

**THE HUNGARIAN
CONTROVERSY: AN EXPOSURE
OF THE FALSIFICATIONS AND
PERVERSIONS OF THE
SLANDERERS OF HUNGARY**

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The Hungarian Controversy: An Exposure of the Falsifications and Perversions of the Slanderers of Hungary by Robert Carter

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ROBERT CARTER

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BOSTON:
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1852.

THIS pamphlet is not a history of the Hungarian War, nor even, except incidentally, a defense of the motives and character of the Patriots and Heroes of that war. The great mass of the American people are well satisfied that the contest between Hungary and the House of Hapsburg, was a contest for FREEDOM and DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, against DESPOTISM, USURPATION and PERJURY. That there are any among us who entertain different sentiments, is owing altogether to the labors of the North American Review, and the New York Courier and Enquirer, the editors of which, Messrs. Bowen and Webb, from motives that I need not discuss, have seen fit to oppose themselves to the general opinion, not of this country only, but of the civilized world. Their attacks upon the Hungarians have been widely and zealously circulated—Mr. Bowen's articles, I am told, having been distributed as a pamphlet distinct from the Review in which they appeared. The calumnies thus propagated have found their way even into the Senate of the United States, and have there been urged in debate, in opposition to the Resolution of Welcome to Kossuth.

Messrs. Bowen and Webb rely for support of their theories on quotations from a number of books and documents of more or less authority, from which they have culled such passages as would serve their purpose, and have paraded them as conclusive evidence against the Hungarians. The best reply to this line of argument, in my judgment, is a critical examination of these "authorities," and an exposure of the mode in which the quotations from them have been made. This is what I have attempted to do,—with what success the reader can determine for himself.

I have likewise devoted considerable space to the consideration of Mr. Bowen's grossly unfair reply to Mrs. Putnam, who, in the Christian Examiner, had criticised his articles on Hungary with eminent ability, and with a degree of knowledge on the subject to which no other American can pretend. It will be seen that on every point which he has endeavored to make against her, I have shown that she is right and he wrong, by the very testimony to which he himself appeals.

I have endeavored, in conclusion, to give briefly a plain and accurate statement of the case between Austria and Hungary, and of the true causes and objects of the Hungarian Revolution. To those who desire full and reliable information on these subjects, however, I recommend a book recently published at Philadelphia, "*Hungary and Kossuth*," by Rev. Dr. Tefft, of Cincinnati.

A considerable portion of the following essay appeared last winter in the Boston Atlas, but as the controversy to which it relates is now more fully than ever before the public, it is not inopportune to republish what was then written.

Cambridge, Mass., Dec. 24, 1851.

R. C.

THE HUNGARIAN CONTROVERSY.

MR. BOWEN'S FIRST AND SECOND ARTICLES.

THE attack upon the Hungarians was begun in this country by Mr. Francis Bowen, with an article, entitled—"The War of Races,"—in the *North American Review*, for January, 1850, which embraced, he declared in a preliminary letter to the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the results of a good deal of "labor and research." Prefixed to it, by way of text, was the title of an able and impartial work on Hungary, by a French writer, M. Degerando, who had long resided in that country, and was probably better acquainted with its real condition than any foreigner who had yet written about it. Mr. Bowen stated, in the beginning of his article, that "we depend for information chiefly on M. Degerando's book, and on a series of excellent articles contributed by E. de Langsdorf and H. Desprez to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*." [*War of Races*, p. 79.] These are the only authorities to whom he refers, with the exception of a document published in the *New York Tribune*, an incorrect translation of the Hungarian Declaration of Independence.

Mr. Bowen's use of the best of these authorities, M. Degerando, is fully and correctly stated in the following passage from Mrs. Putnam's First Article in the *Christian Examiner*, Nov., 1850, p. 423 :

"The work of Degerando, which the *North American Review* selects as the theme of his article, was published in 1848, before the commencement of the war, and gives no intelligence from Hungary later than the summer of 1847. It cannot, therefore supply information in regard to the war or its immediate causes. It contains, however, full and accurate accounts of the political institutions of the country, and of the character and condition of the various classes of the population. We regret that the

Reviewer has not availed himself of the information thus afforded. We cannot, indeed, but express our surprise at the treatment which a writer of the high standing of Degerando, has received at the hands of the editor of the *North American Review*. After placing the title of this work at the head of his article, and citing the name of the author among his authorities, he does not again refer to it. There is not a statement of fact or opinion in the article which can be attributed to M. Degerando; and the greater part of it is in direct contradiction to the statements of that author. Yet, though the work of M. Degerando is professedly under review, the writer of 'The War of Races' gives no intimation that any such contrariety of opinion exists between himself and his supposed authority; he passes no judgment upon the work; he cites none of the author's statements, not even to controvert them. The charges against the Hungarians contained in that article, went forth to the world, therefore, with the sanction of the respected name of Degerando. Three months afterwards, in another article, written to support the assertion made in the former one, the Reviewer, for the first time, alludes to his dissent from the opinions of Degerando; the only notice of the work which is supposed to make the subject of 'The War of Races,' is to be found in a note to the article on 'The Politics of Europe.'"

It appears, then, that Mr. Bowen's "labor and research" were confined to a few articles in a popular French magazine, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, from which, also, he admits, he derived almost the whole of his "information." The *Revue* has long been notorious for its anti-republican tendencies, and the authors of its articles on Hungary, MM. de Langsdorf and Desprez, are royalists, apologists for Austria, and admirers of Haynau and Metternich. The use which Mr. Bowen has made of their articles, and the extent to which he is indebted to them

for "information," are so extraordinary, and have so decisive a bearing upon his character as a historian and a man of letters, as to render it advisable to enter at some length into an exposition of his obligations to them.

In "The War of Races," [pp. 106, 7, 8,] there is an elaborate account of a distinguished Hungarian Magnate, Count Széchenyi, which in point of style and of information, is perhaps the best and most striking passage of the article. If original with Mr. Bowen, it would have deserved the credit it has received as the result of considerable research. It is in fact, however, entirely translated, without the slightest acknowledgment, from an article by M. de Langsdorff in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for Decem-

ber, 1848. Yet Mr. Bowen prints it as altogether his own production. He does not give the least intimation that he is indebted in its composition to any one, but offers it as the result of his own researches upon Hungarian history. The sketch of Széchenyi in the *Revue* fill a space equal to fifteen or twenty pages of the North American. Mr. Bowen's translation, in three pages, is of course abridged in parts, but it is chiefly by omissions which did not suit his purpose, because they were favorable to the Hungarians.

I have made a literal translation of some portions of De Langsdorff's article, that the reader may compare it with the corresponding passages of Mr. Bowen's:

"The Danube had been, as it were, forgotten and neglected by the Hungarians. Repelled by the difficulties which its navigation presented at two or three points, they had confined their use of it to sending down-stream some *bateaux de transport*, and large rafts, which were to be broken up when they arrived at their destination. Széchenyi comprehended, as he says in one of his works, that here was a magnificent gift of Providence, which man had left unused. He built at Pesth a boat of a light and stout form, and descended with some intrepid boatmen, the rapids and shoals hitherto regarded as impracticable. There was universal enthusiasm in Hungary when it was known that these new Argonauts had happily passed the redoubtable Iron Gates, the last cataracts of Orschowa. Patriotic subscriptions were organized everywhere in order to begin the necessary works and to found a navigation company; skilful engineers soon removed the principal obstacles, and within a year after the adventurous expedition of Széchenyi, a line of steamboats was in full activity upon the upper and lower Danube, from Ratisbon to Vienna, and from Vienna to Constantinople. * * * The Austrian Government assisted in this movement, and contributed to the enterprise considerable funds. Prince Metternich figured among the first stockholders, though he jested sometimes upon the pretensions of the Hungarians 'who thought they had invented the Danube.' The name of Széchenyi was already famous; no one knew, however, the extent and variety of his mind. At this period many of his countrymen regarded him only as an engineer, more skilful than those who had preceded him, but his political genius soon showed itself with that superiority which imposes upon the multitude the chiefs whom they think they choose themselves. A series of publications upon all the subjects which then occupied men's minds, established the political reputation of Széchenyi, and decid-

"His first enterprise, commenced twenty years since, was an attempt to improve the navigation of the Danube, a work of immense importance, as we have shown, to the prosperity of the country. The obstructions in the river were so great, that only large rafts and some *bateaux* were sent down-stream, to be broken up when they had once arrived at the Black Sea. Széchenyi built at his own expense a light and stout boat, in which he descended the river himself, and ascertained that the rocks and rapids were not so formidable as had been supposed. He then organized a company for removing the greatest obstacles from the bed of the stream, and placing a line of steamboats upon it. The undertaking had complete success, and within one year the boats were plying regularly from Ratisbon to Vienna, and from Vienna to Constantinople. The enterprise excited great enthusiasm in Hungary; the Austrian government favored it, and contributed largely for its execution. Metternich himself was pleased, and became one of the first stockholders, though he laughed at the boasting of the Magyars respecting it, 'who thought they had invented the Danube.' This work made Széchenyi very popular; but as yet his countrymen regarded him only as an able engineer. He soon showed himself, however, a politician and publicist of the highest rank, by a number of pamphlets published in quick succession, advocating with great eloquence and ability some important changes in the Constitution of the state and the relations between the peasants and the nobility. These pamphlets were the first productions of importance written not in Latin or German, but in the Magyar tongue. * * * The brilliant reputation which Széchenyi acquired was earned as much by his temperance and his regard for justice and the rights of all, as by the boldness of the changes that he proposed. 'I wish,' he remarked, 'to awaken my countrymen so that they may walk, and not that they may throw

ed the rest of his life. These pamphlets were written, not in Latin or German, but in the Magyar tongue. It was the first time that works of such importance had been published in that idiom. * * * * Széchenyi's popularity and glory were unequalled; he was in truth the first citizen of his country, as this title he merited as much by his respect for justice and the rights of all, as by the boldness of his plans of reform. He had roused his country without overturning it, and such had always been his ambition. 'I wish to awaken my countrymen,' said he to a foreigner, 'so that they may walk, and not that they may throw themselves out of the window.' His name was in every mouth. The counties vied with each other in reading him patriotic addresses and diplomas of citizenship, which gave him the right of voting in their local assemblies; when he arrived in any village, the peasants with music at their head, went out to meet him, all wishing to see and hear him, and calling him their father and their liberator. The Diet of Transylvania did homage to the eloquent publicist by sending him a gold pen, several feet in length; his name was given to the first steamboat that furrowed the Danube; the national academy, the circle of the nobility, and the institute of the Hungarian language, at the same time elected him their president. In every drawing room at Pesth, strangers might see an engraving representing Széchenyi, in a sort of apotheosis, amidst luminous clouds; beneath, Hungary coming out of chaos, and the Danube, covered by vessels of all nations, rolling majestically its placid waters adown the levrilled rapids of Orschowa."—*Revue des Deux Mondes, Tome 24, pp. 683, 684, 689.*

themselves out of the window.' His popularity became immense. His name was in every mouth, and the counties vied with each other in sending him addresses of congratulation and rights of citizenship. When he arrived in any village, the peasants went out to meet him with music, and called him their father and liberator. The Diet of Transylvania sent him an entire gold pen, several feet in length, and the national academy, the circle of the nobility and the institute of the Hungarian language, at the same time elected him their President. His name was given to the first steamboat which glided down the River Danube; and in every drawing room at Pesth, the stranger might see an engraving in which Széchenyi appeared in a sort of apotheosis surrounded by luminous clouds, while beneath, Hungary was represented as coming out of chaos, and the Danube, covered by vessels of all nations, flowed on majestically, not fretted by rocks or rapids, towards the sea."—*North American Review, January, 1850, pp. 106-7-8.*

Compare, also, the following passages, which I have selected on account of their brevity :

"The beau-ideal of this government, was it not the ancient diets, where 80,000 nobles assembled on horseback on the plain of Rakos, to deliberate upon peace or war, uttering altogether the formidable cry, 'To Arms!' after which no scrutiny of the vote was needed?"—*Revue, Tome 24, p. 675.*

"The custom, indeed, has a historical meaning; it throws a broad light on the ancient constitution of the diet, which consisted of 80,000 mounted nobles, assembled on the plain of Rakos to determine on war or peace, and uttering all together the formidable cry, 'To Arms!'—after which no scrutiny of the vote was needed."—*N. A. Review, p. 105.*

"The Hungarian constitution seems to have been made entirely for the profit of this class, or rather this class is the constitution itself. The Hungarian noble is, and calls himself a member of the crown of Hungary; *membrum sacre coronæ*; he is part of the sovereignty. * * * If we wish for a parallel we must recall the government of Ancient Poland, and the definition of J. J. Rousseau: 'There the nobles are everything, the burghers nothing, and the peasants less than nothing.'"—*Revue, T. 24, p. 676.*

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"The ancient constitution of Hungary was made, as we have seen, solely for the benefit of this class; in their favor, for the protection of their order, the Golden Bull of Andreas II. had been issued. Hitherto every one of their number had called himself a member of the crown of Hungary; he was a part of the sovereignty. Their idea of the constitution corresponded perfectly to Rousseau's definition of the government of Poland, 'where the nobles are everything, the burghers nothing, and the peasants less than nothing.'"—*N. A. Review, p. 109.*

From the last instance, it will be seen that Mr. Bowen is indebted to De Langsdorff for even his quotation from Rousseau!

I am sorry to say that these are not isolated cases. Mr. Bowen's "War of Races" is nearly sixty pages long. Four or five of these pages consist of acknowledged quotations, but the remainder is put forth as entirely of Mr. Bowen's own composition—as the result of his own "great labor and research." It has been so accepted by the readers of the North American Review, and Mr. Bowen has received considerable credit for it, having, it is said, been appointed to the Professorship of History in Harvard University on account of the historical merit of that article. Nevertheless, I affirm that, of the sixty pages of that article, at least fifty are taken directly from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, either by literal translation, or by a process of abridgment which any person who understands French, and can write tolerable English, could perform nearly as well as Mr. Bowen has performed it. And no acknowledgment whatever has been made for this, though, indeed, no amount of acknowledgment would be sufficient to justify the passing off such a translation as an original historical essay. Mr. Bowen's admission, that he "depends for information" chiefly on M. Degerando's book, and on the articles of Langsdorff and Desprez, does not meet the case at all. It is not merely "information" that Mr. Bowen has derived from the *Revue*; he has taken from it his narrative, by literal translation, or by an easy abridgment; he has taken from it nine-tenths of his facts; he has taken from it his rhetoric, the very ornaments of his style; in short, all that in any kind of composition ought to be particularly the writer's own. If I may so speak, he has not studied and digested these French essayists, and re-produced their substance in a form of his own growth, but he has torn them limb from limb, and with the mangled fragments has put together a distorted and disjointed figure, which he has arrayed in the garments and jewels of his victims.

I say distorted and disjointed, for Mr. Bowen has not only plundered Messrs. De Langsdorff and Desprez, but he has perverted them in the most outrageous manner. They are royalists and apologists for Austria and for Metternich; but, though ill-informed and prejudiced, they are not destitute of honor and a sense of justice—they did not begin to write with the intention of deliberately slandering a whole nation. They admit a great deal in favor of the Hungarians.

They allow much credit to the nobility for effecting reforms and yielding up their privileges; and though they describe with severity the condition of Hungary in former times, they mention, without reluctance, the immense improvements of the last few years. But Mr. Bowen, in translating from them, systematically omits all that they say in favor of the Hungarians, and converts all their unfavorable conjectures, "perhaps," and "it is possible," into downright dogmatic certainties. He suppresses all that they say in praise of the Hungarian leaders, and exaggerates all that they say against them. I will give two instances of this perversion, out of dozens which I could cite. In the "War of Races," [p. 110.] Mr. Bowen gives a short and sneering account of Kossuth. The sneers, of course, are Mr. Bowen's own, but the rest is translated from the *Revue*, [Tome 24, p. 268,] from an article of De Langsdorff, who in the very paragraph from which Mr. Bowen translates his "information," says of Kossuth, that he is "a democrat of the new revolutionary school, who will seek to get rid of the nobility when he shall have got rid of Austria," and that he "has not feared to overthrow the whole political and social state of his country, to realize dreams of universal equality, more chimerical in Hungary than any where else." Mr. Bowen quits De Langsdorff when he comes to this passage, skips it, and goes on translating from the rest of the paragraph, leaving the gap to be filled up by the following rare specimen of his own original composition:

"In fact, Kossuth's party, ever since it was organized, has been endeavoring to effect a complete separation of Hungary from Austria, the preservation of feudal privileges, and the dominion of the Magyar race, being more important in their eyes than the promotion of the commercial and other material interests of the country, and the intellectual cultivation of its people!"

Again, ["War of Races," p. 89,] a passage is quoted, in which De Langsdorff says:

"I shall never forget the impression I received when on the bridge which crosses the Danube at Pesth, I saw every peasant, every poor cultivator of the ground, rudely stopped and compelled to pay toll both for himself and for the meagre horses harnessed to his cart. The tolls are heavy, amounting to a considerable sum for these poor people; while the Magyar gentlemen, mounted on fine horses, or seated in elegant carriages, passed and repassed without payment."

* * * This exemption, it is true, was but a small affair, and tyranny has other practices that are far more odious; but from that time I was no more astonished by the inequalities and anomalies which I witnessed during the rest of my journey; I had foreseen them all on the bridge at Pesth."

With these last words Mr. Bowen concluded his quotation. And why? Because M. de Langsdorff went on to say:

"The feeling which I experienced, others shared with me. In 1836, the diet decreed that the nobles should be subjected to toll on the suspension bridge which was about to be constructed at Pesth. This was the first breach made in the privileges of the nobility; and it was by the nobility that it was made. There, where I felt only a sterile emotion, generous citizens, sacrificing their interest without hesitation, found the opportunity to repair a long injustice. Since that time the Hungarian nobles have walked resolutely in that path; it is they who for twenty years have been laboring to file the chains of their subjects; it is they who in a solemn day, have vowed to break them forever."—*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Aug. 1, 1848.

These perversions will give some idea of the spirit in which Mr. Bowen wrote his article, and of the manner in which he perverted his "authorities" into a seeming support of his charges against the Hungarians. And I must beg the reader not to suppose that these are rare instances, which I have carefully detached from the body of the article. On the contrary, such perversions constitute the very essence of the "War of Races," and pervade it throughout, to an extent that is scarcely to be imagined by one who has not gone into a careful analysis of it, and compared it paragraph by paragraph, and line by line, with the documents on which it professes to be based. In the *Christian Examiner*, Mrs. Putnam has, in her peculiarly guarded and temperate manner, very justly described its character. She says, [p. 423]:

"We are reluctantly compelled to affirm that there is no portion of the article on the "War of Races," on which the reader can safely rely. We do not exaggerate, and we believe that all those persons who have an acquaintance with the history of Hungary, and who have read the article in the *North American*, will sustain us when we say, that there is hardly a sentence in this article in which an error is not either expressed or implied; in many portions of it, error is so interwoven with error, that the baffled critic turns from the task of refutation as from the entrance to an inextricable labyrinth. We are disposed to believe that the absence of any formal and labored confutation of the article on the "War of Races"—to which absence the author appeals as a proof of its invulnerability—may be attributed to the Herculean labor which the task of correcting all the errors contained in this historical essay seemed to involve, and the great length to which such a confutation must be extended, if the task were thoroughly executed. These errors pervade every part of the article, and are almost as numerous in that portion which relates to those periods of Hungarian history which are most familiar to the general reader, as in those whose investigation requires a certain degree of research."

In confirmation of this opinion, I will quote that of another person, very competent to judge of such a question. Count Gurowski, a man of great learning and ability, who has held a high official position in Russia, and who is intimately acquainted with the affairs of Eastern Europe, and who, moreover, is neither a Magyar, nor a partizan of the Magyars, but on the contrary is a Slavonian, and has been a prominent leader of the Pan-Slavistic movement, which is most hostile to the Magyars, said, in February, 1850, in a review of the "War of Races":—

"It is a thick and dark forest of errors in historical or rather unhistorical quotations, as well as in reasoning. Almost every line requires rectification. Almost all motives assigned to the actions of individuals, as well as to the mass of the people in Vienna, in Hungary, and in the Slavonian countries, are put in a false light, and denote by the quoted French authorities perfect ignorance or perfect bad faith. As most of the facts are misrepresented or shown in the falsest possible light, so almost all the deductions are at least erroneous; and it cannot be otherwise, as a disfigured fact very naturally produces the most false conclusions; and the number of these is infinite, so as to render their rectification impossible."

This is certainly strong language; but it has peculiar weight from the fact that Count Gurowski used it in the most friendly spirit towards Mr. Bowen, whom, at the time, he regarded as the unconscious victim of the misrepresentations of the writers in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

The "War of Races" was followed by a second article on the same subject in the *North American Review* for April, 1850, the tone of which was, if possible, still more unfavorable to the Hungarians, while the mode in which it was put together was not a whit more creditable to the literary honesty of Mr. Bowen. One or two instances of this peculiar mode will be sufficient. In attempting to throw discredit on the government of Kossuth, a work entitled "Louis Kossuth and the Recent History of Hungary," by Arthur Frey, is referred to as an authority which "will not be disputed by the sympathizers with Kossuth and his party." Mr. Bowen admits that he has not seen this book, but says that he borrows some extracts from it, from the *London Athenæum*. The first and most important of these extracts then follows, [N. A. R., April, 1850, p. 499.] introduced by "Mr. Frey says." Now, in reality, Mr. Frey says no such thing. The passage which Mr. Bowen endeavors to palm off as Frey's, is a portion of the editorial in the *Athenæum*, and of no more authority than the statements of any other anonymous English