



The American Hungarian Federation

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May 6, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Secretary Kerry:

The American Hungarian Federation (the “Federation”), founded over 100 years ago, represents a broad cross-section of the Hungarian American community. It is a staunch supporter of good American/Hungarian relations, democracy, human and minority rights and stability in Central and Eastern Europe. We write in connection with seemingly disparate but actually intersecting events relating to the foregoing issues.

The dangerous developments rapidly unfolding in Ukraine affect the security interests of both the countries of the region and the United States. The members of NATO must be united and resolute if they are to effectively confront the challenges posed by Ukraine and Russia. We applaud your efforts in this regard.

Hungary has been a strong NATO ally. At the same time it has been the object of relentless, and in many instances unjustifiably harsh, criticism asserting that Hungary is anti-democratic and an incorrigible violator of human rights. This in spite of the fact that the governing party has twice won a two-thirds majority in elections internationally recognized as free -- an extraordinary feat for any democracy.

While much of the criticism has emerged from quarters that are prejudiced against the Hungarian government, it nevertheless has regrettably also found its way into official public pronouncements. The criticism even extends to topics that are generally in the purview of matters left to internal discourse of sovereign states, *e.g.*, historical events and figures.

The April 22 statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Budapest relating to the memorial to the “victims of the German occupation of Hungary” in 1944 squarely falls into this latter category. Without here expressing an opinion relative to the memorial itself, the Federation would note that the history of Hungary and the consequences of the occupation in that treacherous and dark year when hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews perished at the hands of the German occupiers and their Hungarian collaborators are much debated topics in Hungary this year as Hungarians remember the 70th anniversary of the horrors of the Hungarian Holocaust.

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Diplomatic etiquette usually requires that issues relating to a host country's history be raised in private, not publicly in a patronizing manner. By publicly injecting itself into Hungary's debate concerning the history of 1944, the April 22 statement serves only to humiliate and alienate many Hungarians who support NATO and its now critical mission. This, in turn, could have the unintended consequence of undermining U.S. strategic interests. Indeed, we Americans would understandably bristle if a foreign government publicly lectured us about, for instance, how we should commemorate the events relating to the U.S. Civil War and slavery.

Therefore, we respectfully urge that greater sensitivity be shown toward Hungarians and that all necessary steps be taken to shore up the alliance and thereby promote U.S. interests in restoring the rule of international law in a region that is emerging to be dangerously volatile.

Sincerely,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
National President