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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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to To the Files
from David Geller
subject Meeting with Hungarian Ambassador - November 19th

Marc Tanenbaum and I met with Ambassador Vencel Hazy and Second Secretary Viktor Polgar. Marc briefly described the aims and goals of the AJC and reported on some of the recent AJC missions to France, Germany, etc. The Ambassador was very interested and inquired whether we had decided on our own to go to Hungary or whether we had been invited. We advised him that Mrs. Seifert had invited us to participate in the Holocaust Commemoration ceremonies which we were unfortunately unable to do and, in conversations with Marc Tanenbaum during his visit in July, had reiterated the invitation. Our officers not only wished to acquaint themselves with the situation of Jews in Hungary but also to become acquainted with the country in general, and in addition we were interested in the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Hungary.

The Ambassador responded, making the following points:

1. We must understand that Hungary is a member of the socialist states. Hungary's system is Marxist-Leninist and they are firm in adhering to that ideology and are proud of it.
2. The United States has, on a number of occasions, articulated a policy of 'differentiation' in terms of its foreign policy dealings with the various East European states. While Hungary, the Ambassador said, does not agree that there should be 'differentiation', it nevertheless is waiting to see how that policy is implemented in terms of Hungary.
3. There are two examples of problems that exist between the U.S. and Hungary:
 - a) Hungary is now involved in modernizing its telephone and communication system. It is an extremely important and vital project because Hungary is a modern state and cannot function with the archaic equipment that they presently use. Hungary has negotiated a deal with West Germany to provide such a system. However, some of the most advanced equipment that is necessary is controlled by the U.S. and is embargoed to communist countries. The Ambassador felt that this was unfair and harmful to Hungarian interests.

b) Hungary receives Most-Favored-Nation treatment from the U.S. and they acknowledge that they are one of only three communist countries that have received MFN (the other two being China and Romania). Nevertheless, the current law mandates that MFN come under a yearly review. Hungary, and indeed a number of American companies with whom Hungary deals find this yearly review awkward and restrictive. It prevents their planning on a 3- to 5-year basis which would be much more effective for both countries.

The Ambassador then stated that Hungary's relationship with the United States is not that of a petitioner but that of a partner and he hoped that the Jewish community, which he feels is influential in the U.S., can be helpful in sensitizing the relevant U.S. Government representatives to Hungary's needs in the above mentioned areas.

As to the AJC mission, the Ambassador felt that a delegation to meet with Jewish leadership in Hungary in order to learn more about that community and its religious freedoms is an "easy" part of the mission. Our desire to enter into a discussion of bilateral relationships is a little more complicated because we have to make sure that we understand Hungary's position in the communist world and what is and is not possible. He suggested that we send him some materials about our organization and a letter spelling out our interests. The letter should indicate that the mission would be made up of the members of our Board of Governors and that if meetings could be set up with the Prime Minister, only a few of the members of the mission would participate in order to create a climate for freer discussion.

I will be in touch with the Second Secretary who promised to keep me informed as to the status of our visit and the possible appointments that can be set up.

DG/es

cc: David Harris
Leo Nevas
Marc Tanenbaum