

TARNÓC ANDRÁS:

CSILLAG ANDRÁS: *JOSEPH PULITZER ÉS AZ  
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[JOSEPH PULITZER AND THE AMERICAN  
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Joseph Pulitzer is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures of the Hungarian–American community. Csillag’s carefully researched and thoroughly documented ambitious work commemorates the life and personal achievements of the press tycoon. The book, however, surpasses the boundaries of a simple biography as it incorporates its protagonist in the continuum of Hungarian and American history. The work does not remain on the level of information reproduction as it analyzes the historical and cultural role of its main subject. The book is not only a milestone in the recording of Hungarian–American relations, but provides a thorough demonstration of an immigrant’s integration into the host society.

The well-structured monograph is divided into ten chapters. The work concentrates on three aspects of Pulitzer’s life, presenting Pulitzer as a journalist, as a politician and as an immigrant. However, these roles are interrelated. Pulitzer, after all is primarily known as a journalist and all his activities are and should be judged from this vantage point. His political activity, his role as the “king-maker” in the 1884 presidential election, the peace maker function in the British–Venezuelan border dispute, the infamous war mongering of the yellow press and the legal conflict with the Roosevelt administration, in addition to his relationship to Hungary and to the Hungarian—Americans are all derivatives of *The World* and the personality of its

publisher. That is Joseph Pulitzer, the politician, the peace activist, the war monger, the benefactor, the champion of the freedom of the press and the immigrant lacking an identification with the old country, or displaying a limited ethnic consciousness cannot be understood without his main achievement, the cornerstone of his empire, *The World*.

Csillag presents a thorough and scholarly evaluation of Pulitzer's life and career. Joseph Pulitzer was as it is well known, one of the leading, if not the most dominant figures of journalism in the United States. The monograph presents a figure with tremendous contradictions, and these inconsistencies form the basis of this review as well. In fact the reader sees two Pulitzers, a dedicated journalist displaying public consciousness as one of the founders of new journalism, a responsible political activist, and a champion of peace and freedom of the press, while the other Pulitzer is the dejected political supporter turning against Cleveland, and the irresponsible inciter of war during the Spanish-American conflict over Cuba. Based on the facts provided by the monograph, this review will examine Pulitzer's political socialization process, and the development of his immigrant experience including the evolution of his liminal consciousness.

Pulitzer's tremendous successes and devastating defeats can be partially explained by his political socialization process. Political socialization is the result of the interaction of such factors as the family, schooling, peer groups and religious influences (Harris 184). Pulitzer was an offspring of a Jewish family with a Moravian background. His father was a well-to-do merchant, whose assignment as a procurer for the Hungarian troops during the 1848-1849 Revolution and War of Independence demonstrated a commitment to freedom and democracy for the young Pulitzer. Furthermore, Joseph Pulitzer's uncle fought in that struggle as well. Pulitzer was the fourth child of a large family, in fact out of his four brothers and four sisters, only his younger brother Albert survived to adulthood. Another important and dramatic element of his upbringing was the death of his father and the ensuing economic misfortune. As Csillag concludes, Pulitzer's main heritage from his family was the love of freedom, the commitment to struggle against tyranny and the respect of Hungarian culture.

As far as his school experiences go, Pulitzer at first was taught by home tutors and as an adolescent he was instructed in a vocational trade school. Here he learned languages, primarily German and French and the basics of business. Soon after his arrival in America he enrolled in a law school and by age 20 he completed his legal studies. Schooling in America played a definitive role in Pulitzer's life as both his legal and business studies implanted the willingness toward logical and organized thinking, cool-headed rational reasoning and the respect of the law.

Peer pressure, or peer group experience is another important agent of the socialization process. Csillag emphasizes two episodes, Pulitzer's joining the Union army, and his relationship to Carl Schurz. Pulitzer's enrollment in the Union army and his support of the Northern cause in the Civil War reflects his life long commitment to democracy. Schurz, the great German freedom fighter, social reformer and newspaperman functioned as an early role model for Pulitzer.

The role of religion in Pulitzer's case is somewhat limited. As Csillag points out religion played a negligible role in Pulitzer's upbringing, and his Jewish background partially explains his support of democracy and the less fortunate. Despite all this, Pulitzer used religion effectively during his career, suffice to point to the publication of the "Belshazzar's feast" political cartoon during the closing stage of the presidential election of 1884, his successful appeal to leading figures of the British clergy to ease the Anglo-American tension ensuing the Venezuelan border dispute, or his attack on the Blaine campaign for using the degrading "Rum, Romanism Rebellion" slogan to describe the supporters of the Democratic Party.

Thus Pulitzer's journalistic, public and political career are the end product of the abovementioned socialization factors. However, this is only the public Pulitzer, there exists another facet of this individual's character, the somewhat hidden private person, formed by the immigration experience. As one should not forget, even though Pulitzer himself reluctantly treated the subject, he was an immigrant. The distribution and structure of Csillag's work reflects this situation, as out of the ten chapters only one is clearly dedicated to the exploration of Pulitzer's Hungarian ties. An immigrant naturally, lives a liminal life, that is being suspended between two cultures he or she

attempts to maintain ties with the old country and the new one. In Pulitzer's case the connection to American society seems stronger. From the time of his very arrival he seemed not to follow the traditional career of the immigrant, that is, he did not seek the assistance of the Hungarian immigrant community, but joined the Union army. This is all the more so interesting as Pulitzer's English proficiency was not satisfactory and despite this he did not resort to the emotional security offered by the Hungarian diaspora.

Whereas most works dedicated to Pulitzer examine him within the American context, that is dissect his contributions to American culture and society, Csillag offers a more subtle view of the press tycoon. Pulitzer's ambiguous and somewhat reluctant attitude to Hungary and his family notwithstanding, he is an immigrant whose career can be analyzed according to the well-known aspects of the laws and explanations concerning the immigration process. One of the most acknowledged scholars of immigration, E. G. Ravenstein offers certain analytical tools to examine this event. (Daniels 17). Push factors include all elements that drive the would-be immigrant away from his or her homeland, pull factors include certain characteristics and features that draw the individual toward the new country. Arthur Mann's famous classification of the acculturation process can also be applied. As acculturation means the process during which the host society absorbs the foreign born, four stages can be distinguished. Total identifiers are individuals who remain with the original ethnic community throughout their immigrant career primarily for emotional and economic security. Partial identifiers are immigrants who maintain divided loyalties to both cultures. This is the category which applies to most immigrants. Disaffiliates are the individuals who figuratively "cannot go home again" as primarily due to education they broke away from the original community and are unable to return. Hybrids are individuals from whom immigration and ethnicity are all "but washed out"(78).

Having applied these analytical tools, the following conclusions can be drawn. The push factors in Pulitzer's case are the thirst for adventure, escape from poverty, breaking out of the restrictive family and society and leaving behind religious persecution along with a desire for self-actualization. However, Pulitzer does not fit the mold of

the traditional immigrant. While he became part of the second wave of immigration to the United States, and acted as one of the main representatives of the first significant Hungarian arrival contingent, his original destination was not the U.S.. His restless spirit originally attracted him toward Maximilian's failed Mexican expedition, in fact potentially serving the emperor of the very nation which put down the Hungarian revolution which his father and uncle so actively supported. Pulitzer wanted to join an international legion of adventurers fighting in Mexico and he remained in New York primarily due to economic reasons. Once again, the fact that he did not seek the assistance of the local Hungarian community should be pointed out. Instead he followed the traditional American migrant's pattern of movement, participating in the second reincarnation of the Westward Expansion reaching the Gateway to the West, St. Louis. Thus, for Pulitzer, the U.S. did not originally function as a pull factor. He wanted to escape from home, and Maximilian's Mexican adventure supplied ample pretext for the realization of his intentions.

The examination of Pulitzer's acculturation process yields the following conclusions. Csillag's thorough compilation of data relating to Pulitzer's Hungarian connections leads us to believe that he can be characterized as a disaffiliate. As he left Hungary, he nursed a tremendous grudge and dissatisfaction toward that country and this partially explains why he maintained an emotional and physical distance from the very beginning of his immigrant career from the Hungarian community and the country itself. He rarely or never spoke Hungarian in public, and seemed to sever all connections with his family and further Hungarian arrivals. His relationship, or the lack of it, with his brother Albert is instructive, as while both men were involved in the same business in the same city, they rarely contacted each other. Pulitzer, however maintained some connections with the Hungarian community, and the best example of his efforts in this regard is the welcoming of Mihály Munkácsy to the United States. However, in this case Munkácsy's appreciation was not primarily driven by a Hungarian consciousness, but by a cosmopolitan's desire for genuine artistic value.

The liminal consciousness of immigrants can be demonstrated by other elements as well. After his health started to decline, Pulitzer

primarily stayed on his yachts, that is not on American soil. While he participated in the most important American political event, the presidential election of 1884, and he significantly influenced its outcome, he was soon forced into the role of the political outsider following his fall out with the Cleveland administration..

His efforts to stave off an armed conflict between the U.S. and Great Britain were appreciated more in Europe, than in his adopted country. The infamous suit brought by the Roosevelt administration described him as a person attacking the American people and violating American interests. Whereas nativism cannot openly be discerned, Theodore Roosevelt's tirade accusing Pulitzer of denigrating and disparaging the American people, suggests a rejection of the foreign born tycoon.

András Csillag's book achieves its ambitious research objective as it presents a multilayered, subtle, and painstakingly detailed Pulitzer portrait. The work surpasses the traditional boundaries of biographical efforts as the examination of Pulitzer's life reveals not only his personal evolution and career, but sheds light at the developments of American history and the internal dynamics of American society. The author's interpretation of John Singer Sargent's famous Pulitzer portrait is a fitting illustration of the tortured soul of this special individual. Just like the face hidden in the shadow and protruding in the light, the true Pulitzer remains a mystery. In this respect András Csillag's effort to pierce the veil covering Joseph Pulitzer's enigmatic self is the best attempt up to date.

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