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DIPLOMAMUNKA

MA THESIS

*Egy amerikai-magyar politikai játszma háttere: a magyar
királyi korona visszaszolgáltatása*

*The background of an American-Hungarian political game:
the return of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen*

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2021

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Abstract

The following paper introduces several primary sources in connection with the return of the Crown of St. Stephen to Hungary, many of which were not yet used in scholarly research. These were acquired in two main Hungarian archives and were complemented with a number of already published materials and scholarly works. The purpose was to present the debates between Hungarian-American supporters and opposers and the ideologies driving them, as well as the roles of high-ranking figures such as Joe Biden, Zbigniew Brzezinski and less prominent, state-level politicians. The paper also includes several Hungarian State Security sources that were created after the Crown was placed in Budapest; these contain yet unpublished material as well. The paper consists of four main sections: first, early rumors of and reactions to the return are introduced, second, the debates between the opposing and supporting side of decision-makers, American politicians, and outraged Hungarian-Americans is detailed, third, negotiations with the Rákosi and Kádár regimes are described, and finally the several Hungarian State Security reports of the return ceremony and the Crown's exhibition are introduced.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
0.1 — Utilized Sources.....	2
0.2 — Unpublished Sources	2
I. 1970–1977 — Rumors of the Crown’s Return	3
1.1 — American Hungarian Federation	3
1.2 — Charles Wilson and Zoltán Béky.....	7
1.3 — Nicholas G. Andrews.....	9
1.4 — István B. Gereben and Elliot L. Richardson.....	10
II. 1977–1978 — Making the Decision.....	12
2.1 — Mary Rose Oakar.....	12
2.2 — Zbigniew Brzezinski and the State Department	14
2.3 — John Glenn, Joe Biden, and the Subcommittee on European Affairs	15
2.4 — Letters to President Carter	18
2.4.1 — George V. Voinovich.....	18
2.4.2 — Mary Rose Oakar.....	20
2.4.3 — Further letters.....	22
2.5 — Supporters of the Return.....	23
2.5.1 — Zoltán Gombos	24
2.5.2 — Béla Király.....	25
2.5.3 — István Deák.....	26
III. The Home Front: Negotiations with the Socialist Governments.....	28

3.1 — 1950s and 1960s — Attempts by Mátyás Rákosi and János Kádár	29
3.2 — Negotiating the Return	30
3.3 — After the Return	37
IV. The Crown in Hungary	37
4.1 — State Security Reports Surrounding the Return Event	37
4.2 — State Security Reports Concerning the National Museum	39
Conclusion	43
Future Research	44
Notes	46
Works Cited	51

INTRODUCTION

The history of St. Stephen's Crown and its associated regalia is one of the most extensively studied subjects of Hungary's past. So much so, that it has its own, politically checkered field of study. In the early 20th century, the revisionist historiography of the Horthy era attempted to elevate the Crown into a new role: a symbol of unification of the Hungarian people, wherever in the world they may be. This was partially done by the work of legal historians, such as Ákos Timon, who claimed that the Crown had received a personality and mystery through which the "Hungarian nation reached the notion of statehood and real public power earlier than all Western peoples"¹ (Timon, "A Szent Korona elmélete és a koronázás" 6). By extension, he referred to the Crown as a metaphor of the state: "the entire Hungarian nation, together with the king wearing the Holy Crown, constitutes a unified public entity, a living organization, which medieval sources call the whole body of the Holy Crown (*totum corpus Sacrae Regni Coronae*), and today we call it a state"² (Timon, "Magyar állam- és jogtörténet" 479). The far-fetched notion was engraved into public consciousness through decades of repetition, education, and bureaucracy; even court rulings were announced in the name of the Holy Crown. Although these views were not historically, nor scientifically accurate, the Crown's presence remained to permeate public life and its loss at the close of World War II had maimed the national consciousness of many.

During the next decades, the question of the whereabouts of the Crown could not realistically come to the forefront of Hungarian-American relations—although some efforts were made during the rule of Mátyás Rákosi, which are described below. After memories of 1956, the ensuing reprisals, and the series of show trials in the early years of the Kádár regime began to fall into oblivion in the New World, through the advent of the *détente* period, it became possible to finally settle the longstanding issue. After the Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975, economic and diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Hungary improved

drastically, and the American government(s) were able to start probing for opportunities to rid themselves of the burden that the lingering emblem of Hungary was causing. This, however, turned out to be extremely challenging; they were not prepared for the onslaught of hostility that the issue would bring out from so many people.

0.1 — UTILIZED SOURCES

One of the main collections of primary sources used in this paper was the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, henceforth: ÁBTL). Since the State Security was actively engaged in learning all the details of the debates surrounding the return of the regalia, it has gathered a large collection of letters, statements, newspaper clippings, memoranda, etc., which are now available for researchers, accompanied by several documents written after the Crown had been placed in the Hungarian National Museum. These, among others, include the careful plans of the handover ceremony—along with lists of the American delegation—descriptions of the museum’s security detail and their equipment, police reports of *persona non gratae* and investigations of incidents. A number of these documents have not yet been presented in accessible research. Many sources of the National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára) were also of great use, along with the works of Tibor Glant, the foremost Hungarian scholar of the subject. The hard-to-track-down, thousand-page-long documentary collection of Attila L. Simontsits, *The Last Battle for St. Stephen’s Crown* also proved immensely useful, as it contains invaluable sources that the author—being engaged in the debate himself—had assembled for future researchers. Several other works have been used as well; sources written in Hungarian have been translated for direct quotations, cf. Notes page for their original versions.

0.2 — UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Given the amount of extensive research that has been carried out regarding the return of St. Stephen’s Crown, it seems rather a futile belief that one could uncover scholarly mistakes or

make brand new statements concerning the event. Still, since the amount of source material is so substantial, a significant percentage of it has not yet been included in scholarly research. In the following, these are analyzed and compared with already published material, in order to get a more nuanced picture about the return of St. Stephen's Crown and hopefully arrive at a conclusion about its historical importance.

I. 1970–1977 — RUMORS OF THE CROWN'S RETURN

Talks of a potential return of the Crown had surfaced countless times before the official decision was announced in 1977. A significant part of the Hungarian expatriates was extremely sensitive to the issue, understandably so. They believed that the Crown must not be allowed to fall into the hands of Hungary's communist rulers. Every time that the tiniest of rumors appeared in the press about the U.S. planning to return St. Stephen's Crown, a wide range of Hungarian outcries ensued. These included statements by several Hungarian-American organizations, letters to different government agencies written by civilians, as well as those written by—not necessarily Hungarian—state-level and federal representatives.

1.1 — AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION

Chronologically, the first document from the batch of the Hungarian expatriates' statements, correspondences, objections, and articles collected by the Hungarian State Security during the 1970s concerning the return of the Crown is in connection with the American Hungarian Federation [Amerikai Magyar Szövetség]. Established in 1906 in Cleveland, Ohio, the organization's aim has been to "defend the interest of Americans of Hungarian origin in the United States" ("About the American Hungarian Federation"). Throughout its history, the AHF has aided Hungarians emigrating to the USA, raised millions of dollars to support the newcomers as well as the people living in poverty in post-war Hungary. Apart from charity, the organization had worked together with Presidents and Congress, and even affected legislation: in 1974, through the lobbying efforts of the AHF, a bill was passed by the Senate

providing “that any country desirous of acquiring the status of the ‘most favored nation’ must agree to allow the free emigration of its citizens who wish to join their relatives in the United States” (About the American Hungarian Federation). This lobbying work was carried out because impeding the Kádár regime’s chance of receiving Most-favored-nation status was crucial for the AHF and many Hungarian-Americans, since they wanted to seize every opportunity to make it difficult for Kádár to legitimize his rule. It was already decided, however, that Hungary would not acquire the beneficial title: a year earlier, in 1973, during Nixon’s presidency, National Security Decision Memorandum 212 was accepted, which specified that granting of MFN status to Eastern European countries would “not be concluded until there is a satisfactory settlement on U. S. claims for defaulted bonds” (NSDM 212; Glant 117).

However, the American Hungarian Federation’s members had their reasons to be suspicious. There was a threat of improvements in diplomatic relations between the USA and the Kádár regime, which led to talks of the return of St. Stephen’s Crown: an article published on the 19th of April in 1970, by David Binder, the Chief Central European Correspondent of *The New York Times*, touched upon the controversial issue: “according to reliable sources, proving at the pace maintained in the last seven months, the day may be close when Washington finds an occasion to return Hungary’s national treasure” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 3-4). Binder’s article is identified by Glant as one of the main events of the last eight years of the Crown’s stay in the United States (129). As a reaction to the piece, the AHF promptly published a memorandum on April 22, directly addressing the Secretary of State, William Pierce Rogers—who would visit Budapest and meet with János Kádár two years later (William Pierce Rogers)—and made their position on the matter quite clear: the crown’s “return would finalize United States acceptance of the present status quo in East Central Europe more than any other declaration of intent” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 3-4).

Secretary of State Rogers was the one to later disclose the location of the Crown to the Hungarian leadership: in June, 1970, during a non-official meeting with Iván Boldizsár, the editor-in-chief of *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Rogers revealed that the Crown was in fact held at Fort Knox, knowing very well that the information would travel onwards to Kádár (Borhi 291-292).

The AHF's memorandum was quickly but indirectly answered by the Department of State on the 20th of May 1970, with a letter by David M. Abshire, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, addressed to John W. McCormack, Speaker of the House of Representatives. McCormack took up the issue and represented Dr Bishop Zoltán Béky, the Chairman of the Board of the AHF. Abshire wrote on behalf of Secretary of State Rogers and assured McCormack and Béky that "the comments which appeared in a recent news article [i.e. the above mentioned piece of *The New York Times*] referring to the possibility of the early return of the Crown to Hungary were, of course, speculative" (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 1-2). Abshire listed various reasons why the Crown was a delicate matter and stated that "these and other sensitive factors must be taken into careful consideration", but also admitted that the Hungarian government had raised the matter in "recent years as relations have gradually improved . . . and discussions have been carried on looking toward the settlement of various longstanding bilateral problems" (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 1-2). The letter concludes:

[Although the Department of State] has no present plans for the return of the Crown, the subject will continue to be a matter of interest to both Governments. We are properly concerned that any such eventual action should serve the objective of general goodwill rather than discord and should take place in circumstances and at a time appropriately marked by some further substantial improvement in the atmosphere and course of our relations with Hungary. (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 1-2)

Interestingly, this last sentence also appeared with a difference of merely one word in a subsequent letter of the Assistant Secretary, dated June 2, 1971, written to Senator Bob Dole (Simontsits 114-116). Dole, after having been contacted by the AHF, had sent inquiries to the State Department about a potential return of the Crown (Simontsits 114). The repeated sentence suggests that Abshire was reciting the carefully crafted opinion of the State Department, or perhaps simply copied his former letter. There is, however, an important distinction between the two messages: in the one sent to Senator Dole, Abshire wrote:

In view of the sensitive nature of the problem, however, we do not believe that it would usefully serve our foreign policy interest for us to comment directly on the view expressed by particular individuals or organizations on the subject or to speculate at this time on the explicit circumstance under which the Crown's return might be opportune and appropriate. (Simontsits 115)

The Assistant Secretary struck a different note in this letter compared to the one he wrote to McCormack and Béky: he admitted to Dole that the State Department wanted to treat the issue more discretely. Obviously, he would not have dared tell the same to Béky or other Hungarian non-governmental civilians, as doing so would have escalated hostile emotions even further, but it was also a risky undertaking to ask the same of Dole. The Senator from Kansas would just a few months later, on October 29, 1971, cosponsor and submit Concurrent Resolution 48 to the Senate, expressing that “the great national treasure of Hungary . . . should continue to remain in the safekeeping of our Government until the Government of Hungary functions according to the free will of its citizens” (Simontsits 124). Dole would also be the one to lead the resistance against the return of the Crown on the Senate floor after 1971 (Glant 179) and eventually attack President Carter's decision in the Supreme Court (Glant 175).

Still, the letter written to Béky and McCormack and the one to Senator Dole were reassuring in that Assistant Secretary Abshire had dissipated the rumors of a forthcoming opportunity to return the Crown. However, he did not explicitly state that the Department of State would under no circumstances be handing the regalia over to Hungary while it was still under Kádár's rule. A few years later in 1973, the Bureau of Public Affairs—a branch of the Department of State established to convey foreign policy decisions to the public—stated that “the question of the Crown's return never has been connected with the resolution of any specific issues in US-Hungarian relations” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 p. 5). With this claim, similarly to their former position conveyed through Abshire's letter above, the Department of State did not categorically refrain from a potential return of the Crown down the line.

1.2 — CHARLES WILSON AND ZOLTÁN BÉKY

Two years later, in, 1975, later to be famous-infamous Congressman Charles Wilson submitted a report to the chairman of the Committee on International Relations, in which he "referred to the concern caused by continued American possession of one of Hungary's national treasure, the Crown of St. Stephen" and disclosed his plan to introduce legislation on the matter (Soviet Bloc Trade Hopes, 24). On May 5 of that year, Wilson introduced the bill to the House of Representatives with the aim of urging “the President to return the crown of Saint Stephen to Hungary as an indication to the people of Hungary of our respect for their traditions and of our desire for improved relations between the United States and Hungary” (Joint Resolution to Urge the President). Unfortunately, not many sources can be found connecting Congressman Wilson and the Crown's return; it remains unclear why it was in his interest to support the issue. Having been a fierce anti-Soviet, patriotic American, at first glance it seems contra-productive for him to give up these emblems of royalty to a Soviet puppet-government. His aim might have been to help induce a scenario in which the

Hungarian public's resentment for their government and the Soviet Union would increase by knowing that the symbolic artifacts were in safe hands in their own country.

Nevertheless, Wilson's bill was not passed, but it forced the AHF and its chairman, Dr Zoltán Béky to publish a new statement—the precise date is unknown, the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security only indicated the year 1975. In the statement, Béky reminded the readers of how the AHF had expressed its views on the issue “several times in the past, particularly in 1970, 1971 and 1974” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 7-8) and expressed how they were shocked “to hear that Congressman Williams [sic] and four other representatives introduced a bill to return the Crown to Hungary and will do everything in our [the AHF's] power to ensure that their resolution should not pass Congress” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 7-8). Béky was either misinformed or careless, as the congressman in question's name was Wilson, not Williams, and there were not four other representatives attached to the bill, but three: Clay, Edwards and Esch (Journal of the House of Representatives 2682). Indeed, there was a Congressman called Williams, whose name appeared in relation to the Crown, but in quite the opposite role: he was a cosponsor of a resolution for the “Safekeeping of the Hungarian Holy Crown”, introduced on July 30, 1971 (Simontsits 117). Nevertheless, Béky continued by listing how many organizations are united with the AHF on the issue, even the Boy and Girl Scout World Federation (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 pp. 7-8). Béky's statement was answered by Nicholas G. Andrews, who was serving as director for the State Department's Office of Eastern European Affairs. In his letter, Andrews politely corrected Béky's mistakes and explained that the State Department's opinion on the matter was the same as those of the “enclosed publication”—the one issued by the Bureau of Public Affairs discussed above (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/192 p. 11)

1.3 — NICHOLAS G. ANDREWS

Although, in his letter to Béky, Andrews was conveying the appeasing stance of the State Department, a year later in 1976 he was already working towards the opposite goal. In an interview conducted in 1990 by a member of The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training—an organization collecting and publishing material from the USA's diplomatic history—Andrews talked extensively about the return of the Crown. The interview has not yet been cited or published in accessible Hungarian scholarly research concerning the return of the Crown.

I think the most pleasure came from returning the Crown of St. Steven to Hungary. I like to think [it] may have been my initiative, partly because I thought it was right that the Crown should be in Hungary; and partly because I didn't quite see how it would advantage us in any way to keep it forever in the United States.

(Kennedy 21)

Andrews also described how he and his affiliates had worked to gain support among Hungarians living in the US:

We did a lot of soundings among the Hungarian émigré community, there was a former Prime Minister of Hungary [Ferenc Nagy] . . . He was in favor of the return of the Crown . . . An editor of an Hungarian language magazine in Cleveland was in favor [Zoltan Gombos]." (Kennedy 22)

After they had found supporters, the next step was to go through the State Department's bureaucracy:

Usually the objection comes immediately at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level. This time no objection at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level, or the Assistant secretary level, or the Counselor level . . . at some point the memo went over from the Secretary to Brzezinski." (Kennedy 22)

At this point in the interview, the questioner asked whether these events happened during the Carter administration, to which Andrews answered “[yes], During the Carter administration, ‘76” (Kennedy 22). This is an error, as President Carter’s term began in January of 1977. It seems that either Andrews’ recollection of the events was skewed, or the transcriber of the interview is at fault. A few sentences later the date given for the actual return ceremony is “January ‘77” (Kennedy 22) when in fact the correct year is 1978. Nevertheless, Andrews’ recollection is still relevant:

Brzezinski decided to call up some of his Hungarian friends and find out what they thought. There are several we know he might have called, Charles Gatty, Rudolph Turkish, others. Fortunately, they were all in favor . . . Meanwhile, the news got out, and there were several people who objected violently. I think Senator Helms was one, but perhaps the one who gave us the most trouble was Mary Rose Oakar . . . Charles Vanik, who had a lot of Hungarian Americans in his district was very much in favor [Oakar and Vanik will be mentioned later] . . . So there were lawsuits, and things of this kind, and State Department's lawyers, and Justice lawyers were able to fend off these lawsuits. (Kennedy 22)

Andrews finished with a brief account of the ceremonial trip to Budapest—he was talking in first-person plural, but probably referred to the State Department or the U.S. in general, as his name does not appear in the delegation list in the Hungarian state security’s Historical Archives (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 1-3), nor in Tibor Glant’s book (223-225).

1.4 — ISTVÁN B. GEREBEN AND ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON

The next batch of letters of protest collected by the State Security is the correspondence of István B. Gereben, the Executive Secretary of the Coordinating Committee of Hungarian Organizations in North America. The addressee of the first letter from the collection, dated December 15, 1977, was Elliot L. Richardson, the Secretary of Commerce. Gereben, speaking

for the American-Hungarian community, expressed his concerns over the Secretary's remarks from a month earlier on the 25th of November, during trade talks with Hungary concerning the MFN status and the Crown (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 17). According to Gereben, Richardson did not only speak favorably about extending the MFN status to Hungary, but also said: "I am also aware that the Hungarian crown jewels should be given back to Hungary" (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 17). Gereben resented the idea:

The Crown is not a commodity of trade . . . [the crown was] entrusted to the United States Government until the day that freedom and liberty were once again realities in Hungary . . . Five Presidents maintained this trust . . . [Hungary] is ruled by men put in power by Soviet tanks. Release of the Crown to the Hungarian regime for improved trade relations will mean that the United States breaks its sacred trust. (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 18)

He continued by comparing the regalia's significance to the Hungarian people to those of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. To give further ground to his outrage, Gereben invoked President Ford's statement from the 7th of October of the same year, addressed to Hungarian-Americans: "There is no plan to return the Crown of St. Stephen to Hungary, nor are we negotiating towards that end. The Crown remains with us" (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 18). Gereben concluded the letter by asking Richardson to advise his successor—Richardson worked under President Ford, who's term was at its finish—to study the history and significance of the Crown before offering it in negotiations (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 18).

Richardson's answer to Gereben was more on the diplomatic side. He explained that advancing bilateral connections with each country is one of the main aims of the U.S., and admitted that the issue of the Crown did in fact surface during trade talks with Hungary, but he also clearly stated, that he "did not, however, link the return of the Crown to trade matters.

The United States Government has never linked these issues and certainly does not consider the Hungarian Crown and the coronation regalia as objects which can be bartered or traded” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 19). Richardson also assured Gereben that President Ford’s statement from October was still very much in effect (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 20).

II. 1977–1978 — MAKING THE DECISION

After the initial protests by Hungarian-Americans, of which there were several more than the ones addressed above, the next main event was the Congressional debate of November 4, 1977, initiated by Mary Rose Oakar (Glant 180). The day also marked a turning point in the story: the debate surrounding the Crown escalated into the public sphere, heralding a series of demonstrations by Hungarian-Americans aided by representatives like Oakar—whose constituencies had significant numbers of Hungarians (“Mary Rose Oakar”)—a swarm of protesting letters sent to the White House, two Congressional Committee hearings and eventually a Supreme Court ruling (Glant 175).

The transcript of the November 4 debate in the House of Representatives also got into the hands of the Hungarian State Security (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/163 pp. 19-23). However, it was not the first time that Congress and Oakar had dealt with the issue. According to Glant, the Hungarian government payed close attention to the numerous resolutions, initiated between 1971 and 1978, to keep the Crown in the U.S. and protested in unofficial form each time (179), but not all of these appear in the State Security Archives.

2.1 — MARY ROSE OAKAR

In 1977, Mary Rose Oakar was a newly elected Representative of Ohio, under the Democratic party’s nomination. She served 8 terms until 1993, her defeat came partly due to a substantial redrawing of her district (“Mary Rose Oakar”). She took a fierce stand in protecting the interests of the significant group of Hungarians living in Ohio’s 20th Congressional district—since redrawn as the 10th district—who were mainly located in Cleveland, Oakar’s town of

birth (“OAKAR, Mary Rose”). By the late 1970s, Cleveland’s Hungarian population had declined significantly, but the community was still very much visible in the town formerly referred to as the American Debrecen—based on the false but popular premise that during the turn of the century, Cleveland had the largest number of Hungarian citizens after Budapest (“HUNGARIANS: Encyclopedia of Cleveland History”).

In his immense documentary collection, Simontsits presents a letter written by Oakar on the 13th of April 1977, addressed to non-other than Simontsits and his wife:

Your letter to Congressman Mottl regarding the Crown of St. Stephen was just forwarded to my office for response. I was pleased to receive your letter because your concern certainly is shared by me . . . Even though the cultural exchange agreement is a move toward improved international trade relations, I do not feel Hungary would be an appropriate home for the Crown at this time. I have been in constant communication with President Carter’s national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, so that they realize this crown is not merely a piece of jewelry or an object of art to the Hungarian people. It is a symbol of both spiritual and political freedoms that should be protected. I am expecting to introduce legislation to insure [sic] its safety. (298)

And, sure enough, thirteen days later, on the 26th of April, Oakar introduced the Crown of St. Stephen Protection Act, a “bill to forbid the President from returning the Crown of St. Stephen to Hungary without the express approval of Congress” (Simontsits 305). If enacted, this bill would have been a milestone in that, compared to previously proposed legislation that could have served to express congressional disapproval of a possible return, this one would have prohibited it completely, unless consented by the Congress (Simontsits 305).

Oakar’s legal basis for the proposed act is intriguing: since the Crown and the relics came into the possession of the United States at the end of WWII—in the June of 1945, after VE day, but before the conclusion of the Pacific theatre—Oakar argued that it fell under the scope

of article I, section 8 of the Constitution, according to which Congress is empowered to “make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water” (US Const. I, sec. 8). Since the bill did not receive a committee hearing, despite the 23 cosponsors who have joined Oakar (Simontsits 340), it is unknown, whether the reasoning would have stood its ground. It is, however, a fascinating legal situation that in order to protect the apparent interests of millions of Hungarians by withholding the royal emblems from a Soviet puppet-government, Oakar and her cosponsors would have had them declared as legitimate prizes of war. In a succeeding letter written on May 11, 1977, Congresswoman Oakar informed Simontsits about the bill she had proposed, and attached a transcript of her introductory speech in the House (Simontsits 309).

2.2 — ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT

Simontsits had also written to Zbigniew Brzezinski, who by then was serving as National Security Advisor under President Carter. The answer came on June 10, 1977, from the desk of Hodding Carter III, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs and Department Spokesman:

On behalf of Dr. Brzezinski, I am replying to your comments concerning the Crown of St Stephen of Hungary . . . It currently is stored in the United States under conditions appropriate to its unique character. There are no present plans to return the Crown. Its return will be based on further improvement in U.S.-Hungary relations. (Simontsits 311-312)

This last sentence marked a significant change, since until then, the directive of the State Department was the carefully crafted statement that the Crown was not an object of trade that may be used to reward diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The correspondence of István B. Gereben—Executive Secretary of the Coordinating Committee of Hungarian Organizations in North America—collected by the Hungarian State Security, also includes a letter sent to Brzezinski. In the mailgram dated March 28, 1977,

Gereben again wrote in the name of the Coordinating Committee of Hungarian Organizations to request that Brzezinski remind Congressman Charles Vanik that “the crown is not an object of barter or trade”. Gereben also referred to a telegram sent by President Carter to the Organization on September 25, 1976 in which the President “stated that before he arrives to a decision concerning the status of the crown, he will consult with our committee” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/162 p. 22). Whether Gereben received an answer from Brzezinski is unknown.

2.3 — JOHN GLENN, JOE BIDEN, AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Another letter in the correspondence of Simontsits and government officials, dated May 2, 1977—less than a week after Oakar’s proposed bill—was written by Senator John Glenn, the famous American hero, the first American astronaut to have reached orbit around the Earth:

Thank you for writing to express your opposition to Congressman Vanik’s proposal to return the Holy Crown to Hungary. Mr. Vanik has made this suggestion to the President and to the Department of State as a means of improving our relations with Hungary. To date, no action has been taken on the Congressman’s proposal, however, you can be assured that I will keep your views in mind should this matter come before the Senate in the future. (Simontsits 308)

John Glenn’s support would have been desirable, as not only was he a Senator and not just a Representative, he was also part of the Subcommittee on European Affairs (Simontsits 601), that would later be engaged with the issue, under the chairmanship of Joseph R. Biden (Simontsits 600-655). In a staff report written to the Committee on Foreign Relations—the parent committee of the Subcommittee on European Affairs—dated November 20, 1977, the compilers offered a hefty description and analysis of Hungary and its communist leadership (Simontsits 600-655). In the report’s letter of transmittal, Biden warned the members of the Committee on Foreign relations:

Having asked that the report include conclusions and recommendations, I should emphasize that the views expressed do not necessarily represent the position of any member of the Subcommittee. (Simontsits 604)

Near the end of the report in the Summary and Recommendations section (Simontsits 647-649), the following suggestion was given:

The Crown of St. Stephen—The United States should without further delay return to Hungary the Crown of St. Stephen and the associated regalia, which have been in American custody since the close of World War II. Continued retention would serve no purpose other than to perpetuate an unnecessary aggravation in U.S.-Hungary relations. (Simontsits 648)

If Biden's warning in the letter of transmittal is true, it is unclear whether Glenn ended up supporting the views of Simontsits and the other opposers of a return, although, in a letter written to Simontsits about a month later, he stated:

To date, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has not scheduled any action on this issue, however, you can be assured of my active participation in any future deliberations. (Simontsits 773)

However, in the same report, in a section attributed to Biden, the Senator reasoned against the opposition. Although the report was compiled under his chairmanship, its content should not be considered his work entirely, but of the other members of the Subcommittee as well. This section, however, contains descriptions of a Hungarian visit written in the first person, therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that this part is solely the Senator's work. Biden broke down the opposition's arguments into three groups and attempts to refute them one by one (Simontsits 636-637):

First, to those who believe that "the regalia of a monarch would not be safe with, or at least properly treated by, a Communist government", he appealed that since the Hungarian

government at the time had been restoring buildings from the days of the monarchy and advocated the return of the Crown, Kádár obviously would “attach great importance to this national treasure”. Secondly, Biden argued against those who believed that returning the regalia would further legitimize the Kádár-regime, stating that the Hungarian government was from the American standpoint already “legitimately representing [the] nation”. Finally, against those who might oppose the return because they see “Kádár as the betrayer of the 1956 Revolution, and who argue that the Crown’s return should be delayed at least until his successor is in power”, Biden simply stated that they cannot be reasoned with logically:

Based . . . on the deep emotions of those who fought against Soviet power in 1956, this argument cannot be refuted rationally. It can only be said that, whatever his role then, Kádár today appears to be accepted by most Hungarian citizens as a legitimate leader who has brought Hungary social peace if not independence, stability if not political freedom, and unprecedented wealth if not an egalitarian utopia. (Simontsits 597)

All three of Biden’s counterarguments present an idealized, permissive viewpoint of Hungary during the period. Perhaps his visit to the country—with his newlywed wife, a few months before writing the report, between August 8 and 12, 1977—had left an unrealistic impression of the Kádár regime in his mind, but it is just as reasonable to suggest that he was following President Carter’s détente policy. During the visit, he had assured the officials of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the U.S. would be returning the Crown before Christmas that year (qtd. in Bubik and Garadnai). Biden also describes in his subcommittee report meeting an “elderly and astute Hungarian [who] recommended that the Crown be first transferred to the Pope, who could then present it again to Hungarians nearly a millennium after his predecessor Sylvester . . .” (598). Biden refuted the idea, as he believed that it was

already high time for the U.S. to return the Crown “quietly and with respect, directly and without delay” (598).

2.4 — LETTERS TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Naturally, it was President Carter who would receive most of the blame for the decision, in the form of demonstrations, articles, memoranda and letters, some of which Simontsits also presents in his collection. As mentioned above, Charles Vanik, the representative of Ohio’s 22nd district, issued a request to President Carter for returning the Crown and its associated regalia to Hungary.

2.4.1 — *George V. Voinovich*

Having received the news from the “Hungarian Community in Cleveland”, George V. Voinovich, Cuyahoga County’s Commissioner—the county in which Cleveland is located—wrote a letter of protest to the President—with copies sent to Vanik and Brzezinski, dated April 13, 1977:

Your returning the Crown and jewels to the Soviet Hungarian Government would be a blow to the hopes of Hungarian people, not only in the United States but throughout the world, who long for freedom and independence for their brothers and sisters who live under Soviet domination in Hungary . . . The Hungarian people of the United States and other nationality groups, . . . now behind the Iron Curtain, have been most appreciative of your stand for human rights. Your granting of Congressman Vanik’s request would not be consistent with your stand. I suggest that you write to [the Congressman] that the United States will return St. Stephen’s Jewels when the Soviet troops leave Hungary and when the people of Hungary are given an opportunity for free and independent elections . . . which the United States promised them after the Second World War. (Simontsits 299)

As a warning, Voinovich also added: “I want you to know that I am a Republican, and one of two Republican Commissioners in the largest county in the State of Ohio with probably the largest Hungarian population in the United States” (Simontsits 300). The commissioner finished in a more supporting tone: “I also want you to know that I personally appreciate your strong stand for human rights . . . Please don’t buckle under to [sic] the pressure from the promoters of Henry Kissinger’s foreign policy” (Simontsits 300). The letter was not answered by the President, but by Hodding Carter III—whose role in the State Department has been described above in 2.2—writing on behalf of President Carter, thanking Voinovich “for taking the trouble to let [the President] have your views on U.S. foreign policy” (Simontsits 301). A bit more than half a year earlier, on September 27, 1976, Voinovich had also written a letter to Carter’s predecessor, President Ford, several sentences of which are worded almost identically to his letter to Carter:

It has recently been brought to my attention by members of the Hungarian Community in Cleveland that a request has been [made] to you by the Soviet dominated Hungarian government to obtain St. Stephen’s Crown . . . in safekeeping at Ft. Knox . . . I suggest that you write to the Hungarian Government and indicate that the United States will return the [Crown jewels] when the Soviet troops leave Hungary and give the people an opportunity for free and independent elections or self-determination, which is what we promised after the Second World War. (Simontsits 291)

Voinovich, menacingly, also reminded Ford that “this is an election year and it is extremely difficult for me, as a Republican elected county official, to defend your foreign policy in regard to the captive nations” (Simontsits 291). It is interesting that Voinovich was inclined to bring up his party affiliations in his letters to both presidents. To President Ford, a Republican, his warning was grounded on the premise that he would find it difficult to support him in the upcoming elections if Ford were to continue with such foreign policy,

while in his letter to Carter he made sure that the Democrat would know to deal with him as a force to be reckoned with, as he, a Republican county commissioner, had one of the largest groups of Hungarian-Americans behind him.

On the 4th of November, still 1977, right after President Carter's decision was made public, Voinovich once more wrote to Carter in a politically fueled letter:

I was astonished to read in this morning's Cleveland Plain Dealer that you intend to return St. Stephen's Crown and Jewels to the Hungarian Government. Those freedom-loving Hungarians who have immigrated to the United States consider the Jewels a symbol of Hungarian freedom and independence. (Simontsits 360)

Voinovich carefully drew attention to his being a true Clevelander with claiming to have read the news of the return from the local newspaper, and also referred to Hungarians as "freedom-loving" (Simontsits 360), like a true politician would in the middle of their campaign. He would later serve as the governor of Ohio, the mayor of Cleveland and as a Senator as well. In the hastily composed letter, Voinovich had also repeated a whole sentence from his previous letter discussed above: "Your returning the Crown and Jewels to the Soviet Hungarian Government ... under Soviet domination in Hungary" (Simontsits 360) and again assumed an intimidating tone:

Mr. President, your popularity is slipping in this country because of the 'double talk' coming out of the White House. I can assure you that if the Crown and Jewels are returned, the Captive Nation people of the United States will work to make sure you are a 1-term President. (Simontsits 360)

2.4.2 — *Mary Rose Oakar*

Being the fierce advocate of Hungarians opposing the return of the Crown, Representative Mary Rose Oakar had also written to President Carter on the 3rd of November 1977, the day when news of Carter's decision has reached her:

I must express my deep sorrow and disappointment, both in the action you have taken [deciding to return the Crown], and the manner in which your administration has handled the issue . . . the Crown has, to the Hungarian people, evolved into a sacred symbol of the independence and legitimacy of their government. We will be true to its heritage, and to the brave Hungarians who entrusted it to us at the end of World War II, only by refusing to return it except to a Government of Hungary that is independent, and that possesses the legitimacy conferred by the consent of the people . . . Surely you yourself know the origins of [the current] government. I recall so well your debate last year with then President Ford, in which you properly expressed your dismay at and disagreement with his statement that the people of Eastern Europe are not dominated by the Soviet Union. I know the people of Cleveland of Eastern European heritage, many of whom I represent, took great heart from your comments. (Simontsits 342-343)

Oakar, similarly to Voinovich's correspondence with both Presidents, highlighted the potential loss of a voting base:

Frankly, they view return of the Crown to the present Government of Hungary as a betrayal of these [President Carter's] principles, and this is an opinion that I share. . . The fact that they [Hungarian-Americans] were excluded from the decision making process is also of deep concern to me. (Simontsits 343)

Oakar also pointed out her dismay concerning her own experience with the debate, or rather, lack thereof:

Not only were these people excluded . . . but also their representatives in Congress were likewise excluded. As one who has repeatedly expressed my views on the Crown to officials of your Administration and has introduced a bill to require that Congress

be given a say in any decision on the Crown [Crown of St. Stephen Protection Act, discussed in 2.1], I frankly believe I was deceived by these officials. (Simontsits 343)

She described three instances of these deceptions:

In April of this year [1977] . . . I spoke with Mr. Brzezinski . . . and he advised me that he knew nothing of any plan to return the Crown . . . On April 5, I received a letter from John A. Armitage, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, stating, quite simply, ‘There are no present plans to return the Crown to Hungary’. On April 27, I held a meeting in my office of representatives of both national Hungarian American organizations, the Hungarian community council in Cleveland, and two representatives of the National Security Council, William G. Nyland and Robert E. Hunter. These gentlemen again informed us that there were no plans to return the Crown to Hungary. (Simontsits 343-344)

Oakar continued with her experience of receiving news of Carter’s arrangement:

Then, on November 3, after 5 p. m. on the date the House was supposed to go out of session, my office received a call informing me of the decision. Obviously, it is much easier for you to make such an announcement when Congress is out of session and its members are all in their respective Districts . . . (Simontsits 344).

Oakar finished with urging President Carter to reconsider his decision or at least hold personal meetings with the leaders of the Hungarian-American community (Simontsits 344).

2.4.3 — Further letters

President Carter’s decision had unsurprisingly drawn the attention of the Hungarian organizations in America and around the world. Zoltán Béky, whose protesting statements and letters have been showcased above in 1.1-1.3, wrote to the President on November 4, on behalf of the American Hungarian Federation, asking him not to return the Crown. Béky also pointed out the poor choice of the date:

It was especially deplorable that the announcement was made on November 4, the 21st anniversary of the day of infamy when Soviet troops invaded Hungary and while legislation is pending in the Congress to prevent the return of the Crown. (Simontsits 354)

The same tone was struck in a newsletter of the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, claiming that Mindszenty's first request from the organization upon his 1971 release was that they do everything to keep the Holy Crown in Freedom: "It must never be returned to the Communist Government. Ask your members to help save it" (Simontsits 355).

Organizations from outside the U.S. have also expressed their disappointment to President Carter. The Union of Hungarian Association in Switzerland in a hefty letter had pointed out that by legitimizing Kádár's government, that was kept in power by the USSR army, other nations of Central and Eastern Europe would lose their faith in Carter's commitment to human rights, which was a much welcomed change in American foreign policy all over the world (Simontsits 357).

On the home front, not all politicians were as zealous at expressing their dismay as Voinovich. The mayor of Cleveland, Ralph J. Perk, had written a short, formal telegram that seems to have been aimed at the Hungarians living in his city rather than the President (Simontsits 359), although the same allegations can be made of fiercer letters by local politicians, such as Voinovich's agitating writing presented above in 2.4.1.

2.5 — SUPPORTERS OF THE RETURN

Anticipating the backlash that the decision of returning the Crown would bring, the Carter administration as a preventive measure attempted to find Hungarian supporters. As Nicholas G. Andrews—in the interview discussed in 1.3—put it, the State Department "did a lot of soundings among the Hungarian émigré community" (Kennedy 22) in order to seek out

esteemed Hungarian-Americans who believed that handing over the Crown was the right step to take and who would also voice their reasons for supporting the return.

2.5.1 — *Zoltán Gombos*

One of these individuals was Zoltán Gombos, a Hungarian newspaper publisher living in Cleveland, owner of Liberty Publishing Co. and by extension the paper *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* (Simontsits 807 and Glant 189). He eventually received the honor of being given a place in the American delegation escorting the Crown to Budapest, as a “representative of society” (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 1-3). In an interview conducted by a Cleveland-based television on January 3, 1978, after the Supreme Court’s refusal of an emergency order to block the return, Gombos said the following:

I am supporting [the return] because the Crown doesn’t belong to every one of the Hungarian people [he most likely meant that it should not be decided by the opposers alone, but rather kept in Hungary, where it belongs]. And, secondly, it can do a lot more good to be a spiritual symbol in Hungary than displayed in Fort Knox . . . Well, [Hungary] may not be free, but it is a recognized government. We have many diplomatic relations with them, we recognize them, we carry on trade relations with them just like we carry on trade relations with all the countries. (Simontsits 807)

The same television channel interviewed Gombos again on January 5, at Andrews Air Force Base, before the plane carrying the Crown and the delegation took off to Budapest: “I think most Hungarians do feel like President Carter and myself that the crown belongs to the Hungarian people” (Simontsits 823). This distinction between American-Hungarians and Hungarians living in their own country was invoked by him once again in an interview after the return ceremony, back in Cleveland:

I do think that I agree with President Carter that the Crown belongs to the Hungarian people. As a matter of fact, in the presentations to Hungary of Secretary Vance,

emphasis was not to the Hungarian government because it's from people to people, from the American people returning it to the Hungarian people where it belongs.

(Simontsits 884)

2.5.2 — *Béla Király*

Béla Király, the commander in chief of the revolutionary National Guard [Nemzetőrség] in 1956, whose lifepath has been a subject of debate for decades, had also joined the supporting side. He was invited into the congressional hearing of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East (Simontsits 409-572) on November 9, 1977, where he gave a long statement (Simontsits 487-495). He began by thanking the members of Congress for having “such concern about the future of Hungarians”, whether they were on the supporting or the opposing side (Simontsits 488). He drew a comparison between the origins of the Crown and the current debate, connecting the superpower of today—i.e. the U.S.A.—with Pope Sylvester, who “endowed St. Stephen with the power of a papal legate” (Simontsits 488) and thus helped the birth of the Hungarian nation. He argued that by giving back the Crown, the U.S. could “evoke in [Hungarians] a kind of hope” (Simontsits 488) to have their own sovereign state again. He also mentioned another relic that was taken during the war, the “blessed right hand of St. Stephen” (Simontsits 488), and commended President Truman for returning it to the country in the summer of 1945, an event which, according to Király, drew to the streets maybe as much as 1 million Hungarians upon its return (Simontsits 488-489).

Since Király was respected by the Hungarian expatriates for his role in the Revolution, his support was invaluable to the State Department and President Carter. Therefore, it would be interesting to know if they were aware of the questions surrounding his role in the Revolution and the Rákosi era. Király's statements and historical descriptions have been disputed many times, his description of the “battle of Nagykovácsi”—his supposedly biggest role in 1956—for example has been branded as great exaggeration (qtd. in November 4. és a

Hamis Atomtámadás). Before 1956, during the Rákosi era, Király's military career had skyrocketed after the show trial of General György Pálffy. In an interview conducted in 1989, included in a documentary series titled *Múltbanzés* [*Looking Back*], Király described how he did not believe that the espionage accusations against General Pálffy were true. The interviewer then confronted him with an article published in a Hungarian newspaper during the trial: a report of a speech given by Király in which he condemned Pálffy and talked of him as if the allegations were true. In the film, a military journalist also gave his recollections of Király's remarks. Király in the interview reacted by saying "mea culpa" several times and claimed that he had no choice (Sólyom). Of course, it is not the intention here to degrade Király's remarkable career and military achievements, especially since he was later also arrested under false accusations, in 1951 ("Király Béla"), but it is also not too far-fetched to ask whether the U.S. intelligence services knew of Király's questionable behavior during the show trial of the eventually executed General Pálffy, before the State Department asked him to support the return of the Crown.

Király's supporting stance in the Subcommittee hearing inevitably drew him into the crosshairs of the Hungarian emigrant press. In the Canadian *Magyar Élet*, Dr András Pogány on the 30th of November had published a report of the hearing, in which he called Király a "dissident" and asked the question: "What should we write of Béla Király? He's not even worth writing about" (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/163 p. 31). In the heated article, Pogány also accused Király to be or to have been on the payroll of US authorities, but he offered no proof, and his antagonistic tone of the whole proceeding suggests that he wrote the allegation in the heat of the moment.

2.5.3 — *István Deák*

One of Brzezinski's allies in his campaign to support the return of the Crown was his friend and colleague at Columbia University, Professor István Deák (Glant 187). Professor Deák, a

former Hungarian citizen living in the U.S. and at the time serving as the Director of Columbia University's Institute on East Central Europe, had, similarly to Béla Király, took part in the subcommittee hearing on November 7, 1977 (Simontsits 559-560). Beforehand, on October 21, he published a study of the Crown's significance to the Hungarian people, on the request of Brzezinski (Glant 187). In the paper written less than a month earlier, Deák explained that he does not believe that Hungarian-Americans will protest the return, since their community is unorganized, lacks renowned leaders and substantial political-cultural institutions. Since most of them visit Hungary often—only a small number are banned from the country or are not willing to enter it—they have a relatively favorable view of Kádár's government (qtd. in Glant 187). At the subcommittee hearing, he had the following to say of Hungary:

Today's Hungarian regime is a Communist one . . . Still, this regime can be trusted to safeguard the Crown. The Kádár government has promised to exhibit the Crown to permanent public viewing . . . it will help the country along the road of genuine independence . . . Governments come and go, but the nations remain. Long after the present Hungarian regime is gone, the Crown will still be in Hungary . . . Hungary is today the least oppressed and the most prosperous country in the Soviet Bloc. It is not a free country in our eyes, but it is a country that is moving towards freedom.

(Simontsits 559-560)

In his memorandum written on Brzezinski's directive, Deák also brought up the idea of a potential compromise that the Hungarian government could offer in gratitude: they should allow for the establishment of a position of American Studies professor at ELTE (Glant 187-188). In Deák, Brzezinski found another supporter of the return from the field of academics, while also granting him a personal favor. Deák was not allowed to travel to Hungary, but by being on the American delegation's list, he would be able to return and visit his family (Glant

188), and indeed he did arrive with the Americans as part of the representatives of society (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 1-3 and Simontsits 827). Although in the eyes of the opposers of the return, Deák was a traitor of his country, he cannot realistically be viewed as such, nor can his expertise be questioned. Glant discloses an amusing anecdote about the professor: when the State Department called him up before the trip—as it did with all members of the delegation to see if they have any special wishes—Deák asked, since the Crown’s guard members have always been aristocrats, whether he may be given the title of baron for a couple of days (Glant 233).

III. THE HOME FRONT: NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENTS

It is intriguing how often the historical and ideological importance of the Crown was brought up in the U.S. by both the supporters and opposers of its return. The former’s argument in the several cases described above was that it might help induce in the Hungarian people a memory of sovereignty that in turn would hopefully strengthen their distrust in the socialist government and evoke a sense of nationalism, while the latter believed that because of this symbolic power, Kádár’s government should not be allowed to get their hands on the thousand-year-old relic. Were these idealistic, sentimental assumptions well-grounded? It seems that since these Hungarian-Americans had been nurturing their heritage for decades in the free world instead of socialist Hungary, they were stuck with an image of the past that could not really have such significant impact on the people stuck in oppression.

Although the assumption was true that the Kádár regime would benefit from the further recognition of its legitimacy that the Crown’s return would bring, it was also true that the government was already accepted by the U.S. and the West. Giving back the regalia was instead rather a recognition of the improving relations between the two countries and not about admitting the legitimacy of Kádár’s rule. Furthermore, although it might have induced a sense of nationalism in Hungarians, this would not pose a real threat to Kádár, partly because

the generation that grew up after the war did not have the Crown's essential, nation-empowering role engraved in their minds. Kádár was thus in an easier political position than the United States, where the prolonged possession caused more of a diplomatic dilemma than it did for Hungary.

3.1 — 1950S AND 1960S — ATTEMPTS BY MÁTYÁS RÁKOSI AND JÁNOS KÁDÁR

Naturally, the question of the Crown's whereabouts and its potential return has surfaced before Kádár's rule, in the Rákosi era as well. The issue came up already in 1950 with the Vogeler case: an American businessman—the director of IT&T's Hungarian subsidiary—was imprisoned under false accusations by the ÁVH and later offered as exchange for the Americans if they give back the Crown (Glant 79-80). According to Mevius, Rákosi probably never considered the possibility to be real (Mevius 2). Glant, however, states that Hungary set four demands for the U.S. to fulfill in return for the release of Robert A. Vogeler, the last of which was the return of the Crown. Whether Rákosi's demands were serious or not, the news were leaked to *The New York Times*, which promptly published it on the front page and thus heralded a series of letters of protest by Hungarian-American emigrants. Although returning the Crown to Rákosi was in all probability not going to happen anyway, the leaked news made it inconceivable for the U.S. to seriously consider it (80-81).

In 1962, the Kádár regime began its conciliatory process with the U.S., part of which was requesting the return of the Crown. Negotiations concerning the problem began with the Vatican as well, but these were considered less vital than those with the U.S. (Glant 87). However, in 1963, at a session of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Central Committee, an event connecting the Crown and the Vatican was discussed, which revealed that the Hungarians did not know where the Crown was located. On an exhibition held by the Church in Rome—"Hallgató egyház" (Hal'ko 84)—one of the displayed objects seemed to be St. Stephen's Crown. The records of this session of the

Political Committee suggest that it was not obvious for Budapest that the displayed Crown was in fact only a copy of the original. They state that Cardinal Agostino Casaroli—the main diplomat of the Vatican at the time, to be elected Secretary of State in 1979—pointed out to Hungarian inquiries that they have only exhibited a replica and that the Vatican knew nothing of the Crown’s current whereabouts. Cardinal Casaroli also reminded Hungary that the Vatican had already refused to aid negotiations with the Americans about the issue, since they had no authority to do so, as the Crown was considered to be a legitimate prize of war by the U.S. (MNL OL 288. f. 5/318. p. 71). This Political Committee session seems to have not yet been used in scholarly research about the Crown’s return.

3.2 — NEGOTIATING THE RETURN

During the 1970s, the return of the Crown was brought to the foreground of Hungarian foreign policy, but rather in a way of feeling out and assessing the situation than as setting outright demands. By the second half of the decade, this strategy was somewhat expanded. In a session of the Political Committee, on July 27, 1976, on the request of György Aczél, the committee agreed upon the following:

The Political Committee approvingly notes that during his visit to the USA, Cardinal László Lékai, Archbishop of Esztergom, wishes to raise the issue of the return of Hungarian Crown in ecclesiastic circles.⁴ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/697. p. 17)

Interestingly, it was on the very same day that President Ford received a report prepared by the National Security Council, in which he was notified about Cardinal Lékai’s visit, but was also reassured that Lékai would not bring up the issue of the Crown in public (qtd. in Glant 145-146). After the Cardinal’s visit, the U.S. was cherishing hopes that further Hungarian ecclesiastical figures would express their support for the return, in the hope that such acts would aid in persuading the right-wing Hungarian-Americans. Lékai was also asked by the Americans to write a letter of support to the American National Council of Churches, but

Kádár's leadership was worried that by involving the church this way would give the appearance that the U.S. was in fact returning the Crown to the church (Borhi 356).

A year later, in 1977, on the 23rd of August, the Political Committee decided that in response to U.S. ambassador Kaiser's questions posed to András Gyenes—the secretary of foreign affairs in the Central Committee (“Gyenes András”)—they would issue the following answers:

In the event that the US makes a decision to return the Crown and crown jewels, we can discuss the settlement issues through the State Department; knowing the composition of the American delegation, we will form the Hungarian delegation. The Crown and crown jewelry will be placed in Budapest, and we will allow the Hungarian and foreign audiences to view them in accordance with our original intentions.⁵ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/725. p. 19)

This is the first of several instances in the Political Committee records of the promise to display the Crown in a place freely accessible to everyone, Hungarians and foreigners alike. This was one of the major demands of the Americans; it is amusing to see that the Political Committee refers to it as their own original intention.

Later that year, on the December 13 session of the Political Committee, the accepted proposal—with the comments of János Kádár, Frigyes Puja, Béla Biszku among others— included the following:

[The Political Committee] instructs the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to hold further conciliation negotiations on the text of the press release of the return. Make the sentence about visiting the exhibition of the Crown and coronation jewels read as follows: 'The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic will exhibit the crown of St. Stephen and the jewelry of the coronation in Budapest in a way that the

population of the country, Hungarians living abroad and foreigners visiting Hungary can visit them'.⁶ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 9)

Here, the Committee once more emphasized to the U.S. that they will exhibit the Crown in a place visitable to all. Further details of the press release are specified:

The agreed-upon press release . . . shall be published by the Hungarian Telegraphic Office for the entire press. [The Committee] confirms that the agreed-upon release will disclose the foreseeable date of return. However, [the Committee] considers it unnecessary to announce the date of the delegation's arrival in Budapest separately.

The Political Committee agrees that the Crown . . . shall be accepted ceremoniously in the Parliament by comrade Antal Apró.⁷ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)

Several important decisions were described here. The press release being rolled out to all newspapers by the Hungarian Telegraphic Office comes as no surprise, and the choice of not publishing the arrival of the delegation clearly indicates that Kádár's all-around directive was to restrain public reaction to the return. The decision for the Crown to be ceremoniously received by Antal Apró, the speaker of Parliament, was to please the wishes of the Americans who were adamant that, instead of the government, the regalia were to be returned to the people of Hungary. Under normal circumstances, the speaker of Parliament is not connected to the government, however, as the U.S. must have known, Apró was one of Kádár's closest allies.

The Political Committee's resolutions also concerned the handing-over ceremony and the participants who would be allowed to attend:

The representatives of the Hungarian Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Israelite churches, the representatives of the free churches shall be invited, including Cardinal László Lékai, the Archbishop of Esztergom. The composition of those attending the reception ceremony (about 200 people) should be of a Patriotic People's Front nature.

Church members present should also indicate their position on the Patriotic People's Front.⁸ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)

With inviting representatives of all religions, Kádár could dismiss to an even greater extent the misbelief that the Crown was being given back to the church. And by requiring that everyone, even the religious representatives must showcase the unity of the Patriotic People's Front, Kádár could ensure that the Hungarian delegation would give the impression of people united under a same cause, that supersedes even religion itself. The Committees directives were described further:

The Political Committee decides that Comrade János Kádár will only receive the head of the American delegation, and only if him, using his authority to do so, specifically requests the meeting. [The Committee] draws attention to the fact that the press about the event shall moderate and in line with [the Committee's] political interests.⁹ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)

Again, assurance is given to the Americans that Kádár would in no way act as if it was him or his leadership that was receiving the Crown. Originally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that Kádár should meet with the leaders of the American delegation in the presence MTI and television reporters, but this was reconsidered (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 63-77).

The above described resolutions of the Committee were in response to the first part of a proposal—written by minister of foreign affairs Frigyes Puja, labeled strictly confidential—laying out the requests of the U.S. ambassador in relation with the handing over ceremony, which included the following:

It would be expedient if, in addition to the official Hungarian delegation, personalities representing a wide range of the population would be present at the handover, including Cardinal Lékai and the leaders of the Hungarian churches. Representatives of the Hungarian, American and international press should be present at the handover

ceremony. The crown and coronation jewelry will be permanently exhibited in a public place for viewing by anyone, including people of Hungarian descent living abroad.¹⁰ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 63-77)

As can be seen, it was upon the request of the U.S. that representatives of several Hungarian churches shall be present at the ceremony. However, this request went in line with Kádár's efforts of distancing the return of the Crown from the Catholic church, since having the leaders of several different religions present meant that the significance of the Catholic Church would be reduced. The next requirements of the U.S. are even more interesting:

[The two governments should] urgently issue a pre-agreed announcement in both capitals concerning the return of the crown. [The Americans] need this for domestic policy reasons, as two senators and two representatives have filed a lawsuit against President Carter to prevent the return of the crown . . . [The ambassador] asked that we do not replace "St. Stephen" with "King Stephen I", because in America only the former is known, the change would cause confusion . . . the Hungarian side will acknowledge the reception of the Crown in a letter stating that it has no further claims against the USA.¹¹ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 63-77)

The U.S. insisting that the announcement should urgently be published shows how much of an impact the issue had on Carter's presidency and popularity; his administration needed the final, irrevocable statement of Hungary for the case to be closed at last. And, since the American people had learned of the issue from the presses as "St. Stephen's Crown", it was vital that the Hungarian statements be on the same line. This might have caused some headaches for Kádár and the Political Committee, as at the time in Hungary the Crown was not referred to as Saint, due to obvious reasons. Even more important was the assurance of the Hungarian government that the country would not set any more claims against the U.S. regarding the Crown.

The second part of Frigyes Puja's proposal included further directives that the Hungarian side was to follow. Again, the assurance of exhibiting the Crown in a place accessible to everyone was made, but a hitherto unseen plan was discussed as well: "The final exhibition space will be located in the Buda Castle. The Minister of Culture, in agreement with the Minister of the Interior, shall take the necessary measures to this end"¹² (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 73). No further mention was made of this plan, which obviously did not come to fruition. It would be interesting to find out what the reasoning behind it was: placing the symbol of feudalism and royalty in the location where its significance would be elevated even more seems to be an odd choice by Kádár. The Political Committee probably soon realized that this would be a mistake and thus discarded the idea. The proposal of Puja gave further instructions concerning the press reaction:

Our propaganda should be moderate, its tone appropriate to the event; in reporting the return of the Crown, do not criticize the U.S. government for the delay, modestly appreciate the move they have now taken, and do not overestimate it . . . [The press] should emphasize that our consistent, principle-based politics of the last twenty years, our internal achievements, and the growth of Hungary's international prestige led to a significant event . . . *Népszabadság* should publish an article after the handover of the crown.¹³ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 73-75)

As mentioned before, Kádár did not want elevated media coverage of the event; ordering *Népszabadság* to publish an article after the fact also served this goal. By "modestly appreciating" the U.S. and not criticizing it, the Hungarian government could remain diplomatic and courteous while also implying that the act should have been undertaken long ago, since the "principle-based politics" have covered two decades, in which there would have been ample time for the return. The instructions follow:

Cinema news reels may also, after the return, distribute a previously made documentary on the history of the Crown, adapted to the above guidelines of our propaganda; American and other foreign correspondents wishing to enter the country for the return shall be allowed if possible. Rejection should only take place in extreme cases, such as correspondents of Radio Free Europe or of fascist Hungarian newspapers.¹⁴ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 73-75)

The documentary being “adapted” to the needs of the Party is also a characteristic decision of the regime, but the approval of entry for foreign correspondents is more interesting. As mentioned above, despite being banned from Hungary, Professor István Deák was given entry on the occasion. Furthermore, according to the State Security archives, Thomas Bodin, a correspondent of Radio Free Europe accredited to the US State Department, was officially invited by the American delegation, and allowed into Hungary (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 1-3). There is no record of the arrival of correspondents of “fascist” Hungarian newspapers.

In a session conducted two weeks later, on December 28, the Political Committee arrived on the following decisions:

[The Political Committee] confirms its previous decision not to announce in advance the date of arrival of the aircraft carrying the Crown and coronation jewels and the US delegation; this will be made public afterwards . . . The handover ceremony will be broadcasted by the Hungarian radio and television from recorded material. [The Committee] allows that the Hungarian Postal Office may issue a stamp in connection with the return of the Crown.¹⁵ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/734. p. 31)

Not only would the public be not notified of the incoming event, there would be no live broadcast presented to them either. At least a special stamp would be allowed to commemorate the occasion.

3.3 — AFTER THE RETURN

Although, as mentioned above, Hungary had declared to have no further claims against the U.S., talks about the Most Favored Nation status were promptly brought up after the return of the Crown. On January 10, 1978, the Political Committee came to the following resolution:

The Political Committee notes that, as stated at the meeting between the Hungarian and US Foreign Ministers, an exchange of letters will take place in the near future, which will form the basis for the start of negotiations on the granting of the Most Favored Nation status. A draft of the letter should be submitted to the Political Affairs Committee.¹⁶ (MNL OL 288. f. 5/735. p. 23)

The session also discussed the placement of the Crown. It agreed that the National Museum is the ideal place and that, after establishing the necessary conditions, the regalia shall be put on exhibition there. The event would also receive a short news article in the press. Interestingly, there was still debate about the final placing of the Crown, but no mention was made of the Buda Castle, as in the earlier discussions (MNL OL 288. f. 5/735. p. 23). By the next session of the Committee, on January 28, the National Museum was ready for visitors and the Committee decided that the exhibition would open on the 31st (MNL OL 288. f. 5/736. p. 15).

IV. THE CROWN IN HUNGARY

4.1 — STATE SECURITY REPORTS SURROUNDING THE RETURN EVENT

Finally, *Air Force Two* carrying the Crown and the American delegation had arrived on January 5, 1978 at ten p.m. (Glant 233). In accordance with the Political Committee's directives, the newspapers wrote of the event only on the next day. Naturally, members of the international press had also traveled to Budapest and have all sent their drafts about the return ceremony to their respective countries, which were intercepted by the State Security. A report written by police colonel Andor Igaz, head of the III/III-3 division, sent directly to Szilveszter

Harangozó, who at the time was the vice division leader of the III/III division, described the operation:

. . . the separate telex lines of Western journalists and correspondents who arrived in Budapest . . . are under observation. By the time the report was released, around 45-50 reports had been sent about the incident. The tone of the reports was objective, mainly describing the events surrounding the arrival of the Crown and in detail the course of the official handover, as well as summarizing the story of the Crown's adventurous journey. Some correspondents highlighted President Carter's determination to support the return of the Crown despite the opposition of American right-wing Hungarian emigration.¹⁷ (ÁBTL 3.1.5 O-20016, part I, p. 46)

These were mostly good news for the State Security, as they meant that foreign press reports would not only be objective, but by praising Carter, they would condemn the newspapers of the Hungarian expatriates. The report also mentions a British journalist working for Reuter [sic] who emphasized the role of Cardinal Lékai as having aided the return by improving relations between Hungary and the church (ÁBTL 3.1.5 O-20016, part I, p. 46). This contradicted the official stance of the Political Committee since they did not want the church to be credited for the return.

The report also featured a letter that was intercepted by the State Security, written to Theodore Weiss, Hungarian-born U.S. congressman, by Norman Lamm, the president of the New York-based Yeshiva University, addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Budapest—Congressman Weiss was staying there as part of the delegation. Weiss was one of the major representatives in favor of returning the Crown. On the November 4, 1977 session of the House, he said that as the only member who was born and partly raised in Hungary, he found “it rather reassuring that the Hungarian people still feel such a strong tie to their history and tradition and especially to Christianity and Catholicism that they are eager in their desire for

the return of the Crown . . .” (Simontsits 378). He was very harshly criticized by the opposers, but in the end received a place on the American delegation (Simontsits 826 and ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 1-3). In his letter, Lamm asked the following of Weiss:

I urgently ask you to speak to the Hungarian authorities about their promise that they have allegedly made: if the crown of St. Stephen is returned, the world-famous Kaufmann Hebraica, currently guarded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, will be released to the Jewish community. This collection includes the priceless Kaufmann Hagadah, bibles, and countless high-value religious relics. Yeshiva University would be the logical place for this book collection. We undertake to preserve the library and make it accessible to the public, especially to the many Hungarians in our city.¹⁸
(ÁBTL 3.1.5 O-20016, part I, p. 47)

The Kaufmann Hebraica library is still in the possession of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Schöner). No mention of Lamm was made in the works of Glant and Simontsits, and no information can be found in accessible research that indicates that the Hungarian government did in fact give such a promise.

4.2 — STATE SECURITY REPORTS CONCERNING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

By this point, details surrounding the exhibition were being decided by the State Security. A report written on January 5, 1978, by Dr Ferenc Fülep, director of the National Museum, and Sándor Kiss police Major outlined the initial security measures to be taken. The duty of establishing the technical security system and providing the personnel fell on the Civil armed guard [Polgári fegyveres őrség]. The regulations, as one would imagine, were quite strict: the treasury room, in which the Crown and its associated regalia were placed, would need to be opened by two keys—in the possession of the director and the head of the archeology department—always in the presence of an armed guard. A cord in front of the door would need to be sealed on every occasion, and everything needed to be put on record by the guards.

(ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part I, pp. 39-40). The already existing number of guards was also extended, from four to 16 (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part I, pp. 41-43).

Almost immediately after the Crown was placed in the museum, rumors began of the Hungarian government allegedly planning to remove it from there. A report of police major Sándor Bíró—member of III/III-5/b—written on January 17th, described the event's background based on the explanation of the museum's director. Dr Fülep informed Bíró about a conversation between himself and Dr Béla Köpeczi (member of MTA) in which the latter mentioned that a Hungarian art historian in her recent visit to Vienna, in December of last year, gave a report to the Austrian press claiming that the government intends to close the exhibition. Consequently, the U.S. Embassy in Budapest inquired whether these rumors were of merit, which the Hungarian government denied. Bíró believed that the rumors originated from the planned restoration of the Crown, but that would not entail permanently closing the exhibition. Bíró admitted in the report that he did not know the identity of the art historian in question and suggested that the appropriate comrades [i.e. members of the III/III division] working at MTA should investigate the case and identify the person (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 89-90).

In a report submitted a few days later, on the 25th of January, Bíró raised concerns regarding Dr Ferenc Fülep. During a meeting between the director, Bíró, Lieutenant colonel Imre Pálffy and Lieutenant colonel András Békési, Pálffy inquired whether the director plans to appoint someone in charge of protecting the Crown. The director replied that he cannot and does not want to treat the Crown and regalia differently from the other exhibitions, which are in fact more valuable. Bíró claims that Fülep spoke in a rather angry voice and in his summary determines that the director cannot fathom the importance of the Crown and suggests that the Ministry of Culture appoint a vice-president for the role (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 48-50).

In the first few months of the exhibition, the number of visitors grew considerably. So much so, that a report written by lieutenant colonel József Zsarnóczai on February 14 stated that some smaller exhibited objects have been stolen because, according to the report, the directorate of the museum drew personnel away from the other rooms to cope with the crowd (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 51-56). Another report, written by Bíró on the 20th of April described an entertaining situation. A civilian “social connection” [társadalmi kapcsolat] with the initials Cs. L. had notified the guards about a graffiti on the wall of the museum reading “Hülye rendőrök” [stupid cops]. Bíró ordered him—i.e. operative Cs. L., whose identity is unknown—and the guards to secure the crime scene, take pictures and remove the defamatory words (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 81-82).

A more serious case occurred in March of the same year, 1978. One of the members of the Civil armed guard [Polgári fegyveres őrség], Sándor Czeglédi—or Ceglédi, the reports use the name interchangeably—had went on vacation to Yugoslavia, from where he never returned. Czeglédi did not have a checkered past. He was not a party member, but he had been working at the museum since 1974. When asked about his disappearance, his parents did not know or did not tell what had happened to him. According to the guards, he did not imply to his colleagues that he planned to defect Hungary (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 93). The biggest problem was that he knew the security systems and personnel guarding the Crown (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 94-95).

Since Czeglédi’s defection meant that the security of the Crown was compromised, the State Security and the directorate of the museum decided to introduce several modifications—although, it is also possible that Bíró and his associates in the State Security simply took the opportunity to finally strengthen the security measures. In his report on April 21, Bíró described the emergency meeting. Interestingly, this report stated that Czeglédi’s vacation took him to Austria, not Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the changes to the security systems

included a touch sensing system and an infrared sensor, the existence of which would not be disclosed to the museum's directorate and its scientific researchers, and not even to the members of the Civil armed guard. The latter's shifts and passport requesting procedures, however, have been changed, as well as rules concerning museum curators, who were henceforth not allowed to be present at the opening and closing of the treasury room (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 96-99). This last change perhaps would have angered the Americans, had they known about it, since it meant that researchers' access to the Crown was limited.

Naturally, after their implementation, the new security systems needed to be tested, therefore, a safety drill was conducted a year later, on May 11, 1979. In his report, lieutenant colonel Sándor Bohár described quite a disarray. He began by moderately complementing the Civil armed guard, stating that they were not trained well enough to operate the new security systems, but their efforts were satisfactory. Eight minutes after the drill began, the first police vehicle arrived, five people strong. They were followed 20 minutes later by a dog patrol and a submachine gun team, but only one of their members had brought his submachine gun, while another one brought tear gas. Two minutes later, i.e. half an hour after the drill began, lieutenant colonel László Pintér arrived, who was the officer on duty at the police department that night. Since his obligations and responsibilities have not been specified for such drills and he did not have the necessary equipment, he could not perform any useful service activities. Soon, a patrol car in the vicinity was also directed to the museum, but no such measure was specified in the action plan. It did, however, stipulate that lieutenant colonel Géza Csorba was supposed to be the commander in charge on the scene. Until the end of the drill at 08:30, he did not arrive. The dog patrol, however, had arrived on time, albeit, without a dog, since it has previously been delivered to the kennel; the team was preparing for a show (ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-20016, part II, pp. 100-103).

CONCLUSION

Was the return of the Crown the right thing to do? The supporters of the return believed that giving back the Crown was the profound obligation of the United States, but the opposers believed that it was the same duty of the U.S. to not allow it to fall into the hands of Kádár. The two sides' reasonings were based on ideologies, politics, historical understandings and misunderstandings. For a large portion of Hungarian-Americans, the Crown's symbolic meaning was far more significant than the State Department thought. The emotions stirred up by rumors of a possible return were hostile enough, but the level of aggression that the decision's announcement had set loose was even more surprising for the decision makers. As one would expect, several politicians have taken fierce stands in the wake of demonstrations and debates, many of them out of loyalty for the Hungarians in their constituencies. Several others, however, did it rather to build political capital for themselves, which would prove especially useful if President Carter would be replaced by a Republican—which, of course, he was. Carter received most of the blame for the decision, but even in retrospect it is nigh impossible to claim beyond doubt that he chose the right or wrong move. What can be said for sure, however, is that the event happened during a small slice of the history of the Cold War: during the peak of the *détente* period, after the Helsinki Accords, but before the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. If Carter would have decided to wait, Hungary would probably not have gotten the Crown back until after the fall of the Soviet Union.

It seems that the American leadership misunderstood the Crown's significance in many ways. The harsh reactions of the Hungarian emigrants to the rumors of its return—before the decision to do it was announced—came as a surprise to Carter, but it might have also been a reason to go through with the act. Since the Hungarian-American supporters whom the Carter administration had asked to help convince the opposing side have constantly referred to the Crown's symbolic power of uniting Hungarians, the President may be excused

for thinking that returning it to its home would have helped in destabilizing the socialist government of Hungary, even if only in the long run. It is of course also possible that his aim was to improve diplomatic relationships with Hungary and the Soviet bloc, without any ulterior motives. Whichever the case may have been, the Crown's real significance in Hungary turned out to be far less than what the Americans had thought it would be. The difference in the mindset of Hungarian-Americans and Hungarians living in their home country was extensive. The first attached a greater importance to the Crown than the latter. Although having it back in Hungary might have elevated their sense of nationality to a small degree, seeing the Crown was not enough for them to question their opposing leaders any more than before.

Therefore, it would seem that the most pragmatic participant of the whole story was Kádár. Receiving the Crown would be interpreted by the government as recognition for all the improvements in foreign relations, Hungary's progressing economy and better living conditions. Not getting it back, however, would not have resulted in shame or remorse; it rather would have been an avenue through which the United States could again be vilified in the eyes of Hungarians. Returning the Crown was more important for the U.S. than it was for Kádár, but the latter still benefitted from it more. In fact, President Carter's decision probably contributed to him becoming a one-term President only, although several other factors have also caused the fall of his foreign policy, such as the Soviet Union's increasingly aggressive attitude towards the Polish crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There still are open questions for which additional research is needed. It could be interesting to look further into the Hungarian-Americans who had supported the return and see if perhaps the Hungarian State Security tried to approach them in any way.

Although he probably did not play an important role, Congressman Charles Wilson and his reasons for introducing legislation promoting the return of the Crown well ahead of President Carter's decision is also an interesting prospect for future research.

Another promising lead is the role of Joe Biden—serving as President as of the writing of this paper—which might have been more substantial than previously thought. His name probably appears in relation to the issue in more documents of the Historical Archives of the State Security, sessions of the Political Committee, as well as in American governmental archives. Especially now that he is in the forefront of American politics, it would prove to be even more interesting to find out more about his function in the negotiations of the return, be it before, during or after his 1977 visit to Hungary.

Notes

1. „A koronázás alkotmányjogi jelentőségével kapcsolatosan fejlődik ki a magyar nemzet közéletében a szent korona személyisége, mysteriuma, ami által a magyar nemzet az államiság és a valódi közhatalom fogalmához valamennyi nyugati népnél korábban eljutott.” (Timon, “A Szent Korona elmélete és a koronázás” 6)
2. „. . . az egész magyar nemzet a Szent koronát fején viselő királlyal egyetemben alkotja azt az egységes közjogi egészet, élő szervezetet, amit a középkori források a Szent korona egész testének (totum corpus Sacrae Regni Coronae) neveznek, napjainkban pedig államnak nevezünk.” (Timon, “Magyar állam- és jogtörténet” 479)
3. „Mit írjunk Király Béláról? Őröla még írni sem érdemes.” (ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/163 p. 31)
4. „A Politikai Bizottság helyeslőleg tudomásul veszi, hogy dr. Lékai László bíboros, esztergomi érsek, az USA-ban teendő látogatása során egyházi körökben fel kívánja vetni a magyar koronaékszerek visszaadásának kérdését.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/697. p. 17)
5. „Abban az esetben, ha az amerikai fél meghozza döntését a korona és koronaékszerek visszaadására, a külügyminisztérium útján megbeszélhetjük a bonyolítás kérdéseit; az amerikai küldöttség összetételének ismeretében alakítjuk ki a magyar küldöttséget. A korona és a koronaékszerek Budapesten kerülnek elhelyezésre, s lehetővé tesszük—eredeti szándékainknak megfelelően—a magyar és a külföldi közönség számára azok megtekintését.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/725. p. 19)
6. „M megbízta a Magyar Külügyminisztériumot, hogy a visszaadásról szóló közlemény szövegéről folytasson további egyeztető tárgyalást. Értje el, hogy a korona és a koronázási ékszerek kiállításának látogatására vonatkozó mondat úgy hangozzék, hogy 'A Magyar Népköztársaság kormánya Szent István koronáját és a koronázási

ékszereket Budapesten fogja kiállítani úgy, hogy az ország lakossága, a Magyarországra látogató külföldön élő magyarok és külföldiek egyaránt láthassák azokat.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 9)

7. „Az egyeztetett közleményt . . . a Magyar Távirati Iroda hozza nyilvánosságra az egész sajtó számára. Helyesli, hogy az egyeztetett közlemény nyilvánosságra hozza a visszaadás előre látható időpontját. Szükségtelennek tartja viszont a küldöttség Budapestre való érkezésének időpontját külön bejelenteni. A Politikai Bizottság helyesli, hogy a koronát és a koronázási ékszereket a Parlamentben Apró Antal elvtárs ünnepélyesen vegye át.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)
8. „Kapjanak meghívást a magyar katolikus, református, evangélikus, izraelita egyházak, a szabad egyházak képviselői, köztük dr. Lékai László bíboros, esztergomi érsek. Az átvételnél jelen lévők /mintegy 200 fő/ összetétele népfrent-jellegű legyen. A jelen lévő egyházi személyeknél is tüntessék fel a Hazafias Népfrentban betöltött tisztségüket.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)
9. „A Politikai Bizottság úgy határoz, hogy Kádár János elvtárs kizárólag az amerikai küldöttség vezetőjét fogadja és csak abban az esetben, ha az felhatalmazásával élve, kifejezetten kéri a találkozót. Felhívja a figyelmet, hogy az eseménnyel kapcsolatos sajtó politikai érdekeinknek megfelelő és mértéktartó legyen.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 11)
10. „Célszerű lenne, ha az átadásnál a hivatalos magyar küldöttségen kívül a lakosság széles rétegeit képviselő személyiségek is jelen lennének, köztük Lékai bíboros és a magyarországi egyházak vezetői. Az átadási ünnepségen legyenek jelen a magyar, az amerikai és a nemzetközi sajtó képviselői. A korona és a koronázási ékszerek olyan nyilvános helyen kerüljenek majd végleges kiállításra, hogy azokat bárki

megtekinthesse, beleértve a külföldön élő magyar származású személyeket is.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. pp. 63-77)

11. „Sürgősen adjunk ki mindkét fővárosban előre egyeztetett közleményt a korona visszaadásáról. Erre belpolitikai okból van szükségük, mivel két szenátor és két képviselő bírósági eljárást kezdeményezett Carter elnök ellen a korona visszaadásának megakadályozására . . . Kérte, hogy "Szent István" helyett ne "I. István király" szerepeljen, mivel Amerikában csak az előbbit ismerik, a változás zavart okozna . . . a magyar fél levélben nyugtázza majd a korona átvételét, amelyben kijelenti, hogy azzal kapcsolatban nincs további követelése az USA-val szemben.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. pp. 63-77)
12. „A végleges kiállítási helyet a Várban kell kialakítani. A kulturális miniszter—a belügyminiszterrel egyetértésben—tegye meg az ehhez szükséges intézkedéseket.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. p. 73)
13. „Propagandánk legyen mértéktartó, hangvétele az eseménynek megfelelő; a korona visszaadása kapcsán ne bírálja az amerikai kormányt a késedelemért, szerényen méltassa a most megtett lépést és ne értékelje azt túl . . . hangsúlyozza, hogy húsz éve követett következetes elvi politikánk, belső eredményeink, hazánk nemzetközi tekintélyének növekedése vezetett el a jelentős eseményhez . . . a Népszabadság a korona átadása után közöljön cikket.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. pp. 73-75)
14. „A Népszabadság a korona átadása után közöljön cikket; a Filmhíradó, ugyancsak a visszaadás után, forgalmazhatja a korona történetéről korábban készült—és propagandánk fenti irányelveihez igazított—dokumentumfilmet; az ez alkalomból beutazni kívánó amerikai és más külföldi tudósítókat lehetőleg be kell engedni. Elutasításra csak rendkívül indokolt esetben—például a Szabad Európa Rádió, a fasiszta magyar lapok tudósítói—kerüljön sor.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/733. pp. 73-75)

15. „Megerősíti korábbi határozatát, mely szerint a korona és a koronázási ékszereket, valamint az amerikai delegációt szállító repülőgép megérkezésének időpontjáról előzetes hír ne jelenjen meg; ezt utólag hozzák nyilvánosságra . . . Az átadási ünnepséget a magyar rádió és televízió felvételtől sugározza. Hozzájárul, hogy a korona visszaadásával kapcsolatban a Magyar Posta bélyeget adjon ki.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/734. p. 31)
16. „A Politikai Bizottság tudomásul veszi, hogy a magyar és az amerikai külügyminiszteri megbeszélésen elhangzottak szerint a közeljövőben levélváltásra kerül sor, amely alapját képezi a legnagyobb kedvezmény megadásával kapcsolatos tárgyalások megkezdésének. A levél tervezetét terjesszék a Politikai Bizottság elé.” (MNL OL 288. f. 5/735. p. 23)
17. „Jelentem, hogy a korona visszaadása alkalmából Budapestre érkezett nyugati újságírók és tudósítók külön telex-vonalait ellenőrzés alatt tartjuk. A jelentés kiadásáig mintegy 45-50 tudósítást küldtek az eseményről. A tudósítások hangvételére a tárgyyszerűség jellemző, főleg a korona megérkezésével kapcsolatos események leírására és a hivatalos átadás lefolyásának részletes ismertetésére, illetve a korona kalandos útjának története ecsetelésére szorítkoztak. Egyes tudósítók kiemelték Carter elnök határozottságát, ahogyan az amerikai jobboldali magyar emigráció ellenzése dacára is a korona visszaadása mellett döntött.” (ÁBTL 3.1.5 O-20016 p. 46)
18. „Sürgősen kérem Önt, hogy beszéljen a magyar hatóságokkal arról az ígéretükről, amelyet állítólag tettek: amennyiben Szt. István koronáját visszaszolgáltatják, kiadják a zsidó közösségnek a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia jelenleg őrzött világhírű Kaufmann Hebraica-t. Ez a gyűjtemény tartalmazza a felbecsülhetetlen értékű Kaufmann Hagadah-t, bibliákat és számtalan nagyértékű vallási ereklyét. A Yeshiva egyetem lenne a logikus hely e könyvgyűjtemény számára. Mi vállaljuk a könyvtár

megőrzését és hozzáférhetővé tennénk a közönség, kiváltképp városunk sok magyarja számára.” (ÁBTL 3.1.5 O-20016 p. 47)

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