

Early Hungarian-Canadian Culture

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Nowadays very few observers are aware of the existence not only of a considerable body of prairie poetry and other early writings in Hungarian, but of the fact that one or two of the pioneers, now in their eighties, still continue to give vent to their emotions in their ancestral language. Perhaps even scarcer are those who appreciate the significance, cultural and social, of the one-time communities of Magyar peasant farmers of the Canadian West. The objective of the present study is to discuss, to some extent at least, these important aspects of Canadian prairie history.

Prior to the 1920s, Saskatchewan contained most of the Hungarian Canadian settlers and practically all of what might be termed "bloc settlements." Particularly during and since the Great Depression considerable out-migration has taken place from the province, mainly to Ontario and, in a smaller measure, to British Columbia. The number of Hungarian-Canadian residents of the province may be estimated at about 16,000 with more than 3,000 residing in Regina.¹

A folk community

Békevár, situated some ten miles south of present-day Kipling, was a Hungarian-Canadian farmer community established in 1900.² For several reasons this settlement can be regarded as the major centre of Hungarian-Canadian folk culture in the West and as being almost unique, for that matter, on this continent. One factor is that the community very closely resembled a *folk society*, so eminently described in anthropo-sociological literature.³ To express it in a nutshell, the pioneers of *Békevár* had come largely from three regions of the old country.⁴ All were part of the folk society at large which had preserved the folkways, customs, and traditions of the rural style of life that had already become extinct in Western Europe many decades before, together in a great measure, with its cultural expressions. Newcomers to the great plains at the beginning of the century were left largely to their own devices and were expected to conquer from "Mother Nature" and civilize a virgin

area of the prairie. They obviously did what they could, which in the long run included the transfer of as many institutions and other cultural traits of their native communities as appeared feasible and useful within their new environment.

Not unlike in other rural communities of the prairies, the churches became the strongest and most important institutions in this settlement of Calvinist Reformed and Baptist farmers.⁵ Communal cohesion was strengthened by systems of kinship, neighbourhood, and co-villager groupings, as well as by practically exclusive use of the native tongue. Also such "idioms" as costume, gestures, facial expressions (often deriving from the greater movement of the lips and the mouth, characteristic of Hungarian speakers), and other bodily movements tended to act in the same direction. Consequently, their ways, the folkways, appeared strangely out-of-date for farmers of British background whose ancestors had already lost touch with folk society and who, being already well established by the time of the arrival of the newcomers, were inclined to look down upon them as inferior, which circumstances proved to be one of the strongest socio-cultural boundaries around Békevár.⁶

Self-sufficiency

The new colony had to be almost self-sufficient socioculturally, providing its own entertainment, building its own homes, barns, stables, and furniture. Its members made many of their own tools, unless brought along from the old country. They produced material for clothing, which they cut and sewed up for the family. In sum, they carried out all the major and minor operations connected with farming in accordance with the ways of the folk tradition adhered to since time immemorial in their native communities. These ways included a strong emotional attachment not only to the soil, but to the landscape as a whole. They tended to regard everything around them as somehow *human*, somehow *personal*; hence sloughs, hills, domestic animals, and even unusual trees were given personal names. There was a belief, at least with a number of the farmers, that spirits of the departed still retained an interest in the living and that supernatural phenomena might occur in their physical environment.⁷

Socio-cultural changes

The major changes that have occurred in the Hungarian Canadian colony can be summed up briefly: most of the institutions such as the baptismal, wedding and, to a large extent, funeral rites in the Hungarian styles have been replaced by the ceremonies of the society at large. Other

institutions have been transferred to Kipling to merge with similar institutions, as in the case of the former Reformed congregations which now appear under the name of the Békevár Presbyterian Church.⁸ The small schools of the colony — named, in certain cases, after folk heroes of the ancestral tradition — have given way to a centralized school in Kipling and to a high school that transfers the student into a non-Hungarian environment, reduces facility in the ancestral tongue, and at the same time provides major incentives for the complete mastery of the language of the surrounding society through the availability of higher education and the possibility of socioeconomic mobility. A side product of the same process is the free mingling between members of the young generation coming from several ethnic groupings with resultant spectacular increases in interethnic marriages and steep decline in the command and use of their forefathers' language. However, most members of the former Békevár population above about thirty are still able to speak fluent and largely correct Hungarian, yet they seem to be resigned to the impending disappearance of their culture. This state of affairs seems not only similar to, but in most places of the province, far more pronounced than in Kipling.⁹

The Békevár culture

Particularly, the pre-1914 Hungarian immigrants tended to come from folk communities of the "advanced" kind (already considerably affected by the technological change taking place in their native country); nonetheless, they preserved most characteristics of the folk communities, though usually in attenuated forms.¹⁰

The term *culture* is applied here to convey a process as well as its results or products. The process that refers to the production of something artistically, culturally, or expression-wise new or unique may be termed "creativity" and its outcome creative art. The Békevár culture is both inherited and adapted to the ever-changing circumstances. Thus, it is both repetitive and digressive. In these respects, it does not differ greatly from the cultures (sub-cultures) of other Hungarian Canadian communities.¹¹ However, until recently Békevár could be regarded as a creative centre whose people, besides fulfilling adaptive and repetitive functions, proved capable of creating cultural "goods" on a comparatively large scale. As a result, many poetical texts — including that of a very long epos¹² — as well as numerous such prose items as short stories, reminiscences, and diaries, survive. Some of them have also appeared in print. Still, creative activity at Békevár also possessed — amongst others — an abstract, yet instrumental function. Owing to the psychological

starvation caused by distance from one another just as much as by socio-cultural nearness to the sharers of the culture, face to face presence was a major requirement for the members of the community; hence, after a while each member of the community came to *know* the others. *Knowledge* in this context meant a more thorough and deep knowing than would be the case in an urban situation. This knowledge rested on a large cluster of common expectations derived from the possession of the same folkways, *mores*, and traditions including the ancestral tongue. This intimacy of communication was accompanied by a high degree of lack of contact with the outside society. The closeness of the interaction resulted in an emotional atmosphere in which the actors readily and (as a rule) without any prompting would reveal their momentary sentiments, whether joyous or traumatic. It was a society in which there were mechanisms built in for the purpose of reducing what nowadays would be referred to as "stresses," or expressed differently, for the achievement of periodical *catharsis* (or outlet) to pent-up emotions. Some of these remedial activities were music, singing, and poetry.

Music

The approach to music was twofold; for the few who were able to play musical instruments, the experiencing of the satisfaction derived from playing them in a *creative* fashion and the psychological interacting with their listeners had a greatly supportive effect. The *passive* music lovers tended quickly to transmute their passivity into a creativeness of their own either by becoming partakers of the melody through joining in and singing, or by yielding to the human instinct of moving their limbs and bodies in the rhythm of the music. The types of music that prevailed at Békevár were not exclusively folk music of the kind that have been made widely known and socially acceptable through the musical collections and compositions of Béla Bartók¹³ and Zoltán Kodály,¹⁴ but they also incorporated, in accordance with the rules of the general cultural change, snatches of tunes and words taken from such sources as operettas, musical plays, and songs composed by professionals for a variety of purposes and occasions. It is a folk-characteristic to be receptive to what is coming from the other segments of society, particularly from the urban settlements.¹⁵ The average informant would treat the researcher to a mixed diet of traditional, gypsy, operetta, and patriotic songs without much awareness of any difference among them.¹⁶ Most of the interviewees would be prepared to share their accomplishments in singing because of their inclination to be proud of their musical heritage.¹⁷ Although there existed at Békevár several orchestras and bands (albeit not

at the same time) which usually comprised young men, their musical creativity has never reached, at least to the knowledge of the present writer, the level of composing new tunes apart from the adapting of old ones to their own style.

Poetry

Poetry, as well, may act as an instrument of catharsis. Poems can be regarded as attempts to cleanse the mind of painful doubts about oneself, about the community, about society at large, about such feelings as love of various types, solidarity, loyalty, or such aspects of nature as land, seeding, harvesting, animals, and of course, moods related to them. They also might represent purification on a large scale through experiencing vicarious heroism in extolling the deeds and qualities of one or more charismatic persons on the communal or societal level. Nevertheless, the remedy of catharsis could be applied on the personal-heroic level by the writing of an epos of the autobiographical sort.¹⁸ In this, heroism is emphasized through the expressive denial of it. The person becomes a hero through not acting like one.

Statements may be made in prose about anything. However, poetry and music, particularly when combined to form songs, prove to be a way more expressive and relieving of emotional reaction to influences of the environment, whether social or physical. Poetry is a kind of artistic expression that gradually emerged over many centuries or even millennia, in which process rhyme and meter served to aid in the memorization and retention of the lines, not only for the sake of the retention of the contents. Some of the pieces of poetry of old delineated and presented shorter or longer accounts of the history of a group, a community, or a tribe, as a rule describing the unusual and heroic deeds and events of the time.¹⁹

Also in this respect the people of Békevár were a folk community who, without paying much attention to actual dates or minor details, tended to have a strong consciousness of the history and significance of the establishment of their colony and found occasion to describe their memories and views as well in poetical forms. The poetry of Békevár in the first few years of the colony was virtually identical with the literary output of Kálmán Kovácsi,²⁰ the minister of the Reformed congregation, who was very much addicted to the cult of Louis Kossuth²¹ and the concomitant anti-Habsburg sentiments and politics of the contemporary opposition in the old country. Therefore, he was disposed to choose topics from this circle of notions in his poetic works dealing even with anniversary celebrations, as in the case of the jubilee, in 1911, which

commemorated the foundation of Esterhaz twenty-five years before.²² However, the Tenth Anniversary Celebrations of the foundation of Békevár, in 1910, though marked by a considerable amount of publicity — through the displaying of the *banderium*, and by flags, speeches, and the entertainment of large groups of visitors — had no poems or songs written for the occasion.²³

A folk poet

Quite different are the intellectual tendencies and the emotional bases which characterize another and longer poetical effort. The author, Benjamin Szakács, the Eldest, the one-time *biró* (village mayor) of the folk community Botrágy in the old country,²⁴ had assumed the tone of the speech of the Old Testament prophets from his continual study of the Bible.

Also this poem amalgamates aspects of old-country history with those of the past of the colony. It tends to be critical of the traditional social system of the ancestral society with the generalization that “it had not created happiness, its people have never been happy.” But, the people as such (in fact, the whole nation) is taken to task, in that “it had never reached the stage of having been able to make a wise election.” The poet, following biblical precedents, pinpoints the reason for their inclination to not being above committing sins.²⁵ “So the successive invasions of the old country by foreign powers were due to rightful divine punishment for internal discord on the part of its aristocrats, and war followed as if the consequence of a *curse*. The divine punishment was caused by reluctance to coöperate, since lack of concord and peace must end in disaster.” The sufferings of peoples derive from their being too short-sighted to realize that Jesus was the greatest representative of peace, and from their reluctance to know God. The poet identifies the obtaining of land as a quasi-magic²⁶ event by which all newcomers were electrified into persistent toil. The lines also express the improvident, yet necessary, tendency of the penniless new settlers to select wooded land as their homesteads for the sake of the availability of trees for building and heating purposes, not anticipating the price to be paid later in the tremendous effort of clearing the land which was, as a rule, hilly and rocky.²⁷ Not only were the first cottages unassuming, but the dwellers also lacked complexity of personality. Looking back from the distance of a long time the author sees the blissful vision of the community’s thorough harmony during its first few years, when

the hearts of the people constituted the church, as yet unbuilt; they were seeking their fellows’ company, since they bore no hate towards

one another. The church services were eagerly looked forward to [to obtain psychological support as well from discussion and company]. He who lived with us, dwelt with us; we shared one another's joys and woes.²⁸

Indeed, the whole environment, too, is presented as almost idyllic, with the forests and meadows teeming with pheasants, prairie chickens, and snowshoe rabbits. Every little slough is full of water, crowded with flocks of ducks. Besides, death is described as an infrequent visitor, and even illnesses as practically absent. The poem ends with an exhortation towards "concord, humility, and peace." The whole mood of the lines reflects the deep involvement with religiosity of the traditional type so characteristic of the early folk community.²⁹

Then the year 1925 — which was, at the same time, the landmark for the first quarter-century of the existence of the community³⁰ — was generating poems that reflected the outlook and emotions of many of the people of the colony. One of these poetical endeavours resulted in the creation of what was regarded as the "hymn of Békevár" written by Alex Daku.³¹ It revealed the religious inclination of the pioneers and, further, expressed their gratitude for having been given the colony as their place of abode, and their desire that it should be "the home of brotherly love and peace."

Much more complex and revealing is the poem written by George (Gyula) Izsák,³² in connection with the same occasion, entitled "The Conquest of Our New Home." In the first place, not only is the poem as a whole longer, but each of its seven eight-line stanzas tended already externally to create the impression and mood of an ode, to which the poem indeed amounts through its contents. The first stanza is designed to sum up the nineteenth century self-image of the people of the old country, strengthened by the experiences of the First World War and its dramatic aftermath: despite the sacrifices of the wars to contain the invasion of western Europe by the Mongolians and the Osmanli Turks,³³ Hungary stood dispossessed and reduced to poverty.³⁴ The next two stanzas sum up the settling of Békevár a quarter of a century before in the country of the "Aurora Borealis." It is not really the actual settling which is expressed in the second stanza, but the mood of resolution and dauntlessness with which the small "caravan" of the founders set out in search of a new home. The next stanza reflects the mood of the colonists after the "conquest" of the prairie. It shows that the colony incorporated people from diverse regions of the old country and stresses the contrast between the hunting way of life of the migratory Indians and the one which produces "golden wheat in the rich virgin soil." One line already

hints at the ambivalence of the early pioneers who were at times in doubt whether they had acted wisely in exposing themselves to the trials and tribulations of pioneering on the prairies and in giving up the emotional support of the well-known native community and landscape.³⁵ The fourth stanza is a direct reference to the nostalgia of the recent immigrants, which makes their native region appear in their memories charming and attractive far beyond reality and, conversely, their environment on the prairie far less appealing than in actuality. Indeed, a few settlers of the colony could not resist the temptation of far-away landscapes, or more correctly, their former village communities. However, some of them who returned to the old country found before long that their emotional states had reversed and soon, yearning for the colony of Békevár, set out for it once again.³⁶

For George Izsák the era of what may be referred to as “the Spiritist Controversy”³⁷ was indeed very memorable and significant. To the uninitiated the next stanza does not seem to have much to do with the Békevárians; it much rather seems to address itself to the Magyars in general. However, the lines very tactfully and diplomatically remind the main actors in the conflict, with most of them still alive in 1925, that in the Spiritists’ view the main victim of the struggle around 1910 was nothing else but “brotherly love.” Of course, the term may be an indirect allusion to the fact that the first minister of the community and the mentor and theoretician for the Spiritists of Békevár, was forced by the anti-Spiritist opposition to leave the colony forever.³⁸ Nonetheless, he was not ever forgotten by his followers and his statement containing his reminiscences and good wishes was read out and published in connection with the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebrations in 1925.³⁹ The use of the term *curse* is a reference to a long-standing myth mainly in the Hungarian romantic tradition according to which the Magyars’ affliction had been the scourge of continual discord and factional fighting.⁴⁰ Yet it is pointed out that everything comes to an end, and that even the internal strife at Békevár would change into productive and prosperous times for the colony. The prairie had been turned into fertile soil, with wheat growing in abundance; yet enough pasture was left to maintain large numbers of cattle and horses. Nevertheless, the same stanza reflects the feeling of insecurity in the 1920s with the apparent prosperity lacking any solid foundation: “how long will good fortune last?” The last stanza constitutes a terse summation of the thoughts and emotions of the poem as a whole. The last line of every stanza is a reminder for “the God of Hungarians” not to overlook them. The phrase “magyarok Istene” (also implying “the Magyar God”) may be a very ancient phrase that still refers to their pre-Christian era.⁴¹

The initiator and one of the founders of the colony, John (János) Szabó,⁴² did not survive the year of the Twenty-fifth Jubilee. Although his health had been gradually deteriorating, his passing away was a shock not only for his kin, but also for his friends and co-villagers. George Izsák, a relative and admirer of Szabó's, had a religious outlook that was — not unlike the former's — tempered with Spiritism, and felt prompted to pour out his emotions in a historico-lyrical poem named after the deceased.⁴³ After an excusably exaggerated introduction ("even the ground becomes soaked with the tears of the women"), the author refers to Szabó's great feat in "having conquered a large area for our fellow-Magyars." However, he does not leave unmentioned the fact, although with some imprecision, that "the red Indian people had lived there fifty years ago." The merits of the founder are succinctly expressed with the help of a few contrasts: a herd of wild buffalo roaming on the prairie as opposed to the wave-like movements of the sea of wheat in newly broken land; will the man who had given shelter to many, find shelter somewhere in his new life? Will anyone now comfort *him* who had been a comforter to many? Szabó, "whose brotherly love provided the bond for all, the wise adviser, the master singer, now lies in a casket with a still heart."⁴⁴ The poet envisages reverence for the deceased on the part of Békevár, "not only while Hungarians persist there, but while Buda yet stands in the old country."^{*} The last two lines may be regarded by the initiated as significant: "In time a pretty flower will grow from your dust . . . but your *spirit* will keep on guiding and directing."⁴⁵ The application of the words "dust" and "flower" are not really meant metaphorically; they constitute an allusion to transmogrification of the soul, or rather, the eternal transformation of matter into new life, paralleled by the release of the soul from its body and not yet reembodyed (as expressed in the last line); that is why Szabó's soul-spirit was expected to provide further guidance and direction through the poet, the one-time head of the Békevár Christian Spiritists' Association.⁴⁶

Another sequence of rhymed reminiscences deals with the informal description of the ecology of the region and the struggle of the pioneers with the physical and mental obstacles which were hampering them in civilizing the landscape. Apparently, Béni Szakács, Sr. had inherited appreciably from the poetical talents of his father whose lyrical creativity has been discussed above. The poet recalls the early days when the church service was still conducted by the Rev. Kálmán Kovácsi at the

^{*}Reference to the line "the Magyar is still alive; Buda still stands erect. . . ." K. Kisfaludy's (1788-1830) elegy "Mohács."

Kossuth School⁴⁷ where practically all members of the community would meet on Sundays. Also for him the past assumes a golden hue when viewed from the distance of some seventy years. First of all taxation was in those days almost negligible, not amounting to more than a cent per acre, and good shoes were to be had for less than two dollars. There was, in addition, a local mill at which flour cost them only two dollars per sack.⁴⁸ Further, he was witness to a great abundance of wildlife:

They practically covered the *peri* [as the pioneers called the prairie] and the sloughs; when the farmer went into the bush only a small distance he could shoot from eight to ten snowshoe rabbits at a go. Besides, the *ketrics* [as 'cartridge' was named at Békevár in those days] was inexpensive and, with a well-aimed shot one could hit from eight to ten ducks.

The author cannot recall ever having seen between Kipling and Kennedy any trees whose diameters exceeded one inch. In his recollection the reason for this circumstance had been a prairie fire just before the turn of the century. People from Béni Szakács's neighbourhood were compelled to go as far as *mosimaimton*⁴⁹ (Moosomin town) in search of wood. The prairie fire of 1900 occurred as a consequence of a devastating drought — devastating, except for Sexsmith and Toppings,⁵⁰ who could make hay in what in other years was Bender Lake. Of course, such a drought was unbelievable a few years later when the sky could not be seen owing to continual rain for days on end. Then, the meadow was bountiful with grass and the cattle were so fat that they could hardly move; nor were they inclined at all to run around, since, in addition to having been fattened on the big pasture, their hide was soaked by the steady rain. White Lake contained such quantities of fish that whoever desired to do so could capture them with hook or net. In his youth he and his uncle, Charles Szabó,⁵¹ were in the habit of catching fish once a week, which operation would yield about ten fish apiece.

Since there was no school yet in their township, he and other children attended a school situated in a small log cabin at Kennedy.⁵² That is where they learnt their first English: "not too many Hungarians were knowledgeable in it." However, after school he had chores to perform on his father's farm; he had to feed the horses and milk the *mulika* ("milch-cow"), for which work he received the princely wages of one dollar a week provided his *pap* (pop, father) remembered it. He still recalls with disgust and disappointment the case of the old woman for whom he had been sawing and splitting wood for three long weeks and did not receive more than a dollar in the end.

Because our poet did not start studying English until his teens, he

experienced great difficulties in the process. For instance, he could never pronounce the "th" in the word *mother*, "because one has to twist one's tongue." He found communication with English speakers straining and ineffectual. In fact the only sentence he could say was "do you see my cattle?" This circumstance at times resulted in curious situations and occasional frustrations, as on the occasion of his great yearning for prunes. Being fond of that fruit, which was on sale at the *stor* (store), it was to his great sadness that he did not know its English name. However, he did know the colours black and white. When asked by the storekeeper what he wanted, his answer was "I want something black." The man began smiling and led him around; they inspected every box in the store until they came upon the one containing the item. "These are prunes," said the storekeeper and that was a great object lesson for the boy, well remembered even in his old age.

One memory leads to another; old Béni recalls another memorable event from the past, when Andrew Izsák and Peter Biró persuaded him to go to Esterház⁵³ (only the very old pioneers remember the proper name of the oldest Hungarian Canadian settlement in Saskatchewan, which can easily be mixed up with Esterhazy, the later town). The three arrived in Whitewood in the evening and Béni was deputized to find a hotel room. He found one, but, unfortunately, it contained only one bed, across which the three were obliged to lie. This experience was far from pleasurable. On the other hand, the accommodation cost them no more than seventy-five cents. This left the three of them with another "six bits," for which they were able to buy a bottle of brandy (consequently they reached Esterház singing at the top of their voices).

Érdűhelyi on the prairie

Another early poem connected with Saskatchewan and dealing with aspects of life in it came from the pen of one of the main actors in the conflict that has been named "The Hungarian Question," which took place as a minor yet not unimportant portion of the later part of the *Manitoba School Question*. The Rev. Melchior (Menyhért) Érdűhelyi (1860-1925) was a Hungarian priest who, with his very arrival in Saskatchewan in 1908, added to the tensions which gradually led to a bitter confrontation owing to the unbridgeable differences between the political objectives of the Archbishop Langevin and the desire of the Hungarian-Canadian parishioners and a group of Liberal intellectuals. The Hungarian Question controversy took place between approximately 1908 and 1912.⁵⁴ It was during this period of time that Érdűhelyi managed to write the poem entitled "Harvest in Canada."

The nine stanzas are descriptive, partly philosophical, and mixed with a measure of historical contemplation. They also reflect the nostalgia of the recent immigrant and the feeling of alienation of a priest who was denied a status within the church which would have been commensurate with his qualifications, experiences, and self-respect. The poem is introduced by a terse and appreciative description of early Saskatchewan at harvest time.

We are allowed to visualise the large number of people required for harvesting about 1910, despite the availability of "the whirring swather." The workers perspire while they are gathering the crop and deliver it into the barns. The writer sees in the Hungarian Canadians' wheat crop the most beautiful ornament for prosperous Saskatchewan. The priest, also an expert farmer, who had studied various aspects of wheat farming and had a farm in Bácska,⁵⁵ one of the most fertile wheat-growing regions of Hungary of the time, and who also took up a homestead in the Székelyföld⁵⁶ Hungarian-Canadian settlement north of Cupar and carried out all the manual work connected with farming, could state with authority that "you can feast your eyes with pleasure on its [Saskatchewan's] durum wheat which is just like the one in Bácska." In the third stanza the poet claims, with pardonable pride and exaggeration, the fact as "accepted" that the Hungarian Canadian is the foremost of farmers and can work harder than the members of any other ethnic group.⁵⁷ Yet this happened, he points out, despite the circumstance that having arrived without any capital they had to start right from the bottom of society. They achieved advancement, since they proved indefatigable in breaking the sod and turning the wilderness into fertile land. The sixth stanza contrasts the early penury with their position in 1910 when the settlers of older vintage could already afford "to ride about proudly on their prancing horses and live happily in abundance and plenty."⁵⁸ Perhaps, just a trace of self-pity can be detected by the observer in the lines of Érdúj-helyi who, at this stage, was receiving a very small income even compared with the stipends of other, much more junior clergymen.

This is the point at which questions start to throng our author's mind. He stresses the contradiction between the diligence of these immigrants, the wealth, the fertile land of their native country and their need to emigrate to a distant overseas country where they will one day lose their ethnic identity. It is in the last stanza that he volunteers the answer to the riddle by referring to, as well as representing the viewpoint — in rather unrestrained language — of many Hungarians in connection with the state of affairs of their native country:

Poor Hungary! You native country of heroes, you have been afflicted

by the German curse for a thousand years. Your people cannot prosper.
You cannot be free; you are smarting under a heavy burden, the Austrian yoke.

This stanza expresses very succinctly a puzzling fact, or rather a fact which appears puzzling in retrospect. How was it possible with this type of feelings and public utterances, not only in Saskatchewan but all over the world right up to the spring of 1914, to experience a *volta face* and suddenly see Hungary on the side of Austria in the great conflagration that was to follow in a few months time that same year?

Early experiences

Some of the poems concern reminiscences of persons and episodes of the past when life, although theoretically much more difficult, appeared in retrospect to be golden and thoroughly enjoyable. This was so probably because most of the pioneers at that stage were young and rooted in the less sophisticated, but safer, ways of their folk community in which everything and everyone within the settlement was known to all and the strong social and cultural cohesion provided a sense of safety to all. Stephen Tóth,⁵⁹ who originally lived in the vicinity of Whitewood, but later married a Békevár girl and settled down to farming at Békevár, had happy memories amongst other matters and persons, of Mrs. Charles Fodor⁶⁰ of Whitewood. In his poem written in her memory, he recalls the common recollection of the pioneers of contemporary Békevár of their respective arrivals around 1900. Her log cabin in the shade of poplars functioned almost as an informal clinic and recreational centre at which the newcomers were provided with advice, information, and a new hope as to their future on the prairies.

How many homeless persons did she admit into her home;
She always provided the breadless with food.
There came also the first settlers in Kaposvár,
Who had settled there in 1886.
They came on cold winter days on hot horses
To the city of Whitewood to drink steaming tea in Mrs. Fodor's house.
Only a few survive to recount the romance of that era.
They spent many a joyful evening in that house
In Mrs. Fodor's good and clean company.

All this was true not only of the Kaposvárians before the turn of the century, but of the groups of new arrivals who settled southeast of Whitewood in and around the later Békevár, and became new claimants for the hospitality and humanitarian inclinations of Mrs. Fodor.

But this home was a blessing not only for the north,

But also for the south: it was about 1900 that there came
A handful of people into the wilderness of the prairie.
The place is called Békevár nowadays,
Where the tiny group established a settlement.

Thereafter they would go to the city of Whitewood
Into Mrs. Fodor's kind hospitable home.
Many of us are connected through numerous sweet memories of this house:
With its kind-hearted and clean hostess.
She was the motherly figure for the pioneers.
Let her memory be preserved in our hearts.
Let her kind spirit hover amongst us.
May her ashes rest peacefully in the Whitewood cemetery.

Mrs. Fodor was an outstanding woman pioneer.
She was capable of holding her own in a foreign country.
She saw to the education of her children and thus
Excellent scholars came from her family.

Another type of early experience concerning the life of the pioneers is presented by Béni Szakács in a more descriptive style.⁶¹ The prairie fires had been a scourge of the great plains even after large portions of land had been broken up by the pioneers of the area, including the Hungarian Canadians. In Béni's interpretation the life of the pioneers, as they gradually established themselves as farmers, went on in the following manner:

The Hungarians came to Canada in 1885,
Replacing diverse groups of Indians.
The many Magyars were swarming over
The land to become Békevár.
They came here and took up land.
They would work with great joy.
He who had only a horse and a cow
Would make them into a team
In order that his plough should work.
After having purchased his small walking plough
On credit, he would, while following it, kick this way and that.
He kept on doing so all the time
Because lumps of soil would fall back into the furrow.
He just could not have any rest on the endless prairie.
The poor man had his rump so active in this operation
That not even a sharp-shooter could have
Achieved a direct hit on it
However great his skill.

The farmer would cut down tall trees in the forest
For the cottage
And strip off their bark,
And thus he placed them one upon the other.

He fitted them into the shape of a square.
 He put logs across on top
 And virgin sods above;
 Lo and behold, the house was ready.
 This was quite good in fine weather,
 When there was no rain;
 However, when it was raining, it was sad.
 Nowadays only the poorest
 Possess such a chicken coop.
 The Hungarians of today already
 Live in houses which are like palaces.
We took up our land in 1905.
 It had very good soil, to our great joy.
 We built our sod house on it
 As well as our *karaj* ('corral') for sixty cattle.
 There were also two heaps of hay
 Not yet built up into stacks.
 It was fall. My parents were gone to Whitewood;
 This village was forty miles away from us.
 One had to go there to buy food.
 Forty miles may not appear excessive to you,
 But if you have to take a cart
 Your bones will truly rattle and shake
 While you approach your destination through rocks and undergrowth.
 After my parents had departed from home
 With the weather very fine and oppressively hot,
 I and my two sisters, I ten and they seven and four,
 Were in charge, with me also as the handyman.
 Suddenly at sunset big smoke arose.
 A prairie fire was being driven by a pleasant westerly.
 Like a thousand trains burning with a thousand furnaces
 It was racing across the plains straight in our direction.
 Having heard of the prairie fire,
 I quickly prepared water and sacks.
 My two young sisters also took up position,
 In order that we might save our little world through defiance.
 Thank God; when it seemed that everything would catch fire
 Our many good neighbours appeared on the scene
 And nothing was destroyed.

As can be seen in the simple and natural folk-poetical wording of the poem, the community was a real community at that state in the sense that they were well aware of the doings of one another and were ready as they had to be, for communal action when disaster threatened. As to the poetical skill of the author, it is worthwhile to take note of the brevity of expression and almost ballad-like presentation of events. One might say that with a few strong strokes and the application of some vivid verbal

colours, the poet succeeds in depicting, in one broad picture, the main features of the past and present of the colony in his youth.

The lyrical vein

On a higher level the minds of some of the poets would encompass the whole of the province of Saskatchewan. One of the pioneers of Békevár in his younger days expressed his emotions in a short, but memorable, lyric poem entitled in its original Hungarian spelling "Szaskacséván."⁶²

Szaskacséván
The pretty one,
Where that girl dwells
For whom my heart swells.
Another such woman
There's surely none
In any part of
Szaskacséván.
She is as dear, I trow,
As a slim doe:
Her voice as sweet
As a fairy's, indeed.
I wouldn't leave that lass
For aught that the world has,
Including all its
Riches.

As an instance of simple and pleasant expression of the enjoyment of the new environment, a shorter poem is presented:

In the very core of dense, dark forests,
I live my days in a quiet, beautiful colony.
Among the upright people of the good Magyar race,
Nothing reaches here of the din of the outside world.
Each person here has his work and function.
One day is just like the others.
Envy has no chance here; revenge is not in evidence.
We spend the day engaged in hard toil.
Wherever I glance around me in the area,
Cheerful people teem, reaping and stooking.
I listen to the merry songs; I watch their glowing cheeks.
I myself feel joyful in their midst.⁶³

Finally, we shall pause to consider two items of folk poetry proper — that is, poems of which the authors are unknown and which were most probably created in a light-hearted fashion in the course of everyday life. In both cases the charm of the words and rhymes sounds exquisite in the

original and the translation provides only a poor substitute for it. However, these also provide the historian with useful information.

Although nothing could be uncovered about *Kate*, the “actor” of the first poetical item, the stanza may be regarded as containing the structure of the situation and the fate of one and all pioneering women: doing the farming and household chores to distraction, not to mention the giving birth to and the looking after of a dozen or more children.

Kate's a'baking,
Ironing.
In foolish mood:
A'scrubbing.

As to the second little gem, it was Imre Dezső who, on retirement from farming, purchased in 1925 and continued on a smaller scale with the store set up by George Izsák. He and his wife could only with difficulty make a living; the “anonymous” poet had an eye only for the humorous aspect of the position. “Uncle Dezső” passed away in 1928 and thus was spared the experiences of the Great Depression.⁶⁴

Uncle Dezső's tiny shop
Is smaller than where chickens hop.
When two shoppers take the floor,
There's no room for him any more.

Poetical creativity at Békevár

One of the most telling traits of the culture centre of Békevár was its relatively great poetical and other literary creativity. Practically all culture-minded members of the community attempted to or did write poetry at some time in their lives; however, besides Kálmán Kovácsi, the most successful, persistent, and productive poets of the Békevár-Kipling area have been George Izsák, Béni Szakács the Elder and the Eldest. In fact, the younger of the two Bénis — now 85 — has tangibly shown his great poetical ability until recently through creative production of a few elegant poems for some festive occasions, but only to an ever-diminishing audience. Some of the poetry of Békevár has contained lasting and intrinsic beauty and value, yet all surviving poems constitute part not only of the cultural records of the community, but specimens of a unique but vanishing culture. Though the decline of poetical creativity had begun to be noticed in the early 1960s, no young Hungarian Canadian poet writing in Hungarian has emerged in the Kipling area. Of course, the manuscripts of quite a few poems of older vintage survive, besides the known ones, and possibly may remain undetected and unappreci-

ated. The passing away of the folk poetry of Békevár is yet another sign of the receding of the Hungarian-Canadian folk culture.

NOTES*

1. In 1961, there were 16,059 Canadians of Hungarian origin in Saskatchewan, with about only 86 females per 100 males. About 10,000 of them were listed as rural. Census of Canada, 1961, Series 1.2, Population Bulletin 1, 2-5.
2. For a more detailed history of the Békevár-Kipling area, see M. L. Kovács, *Peace and Strife: Some Facets of the History of an Early Prairie Community* (Kipling, 1980) — obtainable from Kipling District Historical Society, Box 131, Kipling, Saskatchewan, Canada, S0G 2S0. Townships 10, 11, and 12, Ranges 4, 5, and 6 contain the largest part of the Békevár region south of the town of Kipling. Cf. M. L. Kovács, *Esterhazy and Early Hungarian Immigration to Canada* (Regina, 1974), 51.
3. See, for instance, R. Redfield, *The Little Community* (Chicago, 1955).
4. The Counties Bereg, Jász-Nagy-Kun-Szolnok and Szabolcs. Ecologically, Bereg and Szabolcs constitute a unit under the name *Tiszahát* and the third county falls in one called *Nagykunság*. Cf. L. Kósa and A. Filep, *A magyar nép táji-történeti tagolódása [The Ecological and Historical Distribution of the Hungarian People]* (Budapest, 1975), 151-152, 185.
5. The twin-spired "Great Church of Békevár" was built after the pattern of the Reformed Church of Debrecen, Hungary, in 1912. It is no longer in regular use. Its functions have been taken over by the "Békevár" Presbyterian Church, Kipling. See Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 27-33.
6. There is a strong temptation for the average person to infer from the degree of mastery of the dominant language achieved by an immigrant, to his cultural background and mental capacity and to categorize him accordingly in respect of social distance. Cf. N. Sealy, "Language Conflict and Schools in New Brunswick," in M. L. Kovács, ed., *Ethnic Canadians: Culture and Education* (Regina, 1978), 311.
7. Many of the folk customs of the village communities concerned the dealing with supernatural occurrences. See T. Dömötör, *Hungarian Folk Customs* (Budapest, 1972), 49.
8. See note 5 above.
9. The principal Hungarian Canadian settlements in Saskatchewan were Esterház-Kaposvár-Esterhazy, Sokhalom-Stockholm, Cana, Otthon, Lestock-Leross-Magyar, Székelyfő-Máriavölgy-Arbury-Quinton-Cupar, Pinkeföld-Plunkett, Szent László-Howell-Prudhomme, Mátyásföld-Wakaw, and Békevár-Kipling.
10. A very detailed analysis of the diverse changes affecting the folk society and its economy between the time of the abolition of serfdom and the beginning of the First World War is provided in I. Szabó, ed., *A parasztság Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában [The Peasants of Hungary in the Era of Capitalism, 1848-1914]*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1972).

* The poetry quoted in this paper has been translated from the Hungarian original by the present writer. If not otherwise stated, interviews referred to in this study took place in Kipling, Saskatchewan or its area.

11. Sokhalom-Stockholm shared cultural leadership with Kaposvár among Hungarian Canadians of Roman Catholic persuasion from the 1920s on.
12. John Szatmári (1869–1947), a member of the wider Békevár community, described his life story, immigrational and farming experiences in an epic poem, unique amongst eposes, of which some 140 pages survive. The present writer has completed a study of the poem, which he hopes to publish together with the translation before long.
13. Béla Bartók (1881–1945) is famous for his collecting and studies of Hungarian folk song and folk music. He helped to develop a characteristically Hungarian musical style. The opera “Bluebeard’s Castle” and the mime-play “The Miraculous Mandarin” might be mentioned as the most outstanding of his compositions.
14. Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967) worked together with Bartók in the collection and editing of Hungarian folk songs. His musical idiom is milder than that of Bartók. Perhaps the best known of his compositions are the “Psalmus Hungaricus” and the opera “Háry János.”
15. Cf. Redfield, 123.
16. A good example of this was the interview with T. Tar, Kipling, July 30, 1976.
17. Numerous informants allowed themselves to be persuaded to sing portions of songs in the Békevár and other Hungarian Canadian settlements in the course of these seven years.
18. The Szatmári epos (see note 12 above) is both autobiographical and cathartic.
19. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would come to mind in this context.
20. See Kovács, *Esterhazy*, 42–45.
21. Concerning the significance of L. Kossuth (1802–1892), see note 23 below. The memories of Kossuth were probably the most vivid in eastern Hungary, wherefrom most of the Békevárians hailed. The city of Debrecen, in which Kovács had received his education, was, as it were, the “seat” of the Kossuth cult. Besides, the first school district of Békevár bore the name “Kossuth.”
22. The Compromise of 1867 was an uneasy one with L. Kossuth passionately opposing it from abroad. The successive pro-Compromise governments had to face the liberal anti-Habsburg opposition which represented the majority of the nation. Cf. C. A. Macartney, *Hungary* (Edinburgh, 1962), 176–179. Also see note 23 below.
23. There is no doubt that the influence of Kálmán Kovács upon the cultural life of the members of the folk community of Békevár was momentous and persistent. The poems that he wrote at Békevár were listened to when declaimed and read when published in the Hungarian paper of the time, the *Kanadai Magyar Farmer (Canadian Hungarian Farmer)*. The subject matter, the mood and the images, all projected well, represent the outlook of the Hungarian Canadian settlers of the pre-1914 period. Two of his odes were fondly remembered in later years as well and their texts were preserved and the poems themselves were recited by heart on suitable occasions in the colony. The March 15 Celebrations provided an annual rehearsal for the Kossuthist and anti-Habsburg sentiments of Békevár. Kálmán Kovács’s *A szabadság ünnepére (On the Festival of Freedom)* was written for the occasion of the sixty-second anniversary of the beginning of the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848. The celebrations of it (March 15) constituted also the major socio-cultural event of 1910. The text of three of the ten stanzas, translated below, fairly reflects the politico-emotional climate of the time.

True Magyar souls, this world around, the mood
Of psalm and prayer, today and hence, exude.
’Tis Easter, with the dawn of vanquished doom

And Magyar freedom charging from its tomb.
 That with its vanishing in the blood-stained dusk that follows,
 Our flag-poles have been turned into gallows;
 And that the hurrahs were drowned by unbearable pain,
 My nation, do not remember, do not grieve again.
 Let the watch fire blaze! Let black despair disappear —
 The shades of Kossuth and Rákóczi hover near.
 We are watched over by the Lord in war unfazed,
 Who once the lofty Tower of Babel razed.
 The fiery souls of the heroes fallen for liberty
 Roam over the whole world restlessly.
 Awaiting the war-cry, all these will march along
 Who still wear the manacles of the oppressor strong.
 Do you see? How, like a comet flashing
 The valiant Csaba and his gallant army come dashing.
 Nor will he return to his heavenly habitation
 Until the huge, world-rescuing confrontation
 Will finally end in a victory resounding
 Until there will come from Freedom's temple bounding,
 Expelled by a flaming sword the many profiteers
 And at the Christmas candle of peace for many years
 All men will chant their song of gratitude.

The *Tenth Anniversary Celebration* (July 1910) was a major event in the process of the emergence of the Békevár identity. See Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 35–41.

24. Béni Szakács, the Eldest (1871–1959), having been the *biró* of Botrágy village, found himself in violent conflict with the village notary and departed for Canada. He became also in Békevár one of the communal leaders. His poetical gift was inherited by his son, the present-day Béni Szakács, Sr.
25. Béni Szakács' ethico-religious views inclined towards greater strictness over the years. The Baptist congregation appeared to express his views to a greater extent, and so he joined it.
26. Cf. B. Malinowski, "Magic, Science, and Religion," in J. Needham, ed., *Science, Religion, and Reality* (New York, 1925).
27. Thus, the land taken up by the first settlers of Békevár was more wooded and less fertile than the quarter-sections selected by later-comers.
28. An observation echoed by other elderly informants.
29. Moreover, of course, the church would be the most important social institution in the early prairie communities. See Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 20 and 27–33.
30. Békevár celebrated its Twenty-fifth Anniversary in a "Jubilee Festival" on July 19–21, 1925, which was attended by several hundred visitors as well, including the Hon. H. W. Newlands, Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan, and Armand Hann, the Consul General of Hungary. For accounts see the *KMU* ("Canadian Hungarian News") July 19–21, 1925 and the (Regina) *Leader*, July 25, 1925, and Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 119–123.
31. Alex (Sándor) Daku (1880–1964), having retired from farming to Kipling in 1944, spent much of his time on communal and church affairs. Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 12.
32. George (Gyula) Izsák (1884–1960) belonged in the cultural nucleus of Békevár. He worked himself up to become an intellectual and a well-to-do man only to lose almost everything during the Depression. He was a most productive Hungarian Canadian poet, writing well into the 1950s. His historical reminiscences provide some of the most useful source material in the past culture of the colony.

Later, he became a community and church leader in Toronto. Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 90 and 206.

33. These are some of the most traumatic experiences in the Hungarian identity. See Macartney, 32-33.
34. Reference to the Peace Treaty of Trianon, June 4, 1920, *ibid.*, 206-207.
35. Very few members of peasant societies were leaving their native countries with an intention other than "to get rich quick" and return to the ancestral villages and buy land there. Cf. W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Boston, 1920), vol. 5, pp. 8ff.
36. One such person was J. Szatmári. See note 12 above. However, very few Békevárians returned to the old country for resettlement there.
37. The Spiritism of the Békevár kind served to promote the intellectual-cultural "appetite" of the participants besides deepening their religious interests. G. Izsák was the first and only head of the "Békevár Christian Spiritists' Association." However, Spiritism was strongly and effectively opposed by the majority of the Békevárians. (Interviews with several informants in Kipling, Saskatchewan, Canada.)
38. The Rev. K. Kovács, the first minister, was forced to make an exchange of ministries with the Rev. John Kovács in Otthon. (Interviews.) See Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 44-45.
39. On July 19-21, 1925. See *KMU*, July 19-21, 1925.
40. Also a theme of the Hungarian National Hymn by F. Kölcsey (1790-1838).
41. Cf. V. Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok hitvilága [Creeds of the Heathen Magyars]* (Budapest, 1967).
42. John Szabó (1852-1925), the initiator of the founding of the colony and also its name giver. Kovács, *Peace and Strife*, 4-8.
43. J. Szabó was one of the main supporters of the Spiritist movement in the settlement and also a kinsman of G. Izsák.
44. Reference to the claim that many of those who had accepted Szabó's hospitality, food, and good advice in the beginning, later turned against him in the course of the Spiritist Controversy.
45. The statement expresses Spiritist beliefs.
46. The Association was at its heyday between about 1908 and 1912. (Interviews.)
47. In the first seven years of the existence of the colony the Kossuth school, No. 948, was at the same time the social-cultural hall as well as the quasi-church for the community. Two other early schools were the *Magyar* and the *Rákóczi*. The three school districts were established: Kossuth and Magyar in 1905 and Rakoczi in 1910 (Education Department Records, Saskatchewan Provincial Archives, Regina).
48. The Rev. John Kovács set up and operated a flour-mill, first in the neighbourhood of the manse, later in Kipling. (Interviews.)
49. Many English words were *magyarized* by the Békevárians.
50. Two of the earliest Anglo-Canadian settlers northwest of Békevár: Jim Sexsmith (1859-1957) and William H. Toppings (1858-1943).
51. Károly Szabó (1879-1956), the elder son of John Szabó, moved to British Columbia in the 1920s.
52. Kennedy, a settlement northeast of Békevár, east of Kipling, contains numerous Hungarian Canadians, many of whom are still in close contact with the Kipling-Békevár community.
53. Esterház was the first Hungarian settlement in what has become Saskatchewan. For further information see Kovács, *Esterhazy*, 17-19.
54. See M. L. Kovács, "The Hungarian School Question," in *Ethnic Canadians*, 333-358.
55. Bácska constitutes an ecological unit in the southernmost portion of the plain

between the rivers Danube (Duna) and the Tisza; now its largest part is in Yugoslavia. Cf. Kósa-Filep, 59–61.

56. A comparatively sizable settlement of Bukovinian *Székelys* next to Máriavölgy, another community of the same origin. Concerning the Székelys, and their role in the Hungarian Question controversy, see Kovács, "The Hungarian School Question." Cf. note 54 above.
57. Not possessing the mastery of the English language and other essential social skills, the Central and East European peasant farmers simply *had* to succeed on the land.
58. It might be a reference to the *banderium* (a group of local horsemen dressed in folk costumes to act as escorts on festive occasions).
59. Stephen Tóth (1888–1964) established himself at Békevár through an 'invention' of his when he constructed a mechanical saw. He went around to the farms and offered his services, which were welcomed by the farmers who had previously no option but to saw firewood by hand. He was in several respects one of the progressive Békevárians. As well, he wrote a number of poems. His widow, Mrs. Julia Tóth, became interested in social activities through "Steve."
60. One of the early pioneers, Peter Debreczeni (1882–), recalls that he received full board with the Fodors in 1902, when they were already elderly. At that stage they had six Hungarians with them as boarders. His impression about Mrs. Fodor was similar to that expressed in Stephen Tóth's poem. (Interviews in Abbotsford, B.C.)
61. Béni Szakács (1895–), now "Sr." — the son of Béni Szakács the Eldest — has likewise developed into a fine poet. He has written a number of poems, often dealing with his family, with his feelings about changes around him, and of course, with his experiences in his long life.
62. Berti Daku (1900–1978) was still in his twenties when he poured out his emotions in this poem. What is more, the item was found by the Hungarian newspaper to be worthy of publication. *KMU*, December 21, 1929.
63. The title of the poem is "Otthon" (formerly the name of a market village for the second-oldest Hungarian Canadian colony of the same appellation southeast of Yorkton). "Otthon" (home) is one of the infrequent geographical designations of Hungarian origin still officially used. The writer of the poem, Christine Stanik, the daughter of an early homesteader in the settlement, had the ambition to become a teacher. The poem was published in the *Canadian Hungarians* [*Kanadai Magyarok*], one of the earliest issues of the earliest Hungarian language newspaper (as far as the present writer knows) printed in Canada (September 1905; initially it was a monthly).
64. *KMU*, June 30, 1928. These two short ditties were recollected by Mrs. Emma Szakács in the course of one of the numerous interviews with her and her husband, Vilmos Szakács.

Modern Hungarian Poetry in Canada

John Miska

It is a pleasure to write this paper on Hungarian poetry, not only because I am myself of Hungarian origin but also because there exist outstanding achievements in this field. Contemporary Hungarian literature in Canada is in its flourishing state. Magyar authors are active in literary groups and authors' associations across the country, publishing their works in anthologies, annals, literary magazines and weekly newspapers within and outside this country. Indeed, the comprehensive bibliography on ethnic and native Canadian literature, recently completed by me, also includes about 350 citations of Hungarian reference material and books of poetry, prose and drama.¹

Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, the late student and mentor of ethnic Canadian authors, stated in one of his last papers:

... But an up-to-date literary community really materialized after the great migration of 1956, and the founding of *Kanadai Magyarság* and *Magyar Élet* as vehicles for the outpourings of that community, presently gathered up in book form. Preeminent in this new wave in Toronto were Ferenc Fáy, with several volumes of distinguished verse; András Tamás, whose *Öröm a házat* is masterly and mature and Márton Kerecsendi Kiss, whose *Hetedhétország: Mesejáték* is alight with imagination. . . . The laudable growth of a whole circle of Magyar poets came with the founding of the *Hungarian-Canadian Authors' Association* (Kanadai Magyar Írók Köre) in 1969, with a series of striking books of poetry and prose entitled *Antológia: a kanadai magyar írók könyve*, edited by János Miska of Ottawa and Lethbridge. All contributors deserve to be cited, but under pressure of space I shall mention only Ernő Németh, Sándor Domokos, Ferenc Fáy and György Vitéz. . . .²

Indeed, our ethnic and native Canadian bibliography deals with 57 authors of Hungarian descent, 47 of whom have published, within the last two decades, 86 volumes of poetry, prose and drama. According to these figures, the over 100,000 Magyars in Canada encompass 57 writers: one author for every two thousand Hungarians — quite an impressive figure by any standards.

What are the reasons for this mushrooming in creativity? First of all,