

JÁNOS HORVÁTH (1921-2019)



János Horváth was gracious host for the AHEA conference luncheon in Vadász terem and tour of the Hungarian Parliament in 2000 and 2005.

János Horváth served as the third president of the American Hungarian Educators Association in 1982-1984, within the first decade of the founding of the organization. He became an AHEA member early and had been a supporter of the AHEA at the 1977 conference in Bloomington. At that time, members knew him as a professor of economics at Butler University, a leader in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, a member of the Hungarian Parliament in 1945-1947, a persistent resister against the Arrow Cross, the Nazis, and Communism who was imprisoned and nearly lost his life, and a respected valiant champion of democratic values.

When he died on November 25, 2019 at the age of 98, he left an early life legacy as Hungarian national patriot, a Hungarian American in the United States for forty one years - even running for public office in the USA, a member of Parliament serving again in 1998-2014 after his return to Hungary, and an illustrious economist, lifelong proponent on human rights, freedom, and democracy, and senior statesman promoting the public good. He made noteworthy contributions on two continents - as heroic resister of oppression, freedom fighter, presenter on Communism to the US Congress, economics scholar, and service as both the youngest and oldest member of Hungarian Parliament.

János Horváth was born in Cece, Hungary on November 7, 1921. He became a member of the Hungarian Scouts in 1933, the year of the international Jubilee in Gödöllő, and then thereafter maintaining scouting activities. Between 1936-39 he was involved in reformed youth movements. From 1938-39 he was President of Soli Deo Gloria College. He finished his program of studies in [Count István Széchenyi School of Commerce of Budapest](#) in 1940. He worked for Nostra General Public Warehouse Company until 1947, first as an accountant, then as deputy chief accountant, and finally as president of the company.

As a university student entering public life, János Horváth was a member of the Independent Smallholders Party, the Agrarian Workers and Civic Party in 1942 and he participated in the Hungarian National Independence Movement in 1944 against the Nazis, which led to his December arrest and cruel interrogation by the Arrow Cross. He managed to escape and was ultimately saved from execution by the chaos of the Soviet Army advancing into Budapest. A few years later he would be imprisoned again, this time by the Soviet Communist dictatorship.

In 1944-1945, Horváth interacted with many rescuers as he reported in his HUNGARIAN REVIEW article in November 2014 article on the student resistance movement of 1943-1945. He helped save Jews and those persecuted by the Arrow Cross and the Nazis. Many had hoped there would be sufficient

documentation available to propose Horváth as a Righteous Gentile for saving others, but alas, certain information difficult to obtain was lacking to substantiate his case.

Horváth maintained a printing shop in the basement of Nostra headquarters on Harmincad Street, where the periodical *Szabad Élet* was printed with the caption “Journal of the Free Life Student Movement”. There they also produced between 200,000–300,000 sheets of underground material documents for resistance groups in the form of leaflets, pamphlets, newsletters, manifestoes and posters. The group in Nostra relocated during bombing raids of Budapest conducted by the Allies, with American bombers targeting the oil fields, for example, on July 2, 1944.

On October 15, 1944, Horváth was asked by Sándor Kiss to store for safekeeping certain governmental and military documents that would be later disseminated by Géza Kádár of the Foreign Ministry. In the clandestine operation they often met at a bookstore on Múzeum Boulevard, where Horváth also met Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who was sent to Hungary under the auspices of the Roosevelt War Refugee Board to save the Jews of Hungary, ultimately credited with saving 100,000 Jewish lives. Occasionally, Horváth supplied Wallenberg with military documents on persons he specified and would hide the documents in a specific place on a selected bookshelf, to be by picked by Wallenberg or a designee later that day. Horváth also met Wallenberg twice at the Gyáli Road Nostra Warehouse to arrange for the consignment of medical supplies.

In 1945 he was elected a member of the Budapest Jurisdictional Committee. In the same year, Horváth, at the age of twenty-four, was elected a member of the National Assembly of the Smallholders Party (FKGP), where he served for two years until his arrest and imprisonment in 1947 by the Communists. During his time in Parliament, Horváth served as economic advisor to prime minister Ferenc Nagy and served on the Budapest City Council. In 1946 Horváth graduated in economics from Palentine József University of Technology and Economics, now Budapest University of Technology and Economics, known as BME.

In 1947, the Soviets crushed the revived Hungarian democracy attempts and Horváth was again arrested. He was convicted in a show trial as an “enemy of the people.” He spent four years in prison in forced labor and after his release in 1951 found work as a technician and manual laborer. Until 1954 he was a worker and a mechanic at the Siemens X-ray Factory, and until 1956 at the Beloiannis Telecommunications Factory.

At the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution, Horváth became a prominent leader against the Communists and served as executive chairman of the National Economic Reconstruction Council. He left Hungary after the Revolution was suppressed on November 4 - first emigrating to Strasbourg where he helped organize the Hungarian Revolutionary Council, then to the United States where he gained refuge through the UN in New York and took a leading role in exile politics. He established the Kossuth Foundation in New York and served as its president.

Shortly after his arrival into the US he testified to the Congress on Communism in 'International communism (revolt in the satellites) : staff with János Horváth [and] Sándor Kiss. Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-fifth Congress, second session.' 1957. He offered a precise and stinging critique of Communism, revealed his courageous stance against oppression, and his consummate message for freedom.

Horváth earned a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia University in study between 1958-1966. He embarked on a long teaching career in the United States. For 27 years, he was at Butler University in Indianapolis where he became one of the leading experts on grants economics, an area of study of unilateral transfers in the economy with particular relevance for intergovernmental economics, intra-

family resource allocation, and non-profit service provision. He authored fourteen books and over a hundred articles.

As a professor, Horváth was a public intellectual and political activist. The mayor of Indianapolis, Richard Lugar, declared János Horváth Day in the decade of the 1960's. Horváth was president of the Indiana Council on World Affairs. He appeared on radio and television, and was featured in newspapers and magazines. In 1990 and 1992, he was the Republican nominee for Congress in Indiana's Tenth Congressional District. He lost both times to the perpetual incumbent, Democrat Andrew Jacobs.

During his 41 years in the USA, he was the Chairman of Economic Advisers of Indiana Governor Edgar Whitcomb in the 1970's when he also served as the head of the Department of Economics at Butler University.

In 1998 Horváth repatriated to a free Hungary and was elected to Parliament as a FIDESZ party candidate and took over leadership of the Fidesz Economic Policy Committee. He was reelected to the National Assembly in 2002, 2006, and 2010. As lawmaker his focus was political economy and world affairs. He remained doyen of Parliament until his retirement in 2014.

János Horváth received many awards and distinctions in Hungary and the United States He was awarded an honorary doctorate and visiting professorship at Corvinus University of Budapest. He earned many other awards in Hungary over the past years and maintained memberships in many organizations, including serving as an officer at the Hungarian Economic Association and a member of the Society for the Promotion of Culture. He was honored with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit in 2006. Recently he was awarded the Miklós Radnóti Antiracist Award in 2013, the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Memorial Plaque, and the József Mindszenty Memorial Plaque in 2014.

In the United States in 2006 János Horváth was the recipient of the American Hungarian Coalition's Colonel Commandant Michael Kovats Medal of Freedom award, named for the founder of the cavalry who died in 1779 in the War for Independence leading the Continental Army he had trained using Hungarian hussar tactics.

He earned the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom in 2007, awarded each year by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation to those individuals and institutions that have demonstrated a life-long commitment to freedom and democracy and opposition to communism and all other forms of tyranny. The American Hungarian Coalition honored János Horváth in 2011 for defending and building democratic institutions in Hungary and the United States .

In 2011 Dr. Horváth was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic, Hungary's highest honor.

He is survived by his beloved wife Linda, his daughter Erzsébet, and three grandchildren.

May our distinguished former AHEA president Dr. János Horváth be remembered for his myriad contributions to his homeland of Hungary over a period of 57 years and to his transplanted nation of the USA for 41 years. His presentations, books, articles, and interviews attest to his life of dedication, diligence, and determination to champion freedom, democracy and human rights. His memorable legacy is replete with pertinent statements and powerful and colorful remarks. His sustained endeavors and outpouring of tributes serve as an inspiration to AHEA members and others to be constantly vigilant against tyranny, injustices, and oppression in our world.

Dr. Ruth Biró,
AHEA, December 3, 2019

