municipal Records), in which he



*Kossuth and the first independent Hungarian banknotes*

covered the events of the General Assembly of the Comitatus for his subscribers. He wrote a series of articles in his journal reporting on the protests made when certain opposition figures of the parliamentary session of 1832-36 were indicted. The Government deemed such conduct intolerable. First it called upon Kossuth to discontinue his activities, and then it took action against him on the grounds of lese majesty. He was arrested on May 5, 1837, detained for some time, and then sentenced to a prison term of several years.

Kossuth's arrest caused general consternation and the stern Government action provoked a series of protests. Kossuth spent his time in jail thinking over his defence and pondering other matters. Shortly after his arrest, he asked his mother for some books and made every effort to stay in contact with the outside world. He also improved his command of the English language, translated and revised Samuel Wilderspin's work on infant care from German into Hungarian, and embarked upon the translation of Shakespeare's Macbeth, too. He regularly read various Hungarian and German newspapers to keep himself well informed. The letters he wrote to his parents from jail are among the finest of his literary activity; some of them contain complete treatises.

Thus prison confinement failed to crush Kossuth and, due to subsequent political changes, he did not have to serve the original term of four years. Three months after Kossuth's conviction the Diet reconvened on June 2, 1839 and the Lower House demanded, in its address to the

Crown, dismissal of all legal proceedings against Wesselényi, Kossuth and László Lovassy (1815-1892) and the release of those imprisoned. The Court had no choice but to give in to the pressure and Kossuth was discharged from prison on May 10, 1840. At the General Assembly of Comitatus Pest held on June 9, 1840 Kossuth thanked the people of the county for their persistent and active support.

During Kossuth's imprisonment, his father, László Kossuth, died on June 13, 1839. Thus Kossuth was forced to shoulder the burden of sustaining the family. On a private note, a major change took place in Kossuth's life in the summer of 1840, when he met Terézia Mészlányi, the daughter of a Catholic family of noble lineage from

Transdanubia. The acquaintance soon grew into love, and Kossuth wedded his fiancée on January 9, 1841.

Kossuth did not retire from political life even after his release. The Court, having decided that it was expedient to keep him in sight, gave Lajos Landerer (1800-1854), the owner of a printing plant, permission to offer Kossuth the post of editor-in-chief at the newspaper "Pesti Hírlap". Kossuth accepted and worked in that position from January 2, 1841 until the spring of 1844. He wrote numerous articles in an effort to disseminate the Kossuthian reformist ideas, and also to demonstrate the intolerable nature of the prevailing feudal conditions. Moreover, in the editing of his newspaper he relied heavily on members of the opposition. In line with the spirit of innovation he was the first to publish front-page editorials. Circulation increased sharply from the initial 60 up to 5000, making it the most widely read paper in the Habsburg Monarchy. The editorial position stabilized Kossuth's financial situation, too.

Kossuth's famous controversy with Széchenyi on the tactical direction to be followed by the reformist opposition emerged from the articles published in Pesti Hírlap. Széchenyi disagreed with Kossuth's overly determined tone and criticism, and was strongly against the straining of relations with Austria. Széchenyi first denounced Kossuth in his book "A kelet népe" (Nation of the East), followed by dozens of articles. Nevertheless, Kossuth managed to emerge as the winner by demonstrating that the majority of Széchenyi's

*"Lajos Kossuth, guardian of the nation" - caricature*



arguments could not be substantiated. In the controversy the greater part of the opposition sided with Kossuth.

Fed up with Kossuth's journalism, the Court in Vienna decided, late in 1843, to order Landerer to break with his editor. According to the instructions received, Landerer provoked a financial dispute forcing Kossuth to resign his editorial post. Kossuth's attempts to obtain a licence to start another newspaper were in vain; the Government maintained its unyielding attitude and refused to issue the permit. Forced to give up the propagation of the reform ideas in written form, Kossuth had to look elsewhere to make a living. He then launched various business enterprises, the most notable one being the Országos Védegyelet (National Society for Protection), established in 1844, the aim of which was to promote the development of domestic industry and trade by adopting protectionist policies in the tariff system. Kossuth was concerned that if Austria joined the German customs union (Zollverein), Hungarian industry and trade would not be able to compete with better quality German-made goods. That was why he proposed the policy of protective tariffs. Though the majority of Kossuth's economic initiatives failed or ended with only moderate success, their presence in principle had a beneficial effect manifested in the strengthening of the organization of the opposition.

Kossuth was firmly convinced that the civil transformation of Hungarian society could only succeed through the radical elimination of serfdom. In his opinion, this was the only way to avoid a civil war that might threaten the very existence of the nobility and the nation. The aim of the programme for the reconciliation of interests, in the drafting of which he took an active part, was that the Hungarian nobility should lead the civil transformation process, and that the country must preserve its independence. When the conservatives founded their own party, Kossuth proposed the organization of a united party of the opposition backing a single political programme. Both Ferenc Deák (1803-1876) and Kossuth had leading roles in the creation of this manifesto. Count Lajos Batthyány (1806-1849) was elected to lead the new opposition party. Kossuth took part in the work of the parliamentary session of 1847-48 as the legate of Comitatus Pest. The Government did everything in its power to prevent Kossuth from being elected, to no avail.

However, the opposition, in the majority in the Lower House of the Diet, found all their efforts blocked by the Upper House. The opposition struggle for reform in Parliament was led by Kossuth in the Lower and by Batthyány in the Upper

The great chance came with the revolutions that broke out throughout Europe in 1848. Leaders of the opposition professing more radical views, Kossuth and Batthyány, were of the opinion that the impaired state of foreign affairs of the



*Kossuth on his recruitment drive in the autumn of 1848*

House. In January and February of 1848, certain segments of the opposition showed an inclination towards making a pact with Vienna, but unity was soon restored through Kossuth's intervention.

Empire offered an opportunity that should be used for the implementation of the reform opposition's programme. Towards the end of February they were prepared to approach the Monarch with a request to

*Kossuth presenting the flags captured at Ozora in Parliament on October 8, 1848*



instruct the Government to restore peace, and to tell him that the only way he could do that would be to grant the nations of the Crown their own constitution. "Do not suppress the Italian freedom at the costly sacrifice of Hungarian blood." These demands well demonstrated both the wide foreign policy perspective and the common sense of the Hungarian opposition. Batthyány and Kossuth were convinced that the freedom of Hungary could be based on a firm foundation only if the hereditary provinces were also put under constitutional government, for the conflicting interests of the two halves of the Empire could be settled only on a common political platform. At this time Kossuth's proposal was not backed by the majority of the opposition. However, his intuition proved correct when, a few days later, news was received in Pozsony of the outbreak of the Parisian Revolution on the 1st of March. On the 3rd of March Kossuth presented his motion of historic importance, addressing the House as follows: "Let us raise our political stand to the level of prevailing circumstances". He demanded, in an implied manner to start with, the general and proportionate sharing of taxation, equality of political



*The battle of Kápolna, February 27, 1849*

rights, popular representation and an independent national government to be set up in Hungary. However, he did not confine himself to these demands alone. Being aware of the fact that he had been able to come forward with his claims only due to favourable changes in the state of foreign affairs, he called for a constitution

for the hereditary provinces of the Habsburg Empire, too.

The news of the Parisian Revolution shocked those in power. The financial situation of the Empire was, once again, critical, although the Crown could still count on military assistance from Nicholas I (1796-1855), the Tsar of all Russians. Nevertheless, Kossuth's speech, that was translated into German and printed, in which he demanded a constitution for the hereditary provinces of the Empire, created such a ferment in Vienna that rendered any high-handed reaction impossible. The revolution broke out in Vienna on the 13th of March; Klemens Metternich (1773-1859), the state chancellor, was forced to resign and go into exile, and the Monarch promised the nations of the Austrian Monarchy a constitution.

Undoubtedly, the revolution in Vienna came at the most opportune time for the Hungarian liberal opposition. However, the address to the Throne formulated on the basis of Kossuth's speech was set aside in the Upper House and aristocrats loyal to the Court left en masse for Vienna to make the convocation of the Upper House impossible. István Széchenyi, who was reckoned among the most determined political opponents of Kossuth, went as far as to offer to employ force against the reform opposition as a plenipotentiary royal commissioner. However, the revolution in Vienna radically altered the situation. The members of the Upper House accepted Kossuth's address to the Throne on the 14th of March and a parliamentary delegation delivered it to Vienna the day





presumed that the Kossuth song dates back to those days and the Kossuth cult took root at that time. Also, on his initiative, on September 27, 1848, Parliament declared the appointment of Ferenc Lamberg (1791-1848) as commander-in-chief illegal and invalid.

Following the murder of Lamberg and the resignation of the prime minister, Batthyány, Kossuth was elected by the House to be president of the Committee for National Defence. As of October 1848 this body exercised executive power, which meant that Kossuth became the political leader of the nation. In the second half of October 1848 he travelled to the Transdanubian region to win new recruits, and then convinced the Hungarian Army to cross the Lajta. After the Hungarian Army's defeat at Schwechat, he appointed General Artúr Görgei (1818-1916) as commander-in-chief of the Hungarian Army. In the autumn and winter of 1848 Kossuth assumed an important role in the military organization. Following the offensive launched by the Imperial and Royal Army, he proposed the relocation of the Hungarian Parliament and Government from Pest to Debrecen. His organizing abilities were vitally important in maintaining Hungarian resistance during the winter of 1849, and then in launching a successful campaign in the spring of 1849.

Having been informed of the so-called "forced constitution" issued in Olmütz on March 4, 1849, in which Francis Joseph I (1830-1916) partitioned Hungary, Kossuth decided to declare the country independent and the Habsburg Dynasty dethroned. (The Monarch intended to impose the Constitution of Olmütz primarily on the Hungarians in the spirit of his centralizing and Germanizing efforts. He sought to revive the Austrian Empire through this Constitution and to achieve German reunification under Austrian rule.) The victories accomplished during the Spring Campaign made the dethronement possible, which was declared, on the initiative of Kossuth, by Parliament on April 14, 1849. Kossuth was elected to act as Governor (regent) and perform the functions of head of state until his resignation on the 11th of August. (Hungary remained a kingdom in spite of the fact that a significant segment of the political forces urged the proclamation of a republic. Political developments in Europe turned Kossuth against this idea.) It was Kossuth who offered the ministerial portfolios to the majority of the members



*Kossuth's farewell to Hungary, August 1849*

of the new Government, and appointed Bertalan Szemere (1812-1869), another minister of the former Batthyány Government, to the prime minister's office on May 1, 1849.

Kossuth hoped that the Great Powers of Europe would recognize the independent Hungary. This hope proved illusory. Supported by 200,000 Russian soldiers, the Imperial and Royal forces launched another attack in the middle of June 1849. The situation prompted

Kossuth to act in haste, issuing one operational plan after the other in confusion. He offered the post of supreme commander to nearly every Hungarian general of repute. However, after the crucial battle fought with the Imperial and Royal troops at Temesvár on August 9, 1849, all hope of continuing the struggle vanished. On Görgei's demand, Kossuth resigned as regent on the 11th of August. He then elected to go into exile.

*Kossuth's arrival in Sumen*



His resignation also spelt the end of the Hungarian War of Independence. Kossuth and the majority of Hungarian politicians sought refuge abroad, in territories ruled by the Ottomans, first in Vidin and Sumen, Bulgaria. Russia and Austria demanded the extradition of these Hungarian refugees, which the Ottoman Empire flatly refused. Moreover, since both England and France backed this refusal, the conflict threatened to escalate into a war of continental dimensions. Finally, Austria and Russia backed off. However, the more illustrious Hungarian and Polish refugees were interned by the Turks in Kütahya where Kossuth authored his draft Constitution in April 1851 on the democratic reorganization of Hungary based on a self-government

with mixed population (mostly along the frontier zones), the nationalities would have formed, through the right of association, so-called “köz nemzeti egyesület” (approx. public nationality associations) conferred with corporate rights albeit without territorial ones. In this way the representation of the nationalities' interests could be achieved without employing the principle of territorial autonomy. Each settlement would have the right to select the official language of administration, but the minorities living there would also be entitled to manage their affairs in their respective languages. Things would have been the same in relation to the meetings of the county assemblies. Legislative power would be invested in the House of People's Representatives elected by the entire

Transylvanian Union. However, in answer to the Saxons' concerns, he wanted to invest the Saxon Széks (territorial units in Transylvania) as well as the Székely Széks with county authority. Concerning the matter of the south Hungarian territories of Voivodina that the Serbs laid claim to, Kossuth was of the opinion that as the Serbs did not have even a relative predominance in the region, there was no justification for the establishment of an independent Voivodina. Indeed, Kossuth also maintained there were no historical traditions to justify such a move. (In a later version of the draft Constitution of 1859, Kossuth was inclined to agree that the population of Transylvania had the right to decide in a referendum whether to maintain or dissolve the Union. However, he considered it vitally important that a potentially independent Transylvania should maintain its relations with Hungary on the basis of a personal union. Also in that version, Kossuth would have agreed to the establishment of Voivodina with a population of Serbian nationality.) The draft was one of the ideological predecessors of the draft of the Danubian Confederation published in 1862.

Kossuth and his fellows were permitted to leave Kütahya during the autumn of 1851. He travelled to England and then on to the United States where he tried to stimulate support for the cause of Hungary. His speeches – delivered in English – were given an enthusiastic reception. It was Kossuth's aim to persuade the English and American Governments to adopt the principle of “intervention for non-intervention”, which meant preventing any foreign state, e.g. the Russian Empire, intervening in the event of another war of independence in Hungary. One of Lincoln's most famous speeches, namely the Gettysburg Address of 1863, has echoes of Kossuth's interpretation of democracy as expounded in one of his speeches: “The spirit of our age is Democracy. All for the people and all by the people. Nothing about the people without the people. That is democracy, and that is the ruling tendency of the spirit of our age.”

One of Kossuth's goals was to become leader of the Hungarian emigrants. His arrogant manners, however, alienated a considerable number of people. In the early years of his exile, Kossuth fostered many illusions. He launched a number of secret initiatives, each and every one of which failed. On account of these debacles Kossuth finally admitted that he



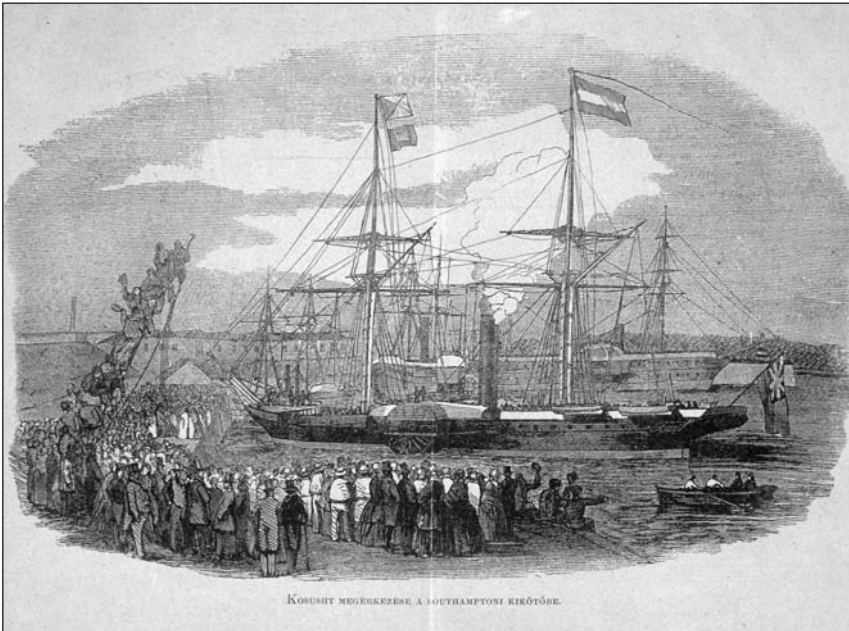
*Execution of Prime Minister Lajos Batthyány, October 6, 1849*

system. The plan called for equal treatment of the various nationalities without compromising the territorial integrity of Hungary.

In Kossuth's view, universal suffrage did not in itself guarantee basic individual and corporate freedoms if the sovereign power of the people was represented by Parliament alone and the Government was vested with exaggerated power. Therefore, he argued, the principle of popular sovereignty should be accompanied by the principle of self-government. Individual rights should be set forth in the Constitution and should not be subject to any amendment or abolition by the legislature. In the territories of Hungary

population in election wards and the House of Senators delegated by each county assembly. Under Kossuth's scheme, legislative power would not have had the right to directly instruct county officials, only to address decrees to the meetings of the county assemblies where objections could have been raised against them.

In Kossuth's opinion, these guarantees were sufficient to render Hungary's internal federalization unnecessary. On the other hand, he re-emphasized that he was inclined to accept the secession of Croatia and Slavonia. With regard to Transylvania, he argued that as there were no ethnic Transylvanians, that was no reason for the revision of the



*Kossuth arrives at the quay at Southampton, October 1851*



*Souvenir postcard of Kossuth's trip to America*

was wrong and conspiracy was not the way to end Austrian rule in Hungary. At the time of the Crimean War of 1853-55, he cherished the hope that Austria would intervene in the conflict, in which case the Great Powers might then avail themselves of the help of Hungarian emigrants and in return provide assistance for the restoration of Hungarian independence. However, Austria stayed out of the war.

The first promising opportunity surfaced in 1859 when French Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873) formed an alliance with the Italian Kingdom of Piedmont. Kossuth was also drawn into the anti-Austrian talks. Then Kossuth, László Teleki (1811-1861) and György Klapka (1820-1892) set up the Hungarian National Directorate. They were hoping that Napoleon III would not be satisfied only by defeating Austria, and would restore Hungary's independence as well. That is why Kossuth made a point that the declaration of the next war of independence in Hungary would only come once French forces were already on Hungarian soil. The allied army of France and Piedmont defeated the Imperial and Royal Army at the Battle of Solferino. However, Napoleon III signed a peace treaty with Austria shortly after. A Hungarian Legion was set up to assist the Italian troops, but it never saw action on account of the speedy restoration of peace.

However, Kossuth refused to give up his hopes; he then attempted to liberate Hungary from Austrian rule by offering an alliance first with the Italian and then the German unionist movements. Kossuth and Klapka drafted the plan of the alliance of the peoples of the Danube Basin, the Danubian Confederation, in 1862. According to plans, this state was to be an alliance between Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia, all having equal rights. Internal sovereignty of the allies would have been guaranteed in a way that the alliance itself worked in parallel as a strong power providing efficient defence against external attacks.

The ideological roots of this plan went back to the end of the 18th century and were connected with two factors. One was that the internal equilibrium of the Habsburg Empire had been upset as a consequence of the evolution into a civil nation. The other factor was that only a strong federal state of Central and Eastern European nations would be able to



assume the role the Habsburg or Ottoman Empire played in the European balance of power should either or both of these empires collapse, fall apart or reform, as well as counterbalance Russia's imperial ambitions.

Confederate notions were split into two camps. The first one contained ideas which aimed at the internal federalization of the Habsburg Empire, while the second preferred the incorporation of some additional territories, situated outside the Empire's borders, into the federative state. The former concept was expressed by the Hungarian Jacobeans in 1794, and then in Miklós Wesselényi's work titled "Proclamation for the Cause of Hungarian and Slav Nationalities" (1843). Published as early as in February 1848, ideas included in the second type comprise, among others, the Kossuthian approach that envisaged a Hungarian future only in collaboration with the southern Slavic nations. Drawn up by the Batthyány Government, the concept of the so-called "Greater Hungary" of 1848 aimed at – in the case where the provinces

of the Habsburg Empire with German-speaking population would have joined the unified German state – the unification of the remaining territories of the Empire with a centre situated in Hungary, the revival of an independent Poland and the extension of the empire's sphere of interest over southern Slavic and Romanian territories.

In 1849, László Teleki was already engaged in discussions in Paris with Polish, Romanian and Czech politicians on the internal federative reformation of Hungary. It was also suggested by Teleki that Hungary should form a confederate state with the small states of Central and Eastern Europe such as Wallachia, Moldavia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Bohemia and Moravia. The Romanian exiles went even further when they thought to find a better way of solving the problem of the Hungarian nationalities by annexing Hungarian territories inhabited by nationalities to the neighbouring kin states.

Kossuth was of the opinion that the only way to solve nationality problems

was to form a federative state with the neighbouring countries and nations. His plan of 1850 outlined a confederation of the territories inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, Croats, Slavonians, Serbs, Dalmatians and Romanians. His confederate dreams would have been built on common national defence, customs frontiers and diplomatic policies of totally autonomous constituent states with a capital in Hungary and a Federal Council to ensure that each state and nationality received representation according to the size of its territory and population. Considering that the Serbian and Romanian Principalities were under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire, Kossuth deemed it necessary to seek Ottoman approval for his confederation. Searching for the causes of the nationality problems and trying to find solutions, Kossuth maintained that Hungary's subdivision into counties should, as far as possible, follow the nationality pattern. This approach also implied an internal federation of

Hungary without breaking up the country's territorial integrity. Details of this plan were drawn up in the Draft Constitution prepared in Kütahya in 1851.

In 1855 György Klapka outlined the plans of a Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian federation, and he indicated his readiness to recognize Croatia's and Transylvania's

to be made up of Hungary, Transylvania, Romania, Croatia and, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia and the remaining southern Slav countries. According to the concept, the confederation would have had common defence, foreign policy, foreign representation, commercial and customs systems, channels of communication,

either unicameral or bicameral. In the latter case, the members would have been delegated to the House of Representatives in proportion to the population of each state, while each one of them would have been represented in the Senate by an equal number of senators. The Federal Council, elected by Parliament, would have been vested with the right to exercise executive powers. The official language of the Confederation would have been determined by Parliament, but each state would have had its own language for internal use. The Government would have resided in the capitals of the states in rotation. The head of the state in which the Government resided would also have acted as the President of the Confederation. In its internal affairs and government, each state would have enjoyed total independence on the proviso that its Constitution did not conflict with the basic principles adopted by the Confederation. Military contingents of the states would have been stipulated in the Treaty of Confederation, but each state would have been permitted to maintain additional forces. In peacetime, no armed forces of any of the states would have been stationed on the others' territories, and even the Federal Government would have had no right to withdraw a state's own troops from the territory. The list of federal fortresses would have been compiled by the Federal Government in power, but military forces of another state would have been permitted to be stationed in them in war-time only. Members of the Federal Parliament were planned to be elected by the Parliaments of the states. Decisions reached by the federal executive power would have been mandatory, and the Governments of the states obliged to enforce them. Kossuth proposed French as the official language of the Confederation.

Kossuth's concept was received with little enthusiasm in Hungary and in the states concerned. Concessions made in the plan were deemed too generous by Hungarian politicians, and too little by the Serbs and Romanians. There were increasing calls within the general public in Hungary for a compromise with Austria.

Political failures were further aggravated by tragedies in Kossuth's private life. His daughter, Vilma, who had been suffering from pulmonary complaints for years, died in Nervi on

total independence. He also suggested, in 1862, the idea of a confederation of nations of the Danube Basin, on which Kossuth expressed an opinion of his own. His reflections were then collected and published to form the best known concept of the Danubian Confederation to the present day. The main point of the draft signed by Kossuth was a federation

currency, weights and measures. Matters concerning land forces and the navy, fortresses and military ports would also have fallen within the competence of the federal authorities. The states within the federal alliance would not have been granted the right to delegate representatives of their own to foreign powers. Parliament would have been



April 22, 1862. She was buried in the English Cemetery in San Benigno, Genoa. On September 1, 1865 Kossuth's wife, Terézia Meszlényi also died in Turin. She was buried in Genoa, alongside her daughter who had been laid to rest there just three and a half years before. Following his wife's death Kossuth conducted his correspondence on mourning-edged paper for the rest of his life.

Kossuth's ambition to unite the Central European nations and to frustrate the plan of the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise failed because the majority of the European Great Powers were interested in the maintenance of the unity of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the meantime the situation had changed in Hungary, too. The idea of the compromise with the Austrians, represented by Ferenc Deák, was winning ever-increasing support. Austria became entangled in a war with Prussia and Italy in the summer of 1866 and the Austrian army suffered a catastrophic defeat by the Prussians at Königgrätz. Austria's defeat speeded the talks on the compromise with Hungary. However, Deák and his followers demanded no more after Austria's defeat than before. In vain did Kossuth launch a press campaign protesting against the imminent treaty of compromise, and in vain did he argue that Hungary would by that compromise tie its fate to that of an empire doomed to destruction. The country was behind Deák. Most emigrants were also satisfied with the work of the compromise and Kossuth was gradually deserted.

Kossuth did not return to Hungary even after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. In his remaining years he continued voicing criticism of the compromise. His long letters prove that he had a better insight into Hungarian political events than his contemporaries living in Hungary. In one of his last letters, he called upon the leaders of the Hungarian opposition to vote for the ecclesiastical policy bills on the registration of marriages by civilian authorities and the segregation of the Church and the state. Facing worsening financial difficulties, once again he was forced to earn his living by intellectual work. The first three volumes of his papers written in the years of emigration were published in the 1880s. Later on he was reduced to selling off his private library. He worked right up until his death in 1894. He was given a



PARLAGHY (M<sup>me</sup> V.). *Portrait de M. Lajos de Kossuth*

magnificent funeral in Hungary which also became a political event, a silent demonstration against the dualistic regime.

Even during his lifetime Kossuth was surrounded by myths and legends. Hundreds of poems were written about and to him in the reform era, during the War of Independence, the era of

despotism and dualism. And not only by Hungarians but German, French, English and American poets, too. His role in 1848-49 was sung in hundreds of folk songs and sagas. No other politician won the hearts of the Hungarian people as Kossuth did. This attachment turned all his personal belongings into relics, as well as the bank notes bearing his

*Burial of Kossuth*



signature, the so-called “Kossuth-bankó”. His characteristic style of beard (Newgate fringe) and even a type of hat were named after him, as was Hungary's small coat of arms without the crown which was given the name “Kossuth Arms”.

The cult's beginning goes back to the spring of 1848 when the abolition of serfdom suddenly made his name famous and beloved in all corners of Hungary. Another landmark was September and October of 1848 when tens of thousands were captivated by his unparalleled public speaking abilities exhibited on his recruiting tours. The enemy itself gave this cult a considerable boost by attributing the whole revolutionary transformation in Hungary to Kossuth and his fellows. A large part of Hungarian society after 1849 expected that all the problems of the country would be solved by Kossuth's return. After 1867 there were some who tried to square the Kossuth cult with loyalty to Francis Joseph I. Kossuth's death in 1894 resulted in his cult gradually waning, and finally it suffered a terrible, almost fatal, blow when the dictatorship of the 1950s declared him one of its “official saints”.

Statues erected in honour of Kossuth in the second half of the 19th century are imperishable marks of the manifestation of his cult. The main streets in hundreds of Hungarian settlements have been named after him, and hundreds of scientific and popular biographies, as well as countless novels, treasure the memory of Kossuth, the “Moses of Hungary”.

Kossuth is deservedly considered one of the creators of modern Hungary. In his last important paper, he marked out his own place in the history of Hungary of the 19th century with incredible accuracy: “The hands of the clock do not affect the course of time, they just indicate it; my name is just such a hand, telling the time that will come and that is bound to come if the Hungarian nation is permitted a future by fate, and the name of that future is 'free Hungary, the land of free citizens' and named 'state sovereignty' ”.

Innumerable lessons can be drawn from Kossuth's career and oeuvre. He was a genuine polymath of public life, interested in anything that might have the slightest bearing upon politics, be it economics, diplomacy, education or military affairs. However, there was one



*Allegorical picture made to mark the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution and War of Independence. Underneath are portraits of Sándor Petőfi, Lajos Kossuth, István Széchenyi, Lajos Batthyány, Ferenc Deák, János Jeszenák and Zsigmond Perényi*

thing in his life that has received less attention. Notably, that Kossuth was perhaps the very first professional politician of his era, a man who was in his element when engaged in politics. All of his great fellow combatants or opponents could find their place and account in the civil society of Hungary. Széchenyi, Wesselényi and Batthyány as big landowners, Kölcsey and Deák as medium landowners. Politics were not a mere passion for Kossuth but the source of his livelihood as well. But, most important of all, politics were adapted by

Kossuth to the ideas, and not the ideas to the politics. He was not, however, just a man of noble ideas; as a born politician, he was able to realize them as well. He did not insist on unrealizable concepts, but at the same time he held dear some ideas that were never sacrificed in the name of practicality, such as: self-government, autonomy and equality before the law. Ideas that mark and have always marked the independent and democratic Hungary.

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