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## US Hungarian Refugee Policy, 1956–1957

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### INTRODUCTION

The United States did not politically intervene during the Hungarian revolution that began on October 23, 1956,<sup>1</sup> but it swiftly accepted more Hungarian refugees than any other country.<sup>2</sup> The first airplane, which carried sixty refugees, arrived at McGuire Air Force Base located in Burlington County, New Jersey, on November 21, 1956, only seventeen days after the capital was occupied by Soviet forces, and were welcomed by the Secretary of the Army and other dignitaries.<sup>3</sup> A special refugee program, created to help meet the emergency, brought 21,500 refugees to the United States in a period of weeks. By May 1, 1957, 32,075 refugees had reached US shores. The United States ultimately accepted approximately 38,000 Hungarian refugees within a year following the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The acceptance of Hungarian refugees took place within the framework of existing immigration laws, along with the Refugee Relief Act of 1953. The State Department's Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs developed this program to bring Hungarians to the United States.<sup>5</sup> The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, known as the McCarran-Walter Act, permitted entry by a quota system based on nationalities and regions, and only 865 people from Hungary could be accepted each year. The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration expanded the quota by adopting the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, which extended 214,000 special immigration visas over

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and above the existing quota limits over a three-year period.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the government had expanded the reception quota by introducing the concept of “parole,” temporary entry permission without the normally required documentation, based on a decision of the Attorney General, because the Refugee Relief Act would expire in December 1956. With the launching of Operation Mercy, President Eisenhower offered asylum to Hungarian refugees in the form of 21,500 visas: 6,500 under the Refugee Relief Act and 15,000 as “parolees” under section 212 (d) (5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.<sup>7</sup>

Congress strongly criticized the administration’s actions, and as a result it became difficult to accept further Hungarian refugees, accelerating the termination of the Hungarian refugee program. The opponents objected to the government’s admissions policy because Hungarian refugees were former Communists; also, active Communists could infiltrate the United States along with the refugees.<sup>8</sup> Congressman Francis E. Walter, a Democrat from Pennsylvania and chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization,<sup>9</sup> warned that many Communists were entering the country disguised as “freedom fighters” along with some who were seeking economic opportunity.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief established by President Eisenhower on December 12, 1956, received numerous letters from US citizens expressing concern that the refugees might become a public burden or deprive Americans of employment.<sup>11</sup>

Given these objections, how is it that the United States was able to accept such a large number of Hungarian refugees? It is a matter of common knowledge that during the Cold War the United States took the initiative to accept refugees from Communist countries as a form of anti-Communist propaganda directed at home and abroad. Some scholars continue to view refugee affairs in the light of the Cold War. For example, Carl J. Bon Tempo, in a book that discusses the tangled domestic and international history of US refugee accommodation during the Cold War, insists that the US decision to assist Hungarian refugees was largely driven by foreign policy concerns of the day, that is, anti-Communism.<sup>12</sup> He argues that the Eisenhower administration used propaganda about Hungarian Americanization to promote their acceptance in opposition to those who favored immigration restrictions.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the intense media propaganda barrage in favor of refugee relief undertaken by the government greatly influenced American society.

However, anti-Communism was not the sole reason why American

society accepted so many Hungarian refugees. Hungarian refugee policy not only supported accepting refugees from the Soviet bloc for reasons of anti-Communism but also because it benefitted a wide range of organizations and individuals in American society, including government agencies, foundations, private corporations, voluntary agencies, and individual citizens.

Instead of directly supporting refugees, the government ensured that the various organizations and individuals co-operated effectively to provide the refugees with means for making a living. At the same time, organizations and individuals aimed at expanding their international and domestic influence and/or contribution to American society by participating in the governmental refugee support system. The various motivations of organizations and individuals were compatible with official anti-Communist propaganda during the Cold War.

In describing American society in the 1950s, historian Jennifer A. Delton explains how, despite Eisenhower's self-professed conservatism, his administration maintained liberal social policies to prevent the spread of Communism at home and to fight the Cold War abroad. She describes that liberal agenda as a commitment to the idea that centralized state power could be a progressive, benevolent, unifying force in a democratic society, one that could control the vicissitudes of modern capitalism and help the nation deliver its promise of liberty, equality, and prosperity for all.<sup>14</sup> She indicates that postwar liberals had "a belief in using state power for social ends, a rejection of 'rugged individualism,' and a group-based conception of society."<sup>15</sup> I adopt Delton's definition of "liberal" in this article and, in addition, pay attention to the internationalist refugee policy of the Eisenhower administration. Because the government and various institutions held liberal views, they accepted and supported Hungarian refugees.

In this article I explore how the United States accepted such a vast number of Hungarian refugees between 1956 and 1957. I concentrate on the roles and motivations of various American institutions in accepting and supporting them. Section One clarifies the backgrounds and characteristics of the Hungarian refugees. Section Two examines how the president's special committee and nongovernmental foundations implemented refugee acceptance and support policies for scientists, professionals, and students. Section Three discusses the support provided by voluntary agencies and individual US citizens.

## I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNGARIAN REFUGEES

The primary reason why so many Hungarians arrived in the United States was the suppression of the Hungarian uprising by Soviet forces in 1956. There certainly were other motivations—political, economic, and social—for them to leave their country. Many refugees who fled to neighboring countries sought asylum in the United States. Apart from those having relatives who had already emigrated to the United States, there were those who desired the material affluence to be found in America and were influenced by propaganda regarding the American dream that with effort everyone could succeed and become rich.

The following incident, however, was what primarily prompted people to leave Hungary. In October 1956, university students began to organize opposition to the Communist regime in several Hungarian cities.<sup>16</sup> The revolution was formalized when students at the Technical University of Budapest issued a sixteen-point declaration demanding changes in national policy. The ÁVH (Államvédelmi Hatóság), Hungarian secret security forces, intervened and turned the peaceful demonstration of October 23, 1956, into a bloody revolution. Members of the workers' committees and other citizens later joined the students to demand the withdrawal of Soviet forces, which had been permitted to stay in Hungary in accord with the Paris Peace Treaties in 1947, the COMECON mutual assistance treaty in 1949, and the Warsaw Pact Organization in 1955. They demanded freedom of speech and free elections. Soon after Soviet forces entered Hungarian territory, reformist prime minister Imre Nagy declared Hungary's neutrality and withdrew from the Warsaw Pact on November 1, 1956. After a fierce battle lasting ten days, the revolutionaries succumbed to the Soviets. Contrary to Nagy and his fellow revolutionaries' expectations, the United States and other Western European countries did not step in to support the revolutionaries' military action.<sup>17</sup>

Statistics by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office reveal that highly educated and skilled citizens departed from the country after the revolution, with more than 200,000 Hungarians escaping to foreign territories.<sup>18</sup> Over the next few years, until January 1959, an estimated 179,000 more fled to Austria, 19,900 to Yugoslavia, and more than 1,000 to other countries.<sup>19</sup> Among them, 67 percent were men and 40 percent were aged fifteen to twenty-four. In terms of occupation, blue-collar workers accounted for 63.5 percent, and among them, more than half were industrially skilled workers. White-collar workers accounted for 25.4 percent; among them, 21.2 percent

were engineers and technicians, while others were educators, medical doctors, intellectuals, and artists. More than 3,000 college and university students illegally departed Hungary; among them 40 percent were in technical fields, 22 percent were in agriculture, and 14 percent were in arts and sciences.

The motivations of those who left Hungary involved several interwoven, randomly connected factors. Julianna Puskás has identified the following three motivators. First, there was a fear of retaliation against those who participated in the armed uprising. Second, there were the negative aspects of the pre-1956 political situation, including social and economic disadvantages and fear of repression or imprisonment. Third, there were personal reasons such as psychological factors, individual character traits, and events in an individual's life history.<sup>20</sup> Though political reasons were important, economic and personal reasons are worthy of attention as well.

Most Hungarian refugees hoped to emigrate to the United States. The refugees, who were provided protection by the Austrian government, congregated at the US consulate in Vienna expecting to obtain US visas. Péter János Sós has highlighted two reasons why so many sought asylum in the United States.<sup>21</sup> First, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, a large number of Hungarians had immigrated to the United States. The refugees believed the existing social network of their relatives and acquaintances in the United States would support them in establishing new lives. Second, the American ideal, derived from material affluence, attracted them. For instance, they retained the image of US soldiers stationed in Western Europe handing out American-made food and stockings after the end of World War II. In addition, the idea of the American dream, a country of freedom and opportunity, was disseminated throughout Eastern Europe via American propaganda organs, the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, during the Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

It was necessary for the US government to decide how to accept such a vast number of refugees. I have discussed the legal acceptance measures for refugees in the introduction. In the next section I consider the acceptance and supporting policies that were implemented.

## II. THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE AND THE ROLE OF FOUNDATIONS

The Eisenhower administration established the US President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, consisting of the Army, government agencies, cooperating organizations and voluntary agencies, to offer support to

Hungarian refugees. These organizations played the following roles: transporting refugees, setting up and operating camp facilities for them, and providing them with support, both material and otherwise. The President's Committee was responsible for coordinating and mediating between these agencies. Philanthropic institutions, the National Academy of Sciences of the United States (NAS), and leading firms provided people and funds for the selection of scientists, professionals, and university students of natural sciences. They achieved their purpose of acquiring top-rate talent by using the state's power to further American society according to their liberal ideas.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL COMMITTEE

During the final stages of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, President Eisenhower issued a statement accepting refugees from Hungary and encouraging Americans to fulfill their humanitarian duty as citizens of a free nation with the assistance of voluntary agencies and other humanitarian organizations.<sup>23</sup> One month later, on December 12, 1956, President Eisenhower established a special committee, the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief. Tracy Voorhees, a former Undersecretary of the Army and US adviser to NATO, was appointed the committee's chairman, with the expectation that his military experience in refugee administration would prove to be beneficial. The committee operated until May 1957.

The committee was assigned four duties and objectives.<sup>24</sup> First, it was to assist in every way possible the various religious and voluntary agencies engaged in working for Hungarian refugees. Second, it was to coordinate the efforts of these agencies, with special emphasis on those activities related to the resettlement of the refugees. The committee also served as a central point to which offers of homes and employment could be forwarded. Third, it was to coordinate the efforts of the voluntary agencies with the work of interested governmental departments. Fourth, it was not allowed to raise monetary aid itself for refugees.

Before the establishment of the President's Committee, the US Army transported the refugees to a facility prepared for them in Kilmer, New Jersey. The chief of the New Jersey Military District had placed the Joyce Kilmer Reception Center under the command of the US Refugee Reception Center on November 14, 1956, for this very purpose.<sup>25</sup> After Eisenhower announced the formation of the President's Committee, offices were opened in Washington, DC, and Camp Kilmer to organize government and voluntary agencies. At Kilmer, the Army housed and fed the refugees and,

when necessary, provided hospitalization and medical and dental care.

There were twenty-two governmental and voluntary agencies participating in the refugee reception and resettlement program at Kilmer.<sup>26</sup> These agencies were independent of one another and were directly responsible to their own individual headquarters, located either in New York or in Washington, DC. In order to improve coordination among these various groups, all of which were performing essential services, an organizational plan was agreed on for the Kilmer center.

The various agencies were divided into three groups: government agencies directly concerned with the resettlement program, voluntary agencies that were sponsoring refugees, and cooperating agencies that were not directly concerned with sponsoring refugees, such as the American National Red Cross, the National Academy of Sciences, the World University Service, and the Hungarian National Council. Leo C. Beebe from the Ford Motor Company was appointed vice-chairman of the office at Camp Kilmer, and employees of leading firms such as Standard Oil Company, IBM, and others were involved in administrative services such as public information, administrative services, data processing services, and educational services.<sup>27</sup>

#### SUPPORT FOR SCIENTISTS

The President's Committee prioritized the acceptance of scientists among the Hungarian refugees, and this process was directed by NAS. Throughout January and February 1957, letters arrived at NAS's office at Camp Kilmer from Hungarian scientists stranded in Austria, which could not afford to keep them.<sup>28</sup> NAS asked one of its members, Paul Alfred Weiss of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, to go to Vienna to investigate.<sup>29</sup> He reported that many of the refugees who had written to NAS had arrived in Austria after December 1, 1956, and thus were not eligible to enter the United States under the parole program. Since the number of refugees requesting parolee status was larger than could be accepted by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), post-December 1 arrivals were not considered true refugees of the revolution that took place in October. Therefore, Weiss proposed that NAS should establish an office in Vienna to help the scientists among the refugees to find professional opportunities in the United States. At the same time, Eisenhower expanded the reception quota via Operation Mercy, as discussed in the introduction.

Subsequently, NAS formed a team in cooperation with the American

Consul in Vienna and the representatives of the INS and began activities.<sup>30</sup> They distributed formal messages to the refugee camps, universities, and various offices frequently visited by refugees in Austria. The message, in English and Hungarian, invited the holders of an undergraduate degree or a doctorate degree in any of the natural sciences (physics, biology, medicine), mathematics, or engineering to apply to immigrate. NAS operated on both sides of the Atlantic in cooperation with the US Department of State and INS to assist and select the scientists from among the refugees. In the United States, a special division of the Kilmer Reception Center was created in conjunction with NAS, where Hungarian American scholars who had immigrated to the United States in the 1930s conducted assessments of the new refugees; among those doing the assessments were Nobel Prize-winning physiologist Albert Szent-Györgyi, theoretical physicist Eugene Paul Wigner, and mathematician Edward Teller.<sup>31</sup> The selected refugee scientists were offered employment at research institutions or universities in the United States.

There were two reasons why the philanthropic institutions and NAS conducted such an operation. First, following the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, the United States had accepted several East European scientists who subsequently contributed to the development of American science and technology. Second, during the 1950s, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation led the nation in the area of cultural diplomacy toward Europe. Both foundations played key roles not only in providing funds to Hungarian refugees but also in influencing the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration.<sup>32</sup> The foundations had their own humanitarian objectives, and during the Cold War, both foundations worked in close cooperation with the US government.

Nelson Rockefeller, special assistant to the president for foreign affairs, created the Special Studies Project funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 1956 to identify problems facing the United States and to define strategic goals for President Eisenhower. The reports published by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund maintained that the Communist rulers of the Soviet Union and China posed the greatest immediate threat to the United States.<sup>33</sup> To counteract the Soviet threat to the United States, they argued that economic development through education and a trained work force were essential.<sup>34</sup> In particular, the report asserted that improving science education in the United States was of critical importance.<sup>35</sup> In order to win the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the development of science, technology, and education were essential in both foreign and domestic policies. Hungarian refugees were

generally highly educated professionals and scientists whose skills coincided with the needs of US policy at the time.<sup>36</sup>

The Ford Foundation, which played a particularly international role, wanted European countries to be included in the aid program in 1951 for the Free University in West Berlin, founded in 1948 when Berlin's old university in the Soviet sector of the city become Stalinized.<sup>37</sup> After Shepard Stone was made director of the Ford Foundation's International Affairs Program in 1954,<sup>38</sup> he produced a memorandum on September 13, 1956, that stated that "the strengthening of Europe and of American-European relations is fundamental to the security and well-being of the United States and to the Foundation's interest in peace, freedom, and human progress."<sup>39</sup> After the Hungarian revolution, Stone immediately traveled to intervene on behalf of the refugees. For instance, on January 17, 1957, the president of the Ford Foundation authorized Stone to offer a grant of nearly ten thousand dollars for a bulldozer to clear snow-clogged mountain passes so the Hungarians could escape. In addition, the foundation conducted "Hungarian student intellectual refugee programs," which will be discussed in detail below.<sup>40</sup>

During the Cold War, the Rockefeller Foundation used grant funding to promote pro-Western social and political ideals and to counter anti-Americanism abroad.<sup>41</sup> Rockefeller's activities in Hungary began shortly after the foundation was established in 1913.<sup>42</sup> In the years following World War II and up to 1956, the Rockefeller Foundation did not work in Hungary because of the new regime's distrust of foreign institutions. This was reflected in problems with successfully transferring grant funds and obtaining visas for foundation officers to visit the country to identify and monitor potential projects.<sup>43</sup> After the 1956 revolution, however, the foundation provided large sums of money for Hungarian refugee aid.<sup>44</sup>

#### SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS

Not only Hungarian scientists but also professionals and university students attracted attention and gained acceptance. After inspecting the Kilmer Reception Center in January 1957, Vice President Richard Nixon stated in a report to the president that in terms of personal qualifications, the Hungarian refugees should be regarded as valuable assets rather than liabilities.<sup>45</sup> The final report of the Kilmer Reception Center also indicated that of the 30,673 Hungarian refugees received in the camp, one third were skilled workers, which was the same as the percentage computed by the Hungarian Statistical Office between 1956 and 1957, but there were more

professionals in the American group than in the groups of refugees who were accepted by other countries. Among the 294 highly educated professionals and scholars sampled, there were 58 medical doctors, 37 chemical experts, 34 lawyers and economists, 59 mechanics, 19 technical researchers, 16 electrical experts, 12 architectural experts, 12 mining engineers, 6 physicists, and 3 biologists who were settled in the United States.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the university and college students, an estimated 7,000, or one fifth, of all Hungarian university and college students left Hungary in 1956. Approximately 1,800 of them went to the United States. Most of them had completed their second or the third year of study in Hungary. A large number of them were specializing in natural sciences, an area in which the United States had a critical personnel shortage.<sup>47</sup>

In the beginning of this migration, the US Labor Department's Bureau of Employment Security played an important role by sending a team to Vienna to classify refugees by occupation and training.<sup>48</sup> At Kilmer, the Labor Department's processing center, staffed mainly by volunteer workers, tried to match as many men and women as possible to similar occupations as those they held in Hungary. Special employment information was provided to the doctors and the nurses who were refugees at Kilmer.<sup>49</sup> The refugee doctors who were MDs were instructed to allow immigrant doctors to gain positions in American hospitals, since an approved internship in the United States was a prerequisite for several licensure examinations for graduates from foreign medical schools. A procedure to find work, similar to what NAS had for scientists, was established for physicians through the American Medical Association.<sup>50</sup>

Hungarian refugee students of the natural sciences also received support. Most of the refugee students received scholarships to continue their studies from the governments of their host countries or from international organizations, such as the World University Student Service (WUS) and the Institute of International Education (IIE).<sup>51</sup> From the beginning of the exodus from Hungary, American educational institutions and organizations expressed their interest in helping Hungarian students. As a result, a cooperative program was established to place Hungarian students in American colleges and universities where scholarship opportunities were available. A total of 1,288 students had registered with the integrated IIE/WUS unit for scholarship placement by October 1, 1957.<sup>52</sup>

For training in English language, special centers were established and supervised by the IIE, with financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The IIE-WUS

joint committee spent \$296,500 on the Hungarian program between November 1956 and October 1, 1957.<sup>53</sup> Thus, selective and substantial subsidy support was provided not only to scientists but also to professionals and students specializing in natural sciences by government agencies and international organizations with the financial support of philanthropic institutions.

### III. THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

The voluntary agencies had a central position in the President's Committee to accept and support Hungarian refugees. They supported the refugees with the aid of local representatives and their networks. Hungarian American organizations and individuals directly interacted with the refugees, while other American citizens did volunteer work on each purpose. As discussed, the activities of various organizations and individuals in the United States were based on the liberal idea that progressive, benevolent, unifying forces benefitted American society and brought prosperity to all people.

#### VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

The voluntary agencies played a principal role in the reception and resettlement of Hungarian refugees. Their activities date back to World War II. In 1944, the American Council of Voluntary Agencies was established by the US government to work with the US Army in distributing supplies in occupied areas.<sup>54</sup> The administrator of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 recognized American religious and voluntary welfare agencies as organizations entitled to underwrite and endorse assurance of employment, housing, and support provided by individual sponsors of refugees. They were also recognized for this service in connection with the parole procedure for Hungarian refugees.<sup>55</sup> The President's Committee acknowledged these supporting agencies as most qualified in the country to assist refugees in adjusting to a new way of life, spiritually, materially, and physically.<sup>56</sup>

Many American volunteer organizations also went to Austria to support the refugees and participated in the relief activities because they had prior experience in refugee relief in Europe after World War II. When the refugee exodus from Hungary began, the larger agencies expanded their overseas staff in cities, including Salzburg, Vienna, and Linz, to receive refugees

immediately after they crossed the border from Hungary and to supervise preliminary processing before sending them to the United States. These organizations respected Austrian sovereignty and refrained from interfering in internal affairs; the acceptance of refugees and the official contact with the refugees was the domain of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior. The most important mission of these voluntary groups was to procure the appropriate material items for the refugees from Western Europe and sometimes from countries in Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup> The voluntary agencies provided funds, food, medicines, hospital supplies, clothing, blankets, bedding, and other necessities.<sup>58</sup> They assisted in refugee resettlement services, working closely with the US Escapee Program, which the government started in April 1952 to assist escapees from Soviet-dominated countries in Eastern Europe, and international agencies such as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),<sup>59</sup> and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

These volunteer agencies stationed officers not only in Austria and at the Kilmer Center but throughout the United States to maintain an orderly flow of refugees from Austria to American communities.<sup>60</sup> Following government examination and registration at the reception center, refugees would go to their volunteer sponsoring agency. Most parolee refugees were not sponsored when they arrived at the Kilmer Center, in contrast to visa refugees who were sponsored when they left Austria. The agencies that were involved included Catholic, Jewish, and Lutheran religious denominations as well as nonsectarian organizations such as the American Hungarian Federation, the Tolstoy Foundation, and the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee.

The large church agencies resettled refugees through their clergy and lay workers in local American communities. Generally, it was the responsibility of these local representatives to find housing and employment for the refugees and to integrate them into the community. According to a document at the Kilmer Center dated February 7, 1957, the total number of refugees that arrived was 24,404, and 22,558 of them were resettled by voluntary agencies. The largest agency, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, accepted the maximum number, 14,231 refugees, and resettled 13,026.<sup>61</sup>

The voluntary agencies were expected to support the refugees by providing employment where they resettled. Vice President Nixon received a letter from a refugee resettled in Cleveland, Ohio, who asked the President's Committee for employment assistance.<sup>62</sup> Nixon in reply

suggested that the person contact the local office of the United States Employment Service accompanied by the local representative of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, since they had assisted in the person's resettlement.

Indeed, when the President's Committee received information that refugees remained unemployed after resettlement, they kept in close contact with the supporting agencies and the Bureau of Employment Security, US Department of Labor. For instance, the committee received information that the employment situation in Detroit, Michigan, had deteriorated in early April 1957.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, they inquired the various supporting agencies and the Bureau of Employment Security concerning the unemployment situation in Detroit. In turn, the six supporting agencies queried their Detroit representatives and reported the employment or unemployment situation to the committee, mentioning the individual names of the accepted refugees.<sup>64</sup> This case shows that the President's Committee functioned effectively during the resettlement process of refugees. When difficulties arose, the supporting agencies worked with their local representatives to resettle refugees.

According to reports from the supporting agencies, the network of religious denominations and kinship ties played an indispensable role in providing employment for refugees. For instance, Catholic Relief Services reported that twenty-five men were still being fed at their shelter but that they would be employed in Detroit shortly. Meanwhile, a small number of Hungarian refugees who could not find work in Detroit moved to Florida.<sup>65</sup> In addition, according to the report of the International Rescue Committee, one Hungarian refugee who joined his relatives living in Detroit found a job; another, who initially stayed with his relatives in New York City, moved to Detroit where his mother was living and found work assisting his father-in-law.<sup>66</sup> In this way, religious denominations and relatives arranged for the employment of refugees and cared for them.

Hungarian American organizations played a complementary role to the sponsoring agencies. The Hungarian National Council organized a committee to provide clothes, dictionaries, Hungarian newspapers, and other literature to the refugees.<sup>67</sup> Besides material help, the Hungarian National Council assisted refugees by giving them advice, moral support, and an opportunity to unburden themselves of their apprehensions. The council also assisted them in establishing contact with their close relatives or friends in the United States. However, the council was not a sponsoring agency; all sponsors and employment offers received by the council had to be

forwarded to the President's Committee. The council believed that they provided the most valuable help to the refugees since their entire staff consisted of Hungarians who had escaped or left Hungary in the recent past under similar circumstances as the refugees. Thus, they were in a position to understand and respond to their struggles better than almost anyone else.

## VOLUNTEERS

Although the voluntary agencies were at the center of the President's Committee, it is worth noting that many citizens volunteered and supported the Hungarian refugees through agencies or outside them. Volunteers worked in various fields, collecting supplies for the voluntary agencies to send to Austrian refugee camps, accepting and assisting resettlement at Kilmer, and providing support for refugees living and working at resettlement destinations. The activities of volunteers across the country enabled the efficient resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees into new communities. It is necessary to explore the reason why many Americans engaged in voluntary work supporting Hungarian refugees.

The documents of the President's Committee contain the records of twenty-nine offers of volunteer activities (thirty-one people) preserved in a folder titled "Job volunteers."<sup>68</sup> Although the sample is quantitatively limited, it displays a certain trend as the materials discuss the motivations of volunteers.

Two of the offers were from organizations and twenty-seven from individuals. The two organizations involved female supporters of President Eisenhower and the Republican Party. The gender ratio of individual offerings was twenty-four men to five (three cases) women.

The diversity of motivations for volunteering demonstrates that American society extensively supported the large number of Hungarian refugees. In descending order, these were the people and their expressed motivations for offering help: people of Hungarian descent who wanted to support their fellow countrymen (four); administrators who wanted to use their expertise in New York or Washington, DC (three); members of the US military who wanted to share their experience gained during World War II (three); those with legal experience in international tribunals who wanted to offer practical help (two); those with experience working in international refugee relief organizations after World War II (two); those who were able to provide legal advice (two); retired businessmen who wanted to share their business expertise (two); a Jewish labor organization that wanted to provide support

(one); an international educator who wanted to use his experience (one); an individual who wanted to criticize Communism (one); and those with unknown reasons (two).

It was characteristic of some male volunteers that they had served in the military in World War II, while others offered their services based on their experience with refugee support in Europe immediately following the war. For instance, there was a Jewish man who had been persecuted and deprived of his job as a lawyer in Nazi Germany.<sup>69</sup> He had fled as a refugee to the United States in the 1930s and engaged in intelligence activities for the United States government against Germany. After the end of the war, he took part in the Nuremberg trials, where Nazi war criminals were prosecuted. He desired to help the government because he sympathized with the Hungarian refugees based on his own experiences during World War II. He wished to contribute to the resolution of the refugee problem by using his knowledge as an expert in international law and administration. Similarly, men who engaged in the military occupations in Austria and Okinawa and lawyers who were involved in refugee relief after World War II desired to use their expertise in supporting the Hungarian refugees. It should be noted that their motivations for volunteering strongly reflected their experiences during World War II, even though it had ended more than a decade earlier.

A Hungarian man who was enthusiastic about voluntary work generally, also volunteered because of his origins. Though he was already committed to several volunteer activities, he now planned to use his day off and evenings after work for refugee support.<sup>70</sup> He desired to renew the type of volunteer work he accomplished during the war and for which he had received several commendations. Although he had a full-time job and was raising four children, he wished to sacrifice his free time in volunteer activities. His letter reveals his enthusiasm for volunteer activities and for participating in the government's social policy.

The female volunteer applicants were few, and unlike the men, their motivations were ambiguous. Three women preferred to offer their talents and efforts in practical support rather than monetary donations. The motivations of the other two women were unknown. This does not indicate, however, that only a few women were interested in voluntary work for the Hungarian refugees. For example, a Hungarian American woman played an active role as an interpreter, providing support to Hungarian refugees in the Hungarian American community of New Brunswick, New Jersey, close to Kilmer.<sup>71</sup>

A group of three secretaries from New York City wished to volunteer after the end of their normal working day. The women criticized the bureaucratic method of support for the refugees, that is, providing support only during working hours, and claimed to be able to help in different ways, as follows: "We can devote our time from 6 p.m. We are willing to go around ringing doorbells. Anything from the menial to the executive, and there are thousands like us, we will do."<sup>72</sup> Although the participation of women in public affairs was not common in the 1950s, this letter expresses how women had a strong awareness of making a social contribution. From the fact that the letter was written by three company colleagues, it can be understood that the Hungarian refugee issue was an important topic of discussion among American women and that they had a strong motivation for volunteer work.

The female political groups offered to do volunteer work while the male political group did not, although the female group was small. The female political groups apparently assumed that women made their international contribution through refugee support. The National Federation of Republican Women offered to do volunteer work for Hungarian refugees. This organization had four thousand clubs across the country that implemented a program for Ike Day, which memorialized General Eisenhower's launch of Operation Overlord, the code name for the liberation of Western Europe and the invasion of Germany on June 6, 1944. A woman who wrote the following letter participated in a project organized by the Women's Division of the Labor Department to bring women from other countries to the United States and to encourage understanding among nations. The letter talks about her strong interest in international affairs: "Like many other Americans I feel we have a great deal at stake in the human facets of this present international situation. I would like to contribute in some way to the resolving of those problems."<sup>73</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have explored how the United States was able to accept a vast number of Hungarian refugees between 1956 and 1957, paying attention to the roles and motivations of various institutions in the United States for accepting and supporting the refugees. The acceptance and support of the Hungarian refugees united the government and various institutions based on liberalism. This cooperation made it possible for the United States to accept so many Hungarian refugees in a short period.

In the system of cooperation that was developed, each organization and individual fulfilled the following functions for the reception and resettlement of the Hungarian refugees in the United States. First, the Eisenhower administration adopted an internationalist foreign policy for the Hungarian refugees, which regarded refugees as human resources for the nation to demonstrate American economic and cultural superiority over the Soviet Union and over Communism. The government established a special committee that organized and utilized volunteer organizations for refugee relief and through them acquired personal, material, and financial resources for accepting and resettling the refugees. Under the liberal refugee policy, the Eisenhower administration used centralized state power to ensure the cooperation of various groups and encouraged them to regard themselves as collaborating with the government to accelerate prosperity in American society.

Second, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation led in selective acceptance for scientists by means of their political influence; they funded the English education of refugee students whose majors were in the natural sciences. They engaged in public diplomacy to expand American influence with the financial power of the foundations and their mother companies and followed the diplomatic and domestic policies of the Eisenhower administration during the Cold War. Their internationalism and their desire to expand business were consistent with the Eisenhower refugee policy and formed the liberal consensus with the government.

Third, various volunteer agencies were centrally situated in the President's Committee to accept and support Hungarian refugees and to cooperate with the government's liberal refugee policy. They supported the refugees transnationally or locally in their transition from Austria to American communities, with the purpose of expanding their organizational networks and influence internationally, domestically, and locally. Networks of religious denominations and kinship ties played an indispensable role in providing employment for refugees. Members of Hungarian American communities played a complementary role to the sponsoring agencies and assisted refugees by giving them advice and moral support.

Fourth, US citizens who individually participated in volunteer activities were indispensable for accepting such a large number of refugees into American society. US citizens had the opportunity to address a humanitarian issue and utilize their experiences in light of the government's policy. While volunteer activities are commonplace in American society, especially through religious organizations and ethnic communities, many desired to

participate in volunteer activities specifically targeted at the Hungarian refugees, based on their individual experiences during the war, their professional expertise, and a strong awareness of wanting to make a social contribution. Their enthusiasm might indicate that US citizens began to acquire an internationalist perspective by supporting refugees and participating in the government's liberal refugee policy.

In this article there is not room to include what happened to the Hungarian refugees after their resettlement in American society. For instance, the Hungarian refugee students set up a student organization to support the movement against the Communist regime in Hungary. Further investigation is necessary to clarify the impact of American society on them in the late 1950s.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The US government regarded the Hungarian revolution as placing the United States in an uncomfortable and embarrassing position, as it heightened global tension. Ronald R. Krebs, *Dueling Visions: U.S. Strategy toward Eastern Europe under Eisenhower* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2001), 34. For US foreign policy in Eastern Europe in the 1950s and the Hungarian revolution of 1956, see Krebs, *Dueling Visions*; Alex von Tunzelmann, *Blood and Sand: Suez, Hungary and the Crisis That Shook the World* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016); David A. Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956: The President's Year of Crisis—Suez and the Brink of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011); Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Of European countries, England accepted 20,660 Hungarian refugees; West Germany took in 14,310; Switzerland welcomed 12,130; and France received 10,240. Outside of Europe, only Australia, with 9,743 refugees, the United States, with 41,000, and Canada, with 37,000, took in more than 5,000. Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees: 1956–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 50–51.

<sup>3</sup> The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, Kilmer, NJ, A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement, B-7, box 7, U.S. President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, Records, 1957, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter DDEL).

<sup>4</sup> "White House Statement on the Termination of the Emergency Program for Hungarian Refugees, December 28, 1957," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1957* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 850–52. According to Cnossen, who estimated the number of Hungarian refugees at a higher number than others, approximately 41,000 arrived in United States and 37,000 in Canada. T. Cnossen, "Integration of Refugees: Some Observations on the Hungarians in Canada," in supplement 7 *REMP Bulletin*, Research Group for European Migration Problems (July 1964): 6.

<sup>5</sup> The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, Kilmer, NJ, A Manual of the Policies and Procedures, B-7, B-8, box 7, DDEL.

<sup>6</sup> Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-*

*Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 55; Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur A. Markowitz, “Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees,” *International Migration Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 47–48. doi: 10.2307/3002493.

<sup>8</sup> Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate*, 73.

<sup>9</sup> Francis E. Walter coauthored the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

<sup>10</sup> *Congressional Record*, 85th Cong., 1st Sess., Pt. 2, 218; Markowitz, “Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism,” 52.

<sup>11</sup> Folders of the President, Letters Received 1–3 [principally letters from the public expressing opposition to Hungarian Immigration], box 8, DDEL.

<sup>12</sup> Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate*, 3, 8, 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 75–85.

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer A. Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Pomogáts Béla, *1956 egyetemisták a forradalomban* (Budapest: Littera Nova Kiadó, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Lee Congdon, Béla K. Király, and Károly Nagy, eds., *1956: The Hungarian Revolution and War for Independence* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs and Atlantic Research and Publications, 2006), 243–310.

<sup>18</sup> This statistic was disclosed after 1989. KSH (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office) jelentés az 1956-os disszidálásról, “Az illegálisan külföldre távozott személyek főbb adatai (1956. október 23.-1957. április 30.),” *Regió* 2, no. 4 (1991).

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) on the Hungarian Refugee Situation*, December 31, 1957 (Austria: ICEM).

<sup>20</sup> Julianna Puskás investigated the UN reports that contained interviews with Hungarian refugees. Puskás, *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 2000), 273–76.

<sup>21</sup> Sós Péter János, *Magyar Exodus: Magyar menekültek Nyugaton 1956–1959* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2005), 77–78.

<sup>22</sup> The Voice of America was founded in 1942 by the US government to exert political and cultural influence on foreign countries as a propaganda organ. Alan L. Heil, *Voice of America: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Radio Free Europe was founded in 1949 by the US government and during the Cold War broadcasted exile statements and anti-Communist propaganda to the Soviet satellites. Vajda Barnabás, *Egy szabad hang Kelet-Európában: A Szabad Európa Rádió tevékenységéről a hidegháború alatt* (Dunaszerdahely, Hungary: Nap, 2011); Loescher and Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> “Statement by President Eisenhower on Hungarian Refugees, November 8, 1956,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1956* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 1093.

<sup>24</sup> Function of the President’s Committee, Outline of the Organization and Work of the President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief in Assisting in Resettlement of Hungarian Refugees, January 7, 1957, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>25</sup> The President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, Kilmer, NJ, A Manual of the Policies, box 7, DDEL.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Personnel Summary, The President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, Kilmer

Office, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>28</sup> Wallace W. Atwood and M. H. Trytten, *The Academy's Role in the Hungarian Scientists' Fight for Freedom*, repr. from *News Report 7*, no. 3, (May–June, 1957): 37.

<sup>29</sup> Tracy S. Voorhees wrote the letter to D. W. Bronk, president of the National Academy of Sciences, stating that Weiss had informed him that there were many scientist refugees in Austria. March 8, 1957, box 6, DDEL.

<sup>30</sup> Atwood and Trytten, *Fight for Freedom*, 37–38.

<sup>31</sup> Sós, *Magyar Exodus*, 83.

<sup>32</sup> Olivier Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 137–49; Kenneth Alan Osgood, ed., *The United States and Public Diplomacy: New Direction in Cultural and International History* (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *The Mid-Century Challenge to U.S. Foreign Policy: Panel Report of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project*, America at Mid Century Series, Special Studies Report 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 37, 41.

<sup>34</sup> Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Foreign Economic Policy for the Twentieth Century: Panel Report of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project*, America at Mid Century Series, Special Studies Report 3 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 209.

<sup>35</sup> Immediately after the project report was published, the Soviet Union preceded the United States in the development of the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and the successful launch of an artificial satellite, Sputnik, in 1957, reinforcing the importance of promoting and implementing rigorous scientific education to win the Cold War. Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *The Pursuit of Excellence in Education and the Future of America: Panel Report of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project*, America at Mid Century Series, Special Studies Report 5 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 368–69.

<sup>36</sup> They had the most advanced university training, for instance at the Technical University and the Eötvös Loránd University.

<sup>37</sup> Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 145.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 184–87.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Gousha, “‘Extraordinary Measures’: The Funding of Hungarian Refugee Students by the Rockefeller Foundations, 1956–1958” (master’s thesis, Central European University, Budapest, 2011), 3, 36.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> The Rockefeller Foundation provided \$600,000 for this purpose to Hungarian scientists, scholars, and artists. “Rockefeller Fund Aiding Hungarians,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1956, 3.

<sup>45</sup> “Special Message to the Congress on Immigration Matters, January 31, 1957”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 1957, 110–17.

<sup>46</sup> Sós, *Magyar Exodus*, 84–85.

<sup>47</sup> Committee on Educational Interchange Policy, *Hungarian Refugee Students and U.S. Colleges and Universities: One Year Later (February 1957–January 1958)* (New York: 1957–58).

<sup>48</sup> Markowitz, “Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism,” 49.

<sup>49</sup> Office of the Surgeon, The President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, A Manual of the Policies, box 7, DDEL.

<sup>50</sup> Meeting, Friday, December 21, 1956, President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>51</sup> The World University Student Service was founded in 1920 to meet the needs of international students and academics. The Institute of International Education (IIE) was established in 1919 by Nobel Peace Prize winners Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University; Elihu Root, former Secretary of State; and Stephen Duggan, Sr., professor of political science at the College of the City of New York.

<sup>52</sup> *Hungarian Refugee Students and U.S. Colleges and Universities*, 2–3, 18.

<sup>53</sup> The United States President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, *Report to the President* (May 14, 1957) (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1957), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, 142.

<sup>55</sup> From James L. Hennessy, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, to General J. Lawton Collins, Vice Chairman and Director, The President's Committee, 56363/809 Pt. 2, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>56</sup> Public Information Section, President's Committee, February 11, 1957, "Here is the story of the program for Hungarian refugee relief as it happened at the Joyce Kilmer Reception Center," box 2, DDEL.

<sup>57</sup> Sós, *Magyar Exodus*, 38–43.

<sup>58</sup> Outline of Activities of Various Countries and Agencies assisting Hungarian Refugees, November 26, 1956, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>59</sup> The International Committee of the Red Cross participated in refugee relief action in cooperation with local Red Cross organizations. League of Red Cross Societies, *Hungarian Refugee Relief: Report on the Relief Measures for Hungarian Refugees Undertaken by the League and Member National Societies in Austria, Yugoslavia, and Countries of Transit and Resettlement, October 1956–September 1957* (Geneva: League of Red Cross Societies, 1957); International Committee of the Red Cross, *Report on Relief Action in Hungary, October 1956–June 1957* (Geneva, 1957).

<sup>60</sup> Outline of Activities of Various Countries and Agencies Assisting Hungarian Refugees, November 26, 1956, 20, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Draft, March 25, 1957, From Richard Nixon, to Dr. Julius Szentendrey, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>63</sup> From Harry Tyson Carter, Assistant to the Chairman, to A. W. Motley, Assistant Director, Bureau of Employment of Labor, April 18, 1957, box 11, DDEL.

<sup>64</sup> The letters from the Lutheran Refugee Service, the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee, the United HIAS Service, the International Rescue Committee, the Catholic Relief Service, and the Church World Service, from April 25, 1957, to May 8, 1957, box 11, DDEL.

<sup>65</sup> From Edward E. Swanstrom, Executive Director, Resettlement Division of the Catholic Relief Service, to Tracy S. Voorhees, Chairman, The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, May 6, 1957, box 11, DDEL.

<sup>66</sup> From Charles Sternberg, Director, Case Department of the International Rescue Committee, to Tracy S. Voorhees, Chairman, The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, May 2, 1957, box 11, DDEL.

<sup>67</sup> The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at the Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, Kilmer, NJ, A Manual of the Policies and Procedures, G-6, box 7, DDEL.

<sup>68</sup> Folder: Job volunteers, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>69</sup> From Robert M. W. Kempner, to Scott McLeod, Administrator, Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, Thanksgiving Day, 1956, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>70</sup> From Frank Szekely, to Tracy S. Voorhees, December 3, 1956, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>71</sup> Sós, *Magyar Exodus*, 89–93.

<sup>72</sup> From Ingrid Helen Coleman, Helen Johnson, and Rita C. Thompson, to Mr. Tracy S. Voorhees, December 15, 1956, box 2, DDEL.

<sup>73</sup> From Louise Gore, National Federation of Republican Women, to Mr. Tracy S. Voorhees, December 1, 1956, box 2, DDEL.