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## AHEA Newsletter: October 2022

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**American Hungarian Educators Association** <aheanews@gmail.com>

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# October 2022 Newsletter

## President's Corner

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Dear AHEA Members and Colleagues,

Greetings! I hope and trust that you are doing well and that your academic year is off to a wonderful start.

[Call for Abstracts:](#) We are pleased to issue our call for abstracts for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual AHEA Conference which will be held in person at [Quinnipiac University's North Haven Campus in Hamden, Connecticut](#) (in the USA). The abstract submission form offers some new venues for scholars to present their work. In addition to paper presentations, panel discussions, and workshops, we have added book presentations and roundtable discussions to the choice of options for presenters.

The program is taking shape. Events begin on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM with a film presentation followed by a reception sponsored by the Fulbright Commission of Hungary. On Friday, the registration desk will open at 8 AM and the program starts at 9 AM. The keynote address will be given on Friday morning. This follows two days of paper presentations, workshops, roundtable discussions, and book presentations. Friday evening, we are planning a piano recital and reception. The closing banquet is scheduled to occur on Saturday night at the Magyar Ház in Wallingford, CT (which is 10 minutes from campus).

This year's fitting theme is "**Dependencies and Alliances.**" We will learn about the establishment of the István Széchenyi Chair in International Economics. The chair was funded through a private donation and charged to build programs with Hungary, especially along three dimensions: academic, business, and cultural. The program was expanded through the Hungarian American Business Leaders (HABL) which brings Hungarian nationals to Quinnipiac to earn their MBA and work at American

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companies before returning home to Hungary. Through a range of programs, the chair established partnerships with the Corvinus University, Mathias Corvinus Collegium, the National Public University, Óbuda University as well as AmCham and Hungarian Fulbright. Based on the success of the Széchenyi Chair, Quinnipiac launched the [Central European Institute](#) (QU CEI) and this led to other great programs within the University.

More detailed information about registration, lodging, and transportation will be posted later this month. We look forward to an exciting conference to rejoin and reconnect with colleagues and friends.

At our last Board meeting, our new editor-in-chief of *Hungarian Cultural Studies*, Paul Olchváry reported that a select group of [highly-qualified academics](#) in various disciplines has agreed to serve as associate editors. He also recruited [two book review editors](#). These individuals will be key in advising on editorial decisions and policies. Seventy-five people signed up to serve as peer reviewers. This is fabulous news as the success of any peer-reviewed journal hinges on its reviewers. Our journal relies on volunteers with a diverse array of interests and expertise to review the manuscripts submitted. There is still time to volunteer. Simply go to the journal website and [create a profile](#). In the section marked "Reviewing interest," add your areas of expertise. Remember that one need not be a member of AHEA to serve as a peer reviewer; please spread this invitation to others in your network who may be qualified and interested in contributing to this effort.

Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions on how AHEA might better support your career advancement.

Wishing you good health and continued success,

Klára Papp, PhD  
President, AHEA  
[klarakpapp@gmail.com](mailto:klarakpapp@gmail.com)

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## Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Tamás Stark,**

Senior Research Fellow, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History

**Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, especially how you came to specialize in demography, prisoners of war, and victims of state violence?**

I started my career at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1983. This is my first and, apparently, last workplace; I serve there as a senior research fellow at the Institute of History, which belongs to the Research Centre for the Humanities. After joining the institute, my adviser suggested I write my PhD thesis on the human losses of Hungary in World War II. This subject was more or less taboo, because the Communist authorities did not want to hear about the Hungarian victims of the Soviet army, especially those who died in fighting in Hungarian territory. It was even forbidden to erect war memorials. Nor were Holocaust studies supported, as in other communist countries. Speaking on the fate of Hungarian war prisoners and civilians in Soviet custody was considered anti-Communist agitation.

Nevertheless, the political situation gradually improved in the 1980s, and scholars were given greater freedom of expression each year. After three years of research, I came to the conclusion that about 80 per cent of the "war" victims were in fact victims of the Holocaust and Soviet detention, not of military operations. Therefore, after completing my thesis on the human losses in Hungary during the Second World War, I began to study the history of the Holocaust in Hungary and the fate of Hungarian prisoners in Soviet custody.

I approached these subjects from a statistical point of view. Thanks to the research work of Randolph L. Braham and other scholars, the basic data on the losses of the Jewish community in Hungary had long been known. These figures, however, were based on estimates. I would have liked to have figures that were as accurate as possible, not only for the territory of Hungary in 1941, but also for the main regions of the country, namely present-day Hungary, Carpathian Ruthenia, Northern Transylvania, and Vojvodina. I was also curious to know what happened to the remnants of Jewish communities in these regions, how many survivors chose to remain in their homeland and how many chose to leave and settle in Israel or the West. My book *Hungarian Jews During the Holocaust and after the Second World War, 1939-1949: A Statistical Review* was published in the East European Monographs series in 2000.

I considered it a mission to deal with the history of Hungarian prisoners in Soviet custody, because it was almost a total "terra incognita" even in the nineties. In 1993 with the intercession of Géza Jeszenszky, who was Foreign Minister at that time, and with the direct assistance of the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow I could visit the Military Archives and I had access to documents on Hungarian prisoners. In the archives, I saw hundreds of thousands of personal files on Hungarian prisoners, made by the Soviet camp authorities, stored on vast and endless shelves. This experience and the personal encounters with former prisoners gave me impetus to write the almost-forgotten story of Hungarian prisoners of war and civilian internees in Soviet captivity.

In addition to the Holocaust and the history of the prisoners, I also focus on the forced population movements of "unwanted" ethnic groups in Central Europe during the Second World War and the early post-war period. The arrival of some 300,000 Hungarians expelled from neighboring countries and the partial displacement of Germans from Hungary dramatically changed the ethnic structure of the country.

As I said, the issue of human losses was more or less taboo in the communist era. Now I find that the history of the Holocaust and the basic figures relating to the numbers of prisoners in Soviet captivity have increasingly become a political issue again. The government's memory policy is reluctant to talk about Hungarian involvement in the deportations. When I wrote in the 1980s that the number of

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Hungarian prisoners (both soldiers and civilians) could have reached 700,000, some colleagues thought I was exaggerating the numbers. Now there is a tendency to blow up the numbers. Speakers at commemorations talk about 900,000, even a million or more prisoners. I think these numbers are baseless.

### **How did you find out about AHEA, and what led you to join?**

I would like to go back to the history of my friendship with the United States. In the era of communism my generation looked upon the United States as the only power which had the moral, economic, and military potential to put an end to the Soviet rule in Eastern Europe. This dream came true in 1989 when the Soviet system collapsed and each former Soviet bloc country eagerly became the part of the Western world. Democracy meant academic freedom for us, and that the world suddenly opened up to us.

In 1995 and 1996, I spent a whole year with my family at Washington DC as the visiting fellow of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I got to know the United States as a society with a human face. My family was fascinated by the helpful and tolerant attitude of average Americans and by the effectiveness of bureaucracy. I was impressed by the richness and the diversity of American social science. I have come to love America. After my return to Hungary, it became important for me to maintain my contacts with my American colleagues. These contacts have been very fruitful for me professionally. Maintaining and even expanding my contacts became even more important after 2014, when I was Fulbright Visiting Professor at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. This is why I became so excited when I first heard about the American Hungarian Educators Association from Gusztáv Kecskés D., my colleague and friend at the Institute of History. I first attended an AHEA conference in 2017, and have attended regularly since then.

### **What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?**

At the conferences I heard many interesting presentations and had the opportunity to meet American, American-Hungarian scientists, with several of whom I was able to develop fruitful collaborations and even friendships. With the assistance/intervention of the former president of AHEA, James P. Niessen, I was invited to the Rutgers University and also to Columbia University to give presentations on my research work. When I am in New York City, I am honored to be his guest. Susan Papp introduced me to the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto, where I gave four lectures in the last few years. I was proud to contribute the book [\*July 1944: Deportation of the Jews of Budapest Foiled\*](#), published by Dr. Katalin Kádár Lynn in 2018.

### **Tell us, please, about your current project**

In March, I have completed my book on the history and the pre-history of the first deportation in Hungary in 1941. In the last few years, this topic was at the center of my scholarly work. In summer 1941, about 22,000 Hungarian “undocumented” Jews were deported to Galicia where they became the victims of what Father Patrick Desbois called the “Holocaust by Bullets.” My thesis is that the deportation was a consequence of the institutional anti-Semitism of the Horthy regime. The deportation or resettlement of unwanted “foreign”, “Galician” Jews was part of the regime's political elite's program “to solve the Jewish question” from the end of 1919 onwards. My workplace the Institute of History plans to publish the book next year.

Much to my sorrow, current Hungarian public life is more or less saturated with anti-American rhetoric. High-ranking public officials blame the United States for the fact that after World War II. Hungary became part of the Soviet bloc. They even blame the US for the tragic fate of Hungarian prisoners in Soviet captivity, saying that America did not care about their fate. I seek to expose such falsehoods. In world politics, only the USA intervened on behalf of Hungarian prisoners. I am currently working on an article that will show what the US governments did to repatriate prisoners in Soviet camps, including Hungarian prisoners, between 1947 and 1953.

I am also continuing to work on my original topic, Hungary's human losses in World War II, as new sources have become available, such as the archives of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany, and the 682,000 personal files of Hungarian prisoners in Soviet camps. This huge amount of material was purchased by the Hungarian National Archives from the Russian State Archives a few years ago.

In addition to my research work, I organize conferences with my colleagues and participate in the dissemination of new research results as president of the subcommittee on the history of the Second World War of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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## Member Publications

The listing of publications is for our members' information and does not signify endorsement by AHEA.

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**Mátyás Mervay** announces the recent publication of "Central European Refugee Diasporas in Republican China: The Shanghai Hungarian Relief Fund and The Roots of The Jewish Refugee Assistance (1924-1940)," in *The Twelfth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12)*, edited by Paul van der Velde, Martina van den Haak, and Narutai Riangkruar, 1:453–57. Amsterdam University Press, 2022.

*Abstract:* Republican China's struggle for unity and sovereignty coincided with the country's unprecedented internationalization. In addition to the looming presence of powerful and privileged foreigners, the Nanjing Government faced the challenge of administering destitute refugees from Europe. The history of Russian and Jewish communities in modern China has come to the fore in recent years. Home to such destitute groups, Shanghai's status as an international city in the Republican Era is well known. By covering the history of the Shanghai Hungarian Relief Fund and the individuals involved in its operations, this paper aims to shed light on the organizational and personal links that connect the assistance offered to two waves of refugees from Habsburg Central Europe to Republican China. The author argues that the humanitarian experience accumulated over the 1920s' relief for the ex-Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war prepared Shanghai's Central European community leaders for the more massive Jewish refugee crisis in the 1930s. In particular, the Hungarian Relief Fund, created by Hungarians of the interwoven post-Habsburg diasporas, explored the avenues of assistance and protection for stateless persons and non-treaty nationals in Republican China. A truly transnational history of the Central European refugee relief is presented here, focusing on Paul Komor and his fellows' philanthropic involvement before the Jewish refugee relief efforts. By exploring this intersection of Jewish, Hungarian, and Chinese histories, listeners will gain insight into the prehistory of the Shanghai Jewish refugee relief, Hungarian diaspora politics, and the administration of foreign communities in Republican Era-China.

**AHEA Life Member Peter Sherwood announces that his translation of *Ádám Bodor's The Birds of Verhovina* will be available in paperback in the USA, starting in October.**

*From the publisher's website:*

"A gripping and eloquent description of an unnamed totalitarian society in all its irrationality, absurdity, and implacability; provoking both laughter and shuddering in the reader.

Home to nine hot springs, Verhovina used to be rich in natural beauty, yet it has become a wasteland, with only a few dozen inhabitants left. Trains to Verhovina are scarce; the timetable was cancelled. One day, even the birds disappeared from the region!

The reader arrives in Ádám Bodor's world, the periphery of civilisation, at the break of dawn. Adam, the foster son of Brigadier Anatol Korkodus is waiting at the dilapidated station for a boy who is arriving from a reform school. Soon afterwards, Korkodus is arrested, for unfathomable reasons. Yet this decaying and sinister world is not devoid of a certain joie de vivre: people eat gourmet dishes, point out their interlocutor's hidden motives with incredibly dark humour and enjoy the region's stunning natural beauty."

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## Have a New or Upcoming Publication?

We would love to help share news of the impressive and diverse work that AHEA members are doing! If you have a recent book, article, or other scholarly/artistic work you would like your fellow members to know about, send a brief description/promotional blurb and a link to further information to [ahenews@gmail.com](mailto:ahenews@gmail.com). Requests will appear in the order in which they were received and may be edited for space.

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## Share With Your Students: Study Abroad at the University of Pécs



Dear Student,

Are you planning to study abroad in Spring 2023 but are not sure where to go?

The University of Pécs is one of the largest research universities in Hungary and offers a semester/year-long program in many different study fields: Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Structural Engineering, Computer Science, Business Administration, Applied Management, Enterprise Development, Tourism, Psychology, International Relations, English and American Studies, Social Work, Communication and Media, Education, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Midwifery, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramic Design, Classical Music Performance, Natural Sciences, Physical Training and Law. All these programs are taught in English.

Our university offers:

- A very budget-friendly living cost and program fee
- dormitory placements
- exquisite location
- safe environment

- high quality student services and a unique Central-Eastern European study abroad experience

Further information about our semester-long study abroad program is available at <https://international.pte.hu/mobility-programs/study-abroad>

Applications may be submitted on our online application platform: [https://apply.pte.hu/en\\_GB/courses/course/473-study-abroad](https://apply.pte.hu/en_GB/courses/course/473-study-abroad)

The University of Pécs is truly an internationalized university with 5,000 international students from 110 countries. We started international education 40 years ago and joined the IIE Generation Study Abroad initiative in 2015. We have received various international and national awards for internationalization. Pécs, our gorgeous, very vivid, 2000-year-old historical city, a former European Capital of Culture is an ideal place for students who would like to immerse themselves in the European culture and make friends with other students from all over the world.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at [vecsanin.boglarka@pte.hu](mailto:vecsanin.boglarka@pte.hu)

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## Don't Let Your Membership Benefits Stop!

Renew your membership to ensure uninterrupted membership today to ensure access to an expanded network of scholars and academics working in multidisciplinary fields of Hungarian Studies.

AHEA's membership dues enable you to access "Members Only" section of the website, participate in the governance of AHEA through your vote on our newly revised Bylaws as well as officers and board members.

We are pleased to announce membership discounts as well as the option of a new **lifetime membership**. Visit <https://ahea.net/members/membership-information>.

Only members in good standing can vote in leadership elections. Please remember to renew yours! **Click here** to access our PayPal link, or to get information on paying by check or bank transfer.



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