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LOUIS KOSSTH'S VISIT TO PITTSBURGH IN 1852

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The students in Budapest, Szeged, and the other university towns in Hungary were responsible for disseminating the ideal of freedom and independence which sparked in their country the revolt of October 1956. Never have American students risen to the political necessity of revolution, but the sympathy of all classes and professions in this country has been with the people of Hungary in their battle against Communist tyranny.

Once before the emotions of the people of the United States had been stirred by the plight of the Hungarian people. In 1848 the peasants of Hungary rose behind Louis Kossuth to fight for independence from Austria and the yoke of their landlords. Success might well have been theirs had it not been for the military intervention of Czarist Russia. Louis Kossuth escaped from his native land and carried the hopes of his people to the United States, just as his political descendants have done in recent months. Who was Louis Kossuth? The mere mention of his name was sufficient to revive in every Hungarian the ideal of freedom and independence and inspire him to fight against the Communist regime over a century later.¹

The people of Pittsburgh knew him well in 1852. On January twenty-first, The Daily Morning Post, which considered itself the official journal of the city, announced that Louis Kossuth was "a pure patriot—a pure-minded and true-hearted representative of European Republicanism." He was a man who wished to establish for his country

¹ The Times Weekly Review (London, November 1, 1956), 18.
what George Washington had done for the United States. Every man of common sense knew that Louis Kossuth did not want to effect the independence of Hungary in order to create a military or monarchical government with himself at the head. In 1851 Kossuth emphatically insisted in London that he was not interested in the new doctrines of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels which had been outlined already in their *Manifest der Kommunisten*. Kossuth wanted no theoretical speculations about property but only the republican institutions of the United States with freedom and independence for Hungary. These were the principles which he expounded during his visit to the United States in 1851-52.

The residents of Allegheny County anxiously awaited the arrival of the Hungarian patriot. For weeks the people in the Pittsburgh area had read about his exciting speech-making tour in the East. Local newspapers daily described in detail his activities and presented virtually in full all of his addresses. The editors, however, were not in accord over how their distinguished visitor should be received. While most of them were inclined to support the civic reception for the patriot, *The Daily Commercial Journal* on January 5, 1852, ridiculed the public's enthusiastic feeling for Kossuth as the symbolic figure of Hungary's forlorn fight for independence. This paper expressed satisfaction that Pittsburgh would receive the Hungarian, but it clearly opposed any possible demands of his for American intervention in European affairs.

Leading citizens of the county planned an elaborate welcome for Louis Kossuth. Various committees were formed throughout the Pittsburgh area to handle the necessary preparations. They scheduled a colorful parade with music and banners to accompany Kossuth upon his arrival in the area to the St. Charles Hotel on the corner of Third and Wood Streets. His approach would be announced by the ringing of bells and by a salute of thirteen guns from the United States Arsenal in Lawrenceville.² The proceedings promised to have all the color and splendor of an important tribute to a military hero. A Festival honoring the patriot was planned for the day following his arrival. It was to be held at the Masonic Hall on Fifth Street between Wood and Smithfield, and it was to be an affair of "intellectual entertainment and feasting of the soul—not one of eating and drinking."³ Newspapers daily advertised the sale of tickets for this Festival. The lowest price was three dol-

² *The Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, January 20, 1852.
lars. The funds that were raised would be devoted strictly to the Hungarian cause.

Deep snow and sub-zero temperatures intervened to make Louis Kossuth’s trip to Pittsburgh a difficult one. The terrible weather forced the party to stop at the Mountain House in Hollidaysburg. They were stranded there because of the high snow drifts which blocked the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Plans were made to convey the visitors by sleighs to Blairsville and then to Pittsburgh. A New York Daily Times correspondent, traveling with Kossuth’s party, described the misery which significantly characterized this part of their journey across the mountains. Temporary shelters were constantly sought to alleviate somewhat the distress of the travelers and to afford some rest for the wearied and frightened horses which frequently had to be driven forcibly through high drifts and frozen creeks. Even the buffalo robes, fur capes, and bear-skin moccasins did not guarantee sufficient protection for the party against the cutting winds and twenty-two below zero temperature around Blairsville. To make matters even worse the “bottled spirits” which were to furnish some measure of warmth froze in the bottoms of the coaches.4

The uncertain time of Louis Kossuth’s arrival necessitated the formulation of new plans by Pittsburgh’s welcoming committees. They decided that the Festival would still have to take place on the day following his arrival and that his entrance into the city would still be marked by a procession. The local papers published daily instructions, outlining a schedule which would assure a warm reception for the Hungarian during his stay in Pittsburgh. Notice of his approach to the city would be sounded by the ringing of various bells throughout the area. At the alarm all fire companies, associations, and delegations, intending to participate in the procession, would organize themselves and proceed to previously designated areas.5

The colorful procession did not occur as planned. Unpleasant weather deprived a great part of the citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny from witnessing what undoubtedly would have been the most spectacular welcome ever accorded to any visitor up to that time. Not since President-elect William Henry Harrison visited the area in January 1841 did the people have a genuine opportunity to display their wholesome hospitality and to extend their warmest greetings to a recog-

4 The Evening Chronicle, January 31, 1852.
5 Gazette, January 22, 1852.
nized military hero. Considering the adverse conditions, the popular reception of Kossuth that did develop certainly was one with which the people could be proud.

About seven-thirty on Thursday evening, January twenty-second, Louis Kossuth and his suite arrived from Blairsville in sleighs which had been sent from Pittsburgh. The party was received in Wilkinsburg and escorted through the frigid night to the St. Charles Hotel, where a freezing but enthusiastic crowd was gathered. When the impending arrival of the Magyar’s party was announced, word spread quickly throughout the city. A countless number of people, bearing colorful and appropriate banners, flooded the roads from the Fifth Ward to East Liberty. Sleighs, filled with boisterous riders, hurried to greet the visitor on the way to his hotel. Many of the area’s business establishments lost their patrons when word of Kossuth’s approach was announced. A reporter for The Evening Chronicle humorously described the reaction to the announcement in a popular East Liberty tavern where “warm-hearted sons of Hibernia” were drinking toasts and singing songs in honor of their approaching hero. When the word reached these merry-making customers, general pandemonium broke loose as everyone started to rush through the door to his sleigh.6

The procession from Wilkinsburg to the hotel in Pittsburgh was a limited but colorful affair. To an observer the sight along the streets must have been one of magnificence and inspiration. The below zero temperature apparently did not discomfort the onlookers who animated the chilled air with jubilant cheers at the approach of the procession. Light, reflecting from the innumerable gas lamps along the way upon the glistening ice and snow, added to the splendor and luster of the pageant. Approximately thirty sleighs with fluttering flags and banners comprised Kossuth’s distinguished train. A four-horse sleigh, preceding the Magyar’s coach, contained Mayor John Guthrie of Pittsburgh and other prominent citizens. In Pittsburgh the cheering of the crowd at the hotel commenced as soon as the cortege was within sight. Because of the bad weather and general fatigue, Kossuth declined to address the people as his party pulled alongside of the hotel, but he did thank them for their fine exhibition of friendliness and respect. Although somewhat uneasy and apparently loath to leave without being gratified with

6 Chronicle, January 23, 1852.
a speech, the gathering responded with exulting cheers prior to dis-

crating.7

The citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny had to wait until Satur-
day morning, January twenty-fourth, before officially welcoming the
Hungarian. Illness had forced him to spend the preceding day in his
chambers, and the Festival was postponed until Monday. The cere-
monies on Saturday were to start at ten o’clock outside the St. Charles
Hotel where Louis Kossuth intended to address the people in the streets.
Prior to that hour several delegations, representing the surrounding
counties of Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Mercer, and Lawrence, visited
Kossuth’s quarters and presented addresses which were adopted by their
constituents as well as “material aid.” The Magyar heartily expressed
his gratitude for the interest and contributions of these delegates.8

In Wood Street thousands of citizens gathered to see and hear their
honored guest. They constituted what perhaps was the largest public
meeting ever witnessed before in the district. The street for blocks was
literally massed with people whose number was estimated anywhere
from eight to twelve thousand.9 Regardless of the frigid air, most of
them had been waiting for hours. Windows from Second up nearly to
Fourth Street were occupied by women waving handkerchiefs, while
the roofs of neighboring houses were tenanted by many anxious viewers
who appeared oblivious to the snow in which they were standing. The
crowd was so dense that in one or two instances persons who had fainted
were conveyed over the heads of others to a place of safety.10 Calling
for Kossuth, the impatient crowd had to be silenced by Dr. E. D. Gazzam
with placating assurances that the Magyar shortly would speak to
them.

At a few minutes before ten o’clock a cordial cheer from the assem-
bled citizens greeted Louis Kossuth, who appeared on the balcony of
the hotel with members of the press and distinguished civic leaders.
When the noise and tumult had subsided, Colonel Black officially wel-
comed the distinguished-looking guest to the two cities with a short but
dynamic address. He lauded the fight for freedom in Hungary and
criticized with unmeasured invective Russia’s unwarranted aggression in
Eastern Europe. His theme was then continued and accentuated by
Kossuth, who spoke with rich and spirited oratory which was interrupted

7 The Daily Commercial Journal, January 23, 1852.
8 Gazette, January 26, 1852.
9 The Daily Morning Post, January 26, 1852; Journal, January 26, 1852.
10 Gazette, January 26, 1852.
frequently by loud and encouraging bursts of applause from his shivering audience. He warned that America should not idly wait until she became the lone bulwark of liberty on earth. Instead, she should aid Hungary so that the oppressed freedom-fighters in that country would have the moral and material support to check Russian preponderance. At the conclusion of his address Kossuth received an impressive ovation.\textsuperscript{11}

The long awaited Festival for Hungary took place at the Masonic Hall on Monday afternoon, January twenty-sixth. An overflowing group of approximately nine hundred people filled the lecture room. Andrew W. Loomis started the ceremonies with a fifteen minute oration in which he largely extolled the democratic institutions of the United States. He told the gathering and Kossuth, the principal speaker, that Americans “love liberty and ardently desire its diffusion throughout the world. Before God and man,” Loomis continued, “we fearlessly and earnestly proclaim our feelings and sympathies. No league of tyranny—no combination of despotism—no concentration of power—no, not the world in arms can restrain whatever expression of sympathy or determination of action the American people may deem appropriate to their interests, their power, their position and their principles.”\textsuperscript{12}

How were the interests of the United States affected in Hungary in 1852? With American trade increasing in Europe after “hungry 1840’s,” Kossuth admonished the assemblage during his hour-long address that Russia showed definite intentions to dominate the European market by supporting Austria’s position in his homeland. “Russia will exclude your trade from Europe,” he said, “because your immensely developing agriculture is the most dangerous competitor to Russian wheat or corn on the markets of Europe.” Kossuth was “perfectly cool” as he warned his American audience that they must make a declaration in favor of the independence of Hungary. “You will have to fight a war single-handed and alone,” he said, “within less than five years against Russia and all Europe, if you do not take the position which I humbly claim.”\textsuperscript{13}

Louis Kossuth was wrong about the immediate future, but his speech was by his own intimation an “inspiration of prophecy.” Germany was to unite and partially fulfill his insight in the first half of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Post, January 27, 1852.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
the twentieth century. The full vision of that bold Hungarian, who gave the main address in the Masonic Hall on that afternoon in 1852, could only be appreciated a century later. His name again echoed in the streets of Budapest in 1956, while his foresight with regard to Russia again went unanswered by a sympathetic American populace.

Kossuth also received a warm reception from the labor element in the district in 1852. His visit to Birmingham on the south side of Pittsburgh was significant because of the special appeal made to the working classes for their support of the struggle for freedom in Hungary. This trip proved almost as colorful as the welcoming procession of the previous week. Crossing the Monongahela Bridge on the morning of January twenty-seventh, the Magyar was enthusiastically received by fancifully dressed militiamen, firemen with shining equipment, a brass band, and cheering citizens. Even the children, who were excused from school, lined the streets to get a glance at this mysterious European who was creating such a sensation with his mere presence.14

A procession quickly formed and made its way through the industrial borough to the Alkali Works of Bennet and Berry, where workmen in their toiling garb anxiously awaited their distinguished guest to pay him tribute. Prior to addressing the group, Kossuth received a donation of $250 from the laborers. In a fervent speech he humbly expressed his appreciation for the gift by remarking that it was indeed the kindest gesture made in his behalf during his American visit, since it represented a sentimental token of understanding from the hearts of toiling men. He only wished that the donation would be imitated by the richer classes. If only one-tenth of one per cent of their income, he asserted, could be given to fight oppression, “then within a year the whole of Europe would be free.” This attack upon the bourgeoisie provoked prolonged cheering and the firing of muskets by the laborers. When they had quieted, Kossuth humorously suggested that some of the gunpowder expended in this demonstration could have been more properly used in combating the malignities of world aggression. After an interesting tour through the works, the Magyar and his party visited another foundry and then returned to Pittsburgh.15

In the afternoon at the meeting-house of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the evangelical ministers of Pittsburgh and Allegheny formally greeted Louis Kossuth. A. M. Bryan, the pastor of the host

14 Gazette, January 28, 1852.
15 Ibid; Journal, January 28, 1852.
church, and eleven other clergymen hailed Kossuth, a Protestant "by his own studied convictions, as a champion of well-regulated liberty, civil and religious, with which the Gospel they preached was linked by an indefeasible connection." Singers from various choirs in the area sang for the Magyar a very beautiful and appropriate greeting which was composed by Anna Wade:

With joy we haste to welcome thee,
Upon Columbia's shore;

The many wrongs of Hungary
Most deeply we deplore.

The patriot's soul beams from thine eye,
With noble majesty—

We honor thee for thy great love
Of glorious Liberty.

We welcome thee! we welcome thee!
With pleasure, to our land—

And gladly aid to break the chains,
Forg'd by the oppressor's hand.

To thee, the hand of love we give—
Proud are we of our guest;

God speed the hour, when thy lov'd home,
With Freedom may be blest.

Thou'rt welcome here! thou'rt welcome here!
Though from a foreign shore;

Thou'll find Columbia's sons, for thee,
Have sympathy in store.

God speed thee in thy noble work,
May thousands join thy band!

Soon may the flag of Victory
Wave o'er thy Fatherland!

Louis Kossuth told the clergy of his conviction that the Gospel should become the bulwark of liberty for all mankind. "Thus we may

16 Post, January 28, 1852.
see,” he said, “that the triumph of genuine liberty can best be secured by recognizing religion as the true basis of the Law of Nations.” He pointed out that the United States must exert its influence among the nations of the world for “it has been said that true religion can never cease to be purely republican.” He insisted that the ministers of the Gospel “should warn their flocks against the horrid doctrines of Materialism: for nothing is more hostile to national greatness than when the poor see the rich governed only by pecuniary considerations—leaving nothing for the mind and soul, or undervaluing virtue and talents.”

By receiving the approbation of so reverend and learned a body in Pittsburgh, Kossuth felt that he and his cause had received the approbation of religion itself. This is the same kind of support that the Hungarian patriots of 1956 have received from the churches of America.

On Wednesday morning, January 28, 1852, Louis Kossuth spoke to a large and enthusiastic meeting of German friends at the Lutheran Church on the corner of Smithfield and Sixth Street. Many German-born citizens, with banners and cheers, had demonstrated their love for the Hungarian during his procession the previous week. Now they listened to his appeal as he addressed them in fine German. His speech was one of “power and beauty.”

The district ladies also manifested a singularly keen interest in their welcome of the Hungarian patriot. A letter to the editor of The Daily Pittsburgh Gazette on January 16, 1852, expressed an ardent desire that the women of the Pittsburgh area should set a fine example for other cities by forming associations and contributing to a common fund for the aid of Hungary. Many of the district women rallied to this appeal. They shortly formed the “Ladies Association of the Friends of Hungary” and planned a reception for Louis Kossuth and his wife at one of the local churches. Any lady could become a member of this organization by the payment of one dollar which would also entitle her to hear the Magyar speak. She would also be able to see Madame Kossuth, “whose history and sufferings were known to every intelligent lady.”

The ladies’ reception for Kossuth took place on Thursday, January twenty-ninth, in the Second Presbyterian Church on Fifth Street. The scene was most impressive. There was a moral sublimity and grandeur about it which was united with a touching sadness that left hardly a dry eye in the audience. When Kossuth was introduced, nearly a thou-

17 Ibid.
18 Gazette, January 29, 1852.
19 Ibid., January 24, 1852.
sand women rose to their feet in testimony of their profound respect for him. The choir sang a "Hymn of Welcome," especially prepared for the occasion, and Reverend Howard, preceding Kossuth on the program, spoke briefly to the ladies. The minister condemned Russian despotism and asserted that Divine Providence must have summoned Kossuth upon the stage of action against world oppression. He then presented to the Hungarian a beautifully bound book, containing the names of all the ladies who had enrolled themselves into the permanent organization of the Friends of Hungary. The visitor also received a purse which was wrought with green, white, and red silk (emblematic of the colors of Hungary) and contained $1040 in gold. While "every bosom heaved with sympathy and emotion," Kossuth delivered his farewell speech to a Pittsburgh audience. "But though you forget me," he concluded, "remember my bleeding Fatherland. Remember it in your sorrows and in your joys, remember it with love."20

Before leaving the district Louis Kossuth spoke briefly on Friday afternoon at the Associate Reformed Church in Allegheny. Uniquely characteristic of this visit was a moving but pleasant incident. A woman, who had named her baby "Louis Kossuth Johnston" in honor of the patriot while he was still in Europe, brought the six-month-old child for Kossuth to hold. While affectionately handling the child, Kossuth said to it a few kind words which were loud enough for his audience to hear. The scene was so touching that it brought tears to the eyes of many of the women present.21

On the next morning Louis Kossuth and his party departed from Allegheny County. They had spent ten days in the area, and every day had been filled with excitement. Kossuth left with good feeling and ten thousand dollars which was raised in the Pittsburgh area.22 His next stop was in Cleveland where he resumed his western journey.23 The Democrat Daily Morning Post on February 3, 1852, discussed the results of his visit to Pittsburgh which created a fervor that soon died out. The editor of the newspaper turned to the plight of the Irish and commented that "our eyes have been opened to the tyranny of Austria and Russia . . But in the fervor of our indignation against them, we have forgotten the

20 Ibid., January 30, 1852.
21 Ibid., January 31, 1852.
22 Chronicle, January 31, 1852.
23 For a complete description of Kossuth's mid-western tour, see John W. Oliver, "Louis Kossuth's Appeal to the Middle West," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIV (March, 1928), 481-495.
cunning diplomacy of the arch mistress of tyranny in the old world, and
the power that guards the destiny of despotism and crushes the hopes of
Republicanism in Europe. England is the watchful guardian of them all; and until her power is crushed, we fear no material aid, rendered by
us, will secure to her neighbors the inestimable liberties that our heroic
fore-fathers wrung from her in the war of the Revolution."

Louis Kossuth’s visit was turned into more than a temporary awaken-
ing of a feeling of sympathy for the Hungarian patriots who suffered. It encouraged American sympathy for all the oppressed peoples in the
world which has lasted to the present day. The Hungarian’s mission evolved into one of sympathy, of dollars, and of non-intervention. The Evening Chronicle approved of this, since it had consistently opposed
any plan for American intervention in European affairs. The editor also
reminded the Pittsburgh enthusiasts, “whose whole time was engaged
in paying homage to one man,” that they should not forget the many
Hungarian exiles who came to the United States with Kossuth. Many
of these immigrants had been virtually left alone to work themselves
into American society. The paper urged that emotional powers should
be tempered by common sense so that the American people would rec-
ognize the plight of these unfortunate aliens instead of “inventing argu-
ments for national intervention.”

The Hungarian revolution of 1848 was championed by a man who
overshadowed all of his associates. In this respect the revolution of 1956
in Hungary was different. Its leaders were the freedom-fighters and the
homeless. Pittsburgh has finally honored them as well as their symbolic
leader whose name still lives in the hearts of every freedom-loving
Hungarian. Americans have not forgotten the “bleeding Fatherland”
of Louis Kossuth.

24 Chronicle, January 30, 1852.