

American Hungarian Educator

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Please visit the AHEA Web page at: <http://ahea.net> and send any suggestions you have to the Executive Director at eniko.basa@verizon.net or 4515 Willard Ave., Apt. 2210, Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Conference

The AHEA Conference in Kolozsvár, Transylvania, was a great success. Our hosts, the Babes-Bolyai University and its Faculty of Letters were generous in their support. The American Hungarian Folklore Centrum provided the usual logistical support, bus transportation, and a very successful tour of Transylvania. The Balassi Institute provided financial support for the reception at the Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület (Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania) which featured András Ludányi's talk on the writings of Tibor Cseh, a piano recital by Boglárka Oláh, and a tasting of the wines of Transylvania. Helena Press sponsored the printing of the program.

The opening ceremony on Friday was held in the Aula of the University with the Vice-Rector of the University, Dr. Anna Soós giving the opening address. The keynote address by Vilmos

Tánczos examined the ethnic and linguistic heritage of the Csángós in Moldavia, debunking some myths and presenting contemporary research. A book presentation by Judith Kesserű Némethy followed in the Aula Magna. An examination of language maintenance, 21st Hungarian Language Survival in Transylvania, was done in cooperation with Noémi Fazakas, Krisztina Sáros-Márdirosz, and Borbála Zsemleyi, organizers of the conference. Sessions were held in the main university building on Friday and at the Faculty of Letters on Saturday. (The program and abstracts are available on the AHEA home page (<http://ahea.net/conferences/2015>)). Due to the interest and accessibility, we had to have three parallel sessions rather than two. Presenters from Hungary and the Carpathian basin were well represented, as were scholars from Western Europe and the US.

Following the conference, the Transylvanian tour started at St. Mihály Church and the statue of King Matthias in the city square of Kolozsvár. The tour continued through Válaszút, Torockó, and the Torda Hasadék where we took a hike through much of the storied canyon. In Marosvásárhely we were able to tour both the Kultúrpalota (Palace of Culture) and the Teleki Téka (library) guided by dedicated docents, in spite of being a Monday, a closed Museum day. A visit to the Jewish synagogue was a bonus. Next stop was Szováta where some members went swimming in the medicinal waters while others took strolls around the resort. In Korond the group watched a master potter ply his trade and had a chance to buy folk art. The visit to Szárhegy near Gyergyószentmiklós ran into a problem as the estate was closed due to a family dispute, but the group was able to tour the sculpture park and the chapel at the top of the hill. Next stops included the Gyilkos Tó and the Békás Szoros, where participants could walk through the pass that at one time formed the border between Hungary and Moldavia (Romania).

In Gyergyószentmiklós the group visited the Armenian Catholic Church where the pastor spoke of the refuge Transylvania had extended to the Armenians in the 17th century and later. The next day the group went to the Felcsík region and paid homage to the Székelys slaughtered by Austrian forces in 1764 at Mádéfalva. In Csiksomlyó the group paid their respects to a miraculous Shrine of the Virgin. After the fall of Communism, it has once again become a place of pilgrimage on Pentecost which draws thousands, as well as a revered holy shrine. Remarkably, the area is still free of commercialization, though a pleasant and well-appointed hotel close by offers lodging to sightseers and pilgrims alike. In Csikszerecska a visit to the Mikó

fortress showed the problems of presenting historical narrative in the region.

Crossing to the Tatros valley via the Gyimes Pass brought us to the Csángó region on this side of the Carpathians. Strong ethnic identities surfaced here as the efforts to assimilate into Romanian culture are very pronounced. The locals, however, take pride in maintaining the ruins of the Rákóczi Castle and mementos of the thousand-year border of Hungary before the area was granted to Romania in 1920. A stop at a local inn provided plenty of food and an organized trip to memorials, the most eastern terminus of the Hungarian railroad, and a folklore museum. Local musicians played ancient instruments and set a nostalgic mood before and during dinner.

Háromszék was the destination next day with visits to the Szent Anna Tó, a romantic volcanic lake, and a guided tour of the Mohos tőzegláp (Mossy Tufts) formed in an even earlier volcanic crater. Going on to Kézdivásárhely we visited one of the oldest county seats in Transylvania, with its interesting streetscape, the so-called “udvarok” (back yards) opening from the main streets. The Céhtörténeti Múzeum (Guild Museum) displays of local crafts are augmented by a collection of 247 dolls demonstrating the regional costumes of Transylvania. Áron Gábor, cannon foundry hero of the 1848 Revolution, is commemorated here as well.

Moving on to Gelence and its church, dating to the Árpád age, we were able to view one of the valuable frescoes from the middle ages. These pictures were whitewashed in Churches that became Calvinist after the Reformation and so were preserved to this day. Scenes of Hungarian saints’ lives and of the life of Christ are gradually being revealed as

renovations are undertaken. Gelence, like many of the other churches within the historical boundaries of Hungary, depicts the legend of St. László (Ladislaus).

The next day the group crossed the Hargita to arrive in Udvarhelyszék and tour the town square featuring major figures from Hungarian history. A visit the Unitarian church at Székelyderzs gave a glimpse into the unique Transylvania custom of fortress churches which helped the population survive the Turkish wars. In some places, the fortifications continue to provide storage for foodstuffs, particularly bacon, ham and maybe grains. The largest example of such a fortress Church is at Prázsmár. Built between the 13th and 15th centuries, it has several hundred living quarters, storage areas, a school, and other exhibits which demonstrate the way in which a population would withstand a protracted siege. We are now in Saxon territory, an autonomous region of German settlers invited to found fortified towns by the Hungarian kings in the 12th and

13th centuries. It was they who first developed the fortified churches, and it is here that the best examples can still be found. Segesvár still retains its medieval core and the church is accessible by a long flight of covered stairs—a practical solution to the steep climb which offered protection in inclement weather. The old town below the church offers various tourist services and was a welcome break even for those who did not climb up to the church and ecclesiastic buildings. Before reaching Segesvár we paid our respects to Sándor Petőfi at Fehéregyháza where a museum and memorial commemorate the poet of the 1848 revolution who was lost on this battlefield.

In Gyulafehérvár we were treated to an in-depth history of the region and the church, by the bishop and then given a tour of the medieval cathedral which includes the graves of János Hunyadi, Queen Isabella, and Prince János, areas generally off limits were opened to us for a truly memorable visit.

Minutes of the AHEA Meeting

Jim Niessen, President, reported on the Diaspora Tanács, the Körösi Fellows Program and the Mikes Kelemen Program. All are good initiatives though implementation is not always optimal. In particular, some of the interns are not paired well and are not always used to their own advantage or to the advantage of the hosting organization. The Mikes Kelemen poses problems of just who should retain ownership of Hungarica Collections. This will be addressed in later conferences and discussions.

AHEA Membership Form/Dues Renewal

Dues are payable for the calendar year. All members are urged to send dues for the current year if not yet paid. It has not been feasible to send out separate notices for dues renewal, but you can make a copy of the address with the dues information and keep as a reminder to pay in January. *You can check your entry in the Membership List on line for the last time we received dues from you.*

Name:

Address: give the preferred mailing address

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Fax: _____ **email:** _____

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Dues: Regular members: \$30.00 Couples/Joint members: \$50.00 Students/Retired: \$10.00
Make checks payable to: AHEA Treasurer and send to AHEA, 4515 Willard Ave. Apt. 2210 Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Clip or copy this form and return with a check for the appropriate amount.

Please send your email address as we are using this to communicate news of a timely nature or those with a deadline. Also, we can notify you about developments pertaining to the e-journal, updates on the conference (paper call for papers will continue to be sent to members), and other dated news. Emails are sent out via the web site and do not contain emails of recipients, so your privacy is protected.

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