

MÓNKA SZENTE-VARGA

## General Zakany in the Americas

‘An American named Stephen Zakany was assassinated near Ahome, Mexico, by a well-known Mexican bandit,’ wrote various newspapers in the United States in 1888. Who was Stephen Zakany? Why did he go to Mexico? What did he do there? Why was he killed? What made U.S. newspapers comment on his murder? – These are some of the questions that immediately arise, and this essay will try to answer at least some of them.

The resulting investigation fits into the general context of studies on Hungarian emigration, and from a narrower perspective, it is connected to the wave of people who left after the defeat of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848–49. The activities of former revolutionaries fighting with Garibaldi in Italy, and later in the U.S. Civil War have been examined by various scholars.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, relatively little is known about Hungarian exiles who lived, fought and settled in Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons are closely connected to the lesser prestige of these investigations,<sup>3</sup> as well as to the difficulties they entail due to the great geographical extension and

<sup>1</sup> Some works on Hungarians fighting in Italy: Ács, Tivadar: *Magyarok és a risorgimento* [Hungarians and the Risorgimento], Budapest, Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár, 1961; LUKÁCS, Lajos: *Az olaszországi magyar légió története és anyakönyvei 1860–1867* [The history and the registers of the Hungarian legion in Italy], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986; LUKÁCS, Lajos: *Garibaldi magyar önkéntesei és Kossuth 1860–61-ben* [Kossuth and the Hungarian Volunteers of Garibaldi in 1860–1861], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962; NYULÁSZINÉ STRAUB, Éva (ed.): *A Kossuth-emigráció olaszországi kapcsolatai: 1849–1866* [The Italian connections of the Kossuth Emigration: 1849–1866], Budapest, Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1998.

Some works on Hungarians fighting in the United States: Ács, Tivadar: *Magyarok az észak-amerikai polgárháborúban 1861–1865* [Hungarians in the U.S. Civil War], Budapest, Pannónia, 1964; PIVÁNY, Jenő: *Hungarians in the American Civil War*, Cleveland, Dongó, 1913; VÁRDY, Béla: *Magyarok az Újvilágban: Az észak-amerikai magyarság rendhagyó története* [Hungarians in the New World: A Special History of Hungarians in North America], Budapest, A Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000; VASVÁRY, Ödön: *Lincoln’s Hungarian Heroes: The Participation of Hungarians in the American Civil War*, Washington D.C., 1939; VIDA, István Kornél: “A régóta elnyomottak barátai”: Magyar katonák az észak-amerikai polgárháború néger ezredeiben’ [Hungarian Soldiers in the Black Regiments of the U.S. Civil War]. *Aetas*, Vol. XXIII, 2/2008. 68–82; VIDA, István Kornél: *Világostól Appomatoxig: Magyarok az amerikai polgárháborúban* [From Világos to Appomatox. Hungarians in the U.S. Civil War], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> ANDERLE, Ádám: ‘La emigración húngara a América Latina después de la derrota de la revolución de 1848/49’. *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft Latein-Amerikas*, Vol. XIII, 1976. 73–83; ANDERLE, Ádám: ‘Az 1848/49-es emigráció Latin-Amerikában: Új adatok’ [The 1848/49 Emigrants in Latin America: New Data]. *Acta Historica*, 1991. 65–70.

<sup>3</sup> This has to do with numbers (that is, fewer Hungarians got to Mexico than to Italy and the U.S.), and also with the importance attributed to Italian unification and the U.S. Civil War in world history vs.

the large number of countries of the subcontinent, its great distance from Hungary, and the less favourable conditions of research.

After the failure of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848–49 against the Habsburgs, a wave of emigration was generated and found its way via Turkey to the United States. There was a general feeling of sympathy towards the Hungarian exiles overseas, yet their integration was not always easy.<sup>4</sup> They had to find a place to live, learn the language and, most of all, earn a living. With respect to the latter, we can divide emigrants into two major groups: those who had a professional background and those who did not. Members of the first group could try to hold on to their original profession, yet their possibilities were limited by differences between the U.S. and Central Europe and, at least initially, by the level of English that position could require. Those who used to work in state or local administration were usually unable to take up a similar position abroad. Artisans and craftsmen, as well as highly qualified people such as doctors and engineers could experience a relatively fast and easy economic integration. Many emigrants, however – in particular the nobility, who used to live on the money obtained from their properties, which now they lacked, and students who joined the cause of independence very young, without having learnt a profession – had no previous working experience at all, and were thus the most vulnerable among the exiles from a financial point of view. Returning to Hungary was not an option until the amnesty, so those who were not successful in the U.S. started to direct their attention towards Latin America. The present essay will first offer a general sketch on the activities of Hungarian exiles in Latin America as a whole, and then it will focus on one particular man: Stephen Zakany.

The principal sources include digitised 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers, genealogical data – basically birth certificates – as well as research done on the sugar industry by Mexican scholars. These were complemented with a book written by László Domokos under the title *General Zákány in America* (Zákány tábornok Amerikában). The book was completed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is, after the death of Stephen Zakany, but at a time when people who knew him personally could still be alive. The story was first serialised in a local newspaper in the city of Szeged where Zakany had been born, and was then published as one volume in 1904. It is not a history book or a documentary, but a novel not devoid of sentimental and exotic parts. Nonetheless, it can serve as an auxiliary source to help fill in the holes that exist in the mosaic of the activities of Zakany after 1849.

.....

19th-century conflicts in Latin America, such as the French intervention in Mexico or the filibuster expeditions led by Narciso López to Cuba and William Walker to Central America.

<sup>4</sup> They must have had an enthusiastic welcome in the US, because we know about the existence of some impostors who were neither revolutionaries nor Hungarian, but pretended to be so, in order to receive preferential treatment. See for example the life of Gabor Naphegyi. SZENTE-VARGA, Mónika: 'Gabor Naphegyi en las Américas'. In Prutsch, Ursula – Bertonha, Joao Fabio – Sente-Varga, Mónika (eds.): *Aventureros, utopistas, emigrantes: Del Imperio Habsburgo a las Américas*. Madrid – Frankfurt am Main, Iberoamericana – Vervuert, 2017, 81–96.

*General framework*

The principal – but not exclusive – fields in which Hungarian exiles played an active role in Latin America were combat and/or entrepreneurship.<sup>5</sup> Fighting was more connected to the past of these people in a sense that their experience was seen as a guarantee of efficiency and facilitated their recruitment, which at the same time could also mean financial survival in the present. Entrepreneurship was also a form of living, but it was more linked to the future, as locals tended to think that modernisation should and would come from outside, either from Europe or from the U.S. Thus the 1848/49 emigrants – Europeans by origin and U.S. citizens by naturalisation – might be the embodiments of those who would bring the fruits of civilisation. In fact not only were the locals of this opinion, but so were the exiles themselves, who began their American experience in the ‘Northern colossus,’ a place where they acquired most of their information about Latin America. This contributed to the adoption of the U.S. point of view with respect to the rest of the continent, whether right or wrong. Therefore, by the time the exiles got to Latin America, a lot of them were not only U.S. citizens, but behaved as such, having an imperialistic – and often paternalistic – approach.

Entrepreneurship could be linked to region-specific products such as mahogany or rubber, or to communications (railways, shipping, telegraphs, and so on). Examples for the latter in Argentina include Mauricio/Móric Mayer, who ‘was the founder of the Mayer-Brugo Company, specialised in foreign trade and shipping, later called Lloyd Argentino, and was in charge of reorganising the railway line Ferrocarril Oeste’;<sup>6</sup> and Juan/János Czetz, who elaborated the plans for the railway Santa Fe – Esperanza – San Gerónimo, and constructed the telegraphic line that connected the cities of Rosario, Santa Fe, Paraná and Concepción del Uruguay.<sup>7</sup>

Let us present one more example, that of the Hungarian exile and later U.S. citizen, Louis Schlesinger, whose life in the Americas encompassed a rather wide range of activities, which I will list in a reverse chronological order. He and Nanne Meyer (Hannover 1828 – Escuintla, Guatemala 1895), a Costa Rican national with German origins, undertook the construction of the very first railroad in Guatemala, leading from the port of San José to Escuintla, inaugurated in 1880.<sup>8</sup> Beforehand, Schlesinger had lived in El Salvador and ‘obtained from the government of [E]

<sup>5</sup> Another means of survival and successful integration in society was marriage. Louis/Lajos Schlesinger, for example, married Virginia Guzmán y Martorell, daughter of General Joaquín Eufracio Guzmán (1797/1801–1875), president of El Salvador in 1845–46 and in 1859. Juan/János Czetz married Basilia Ortiz de Rosas, niece of the Argentinian politician and military officer Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793–1877), governor of Buenos Aires province.

<sup>6</sup> SZÉKÁSY, Nicolás (comp.): ‘Reseña de la inmigración húngara en la Argentina’. [clubeuropico.com/old/index.php?PN=noticia\\_desarrollo&DX=600](http://clubeuropico.com/old/index.php?PN=noticia_desarrollo&DX=600) [17/07/2017].

<sup>7</sup> SZÉKÁSY, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> ‘General Railway Notes’. *The New York Times*, 13/08/1880. 5. The distance was about 33 miles.

Salvador special rights with respect to India rubber,<sup>9</sup> in exchange for teaching and disseminating a new process for extracting it (1860). Before becoming a businessman, Schlesinger had been a filibuster. He fought in expeditions launched from the United States, with Narciso López in Cuba<sup>10</sup> and with William Walker in Central America.

The 1851 Narciso López expedition had numerous Hungarian participants, motivated both by financial reasons as well as by the idea of liberating a colony (after all, they were exiles due to a lost War of Independence, therefore parallels could be drawn between the position of Cuba and Hungary). Based on the investigations of historian Ádám Anderle and Ferenc Tamás, a resident in Cuba, the following list of Hungarian participants was drawn up for the above-mentioned expedition: Mihály Biró, György Bontilla, Konrád Eichler, József Csicseri, János Péteri, Imre Dadney, Béla (Adalbert) Kerekes, János Virág, János Nyikos, Géza Aiderlár, János Kürmely (Csermelyi?), Ede Slesinger, Lajos Schlesinger, János Blumenthal, Dávid Ganó, Attila Geiger, Andor Lewohl (Sewold?), Tibor Reckendorf, János Prágay, Lajos Palánka, Adorján Kerr (Kern?), T. B. Vécsey and B. J. Üröghy.<sup>11</sup> Many perished, for example General Prágay, the chief of general staff. Schlesinger was sentenced to forced labour in Ceuta, from where he escaped and returned to the American continent.

Exiles possessed one special and common skill: they knew how to fight. For some, it was their only ability, therefore their only way of earning a living. Some ended up as adventurers, filibusters and mercenaries as mentioned above, whereas others found their place in regular armies. Juan/János Czetz<sup>12</sup> became one of the

<sup>9</sup> *The Standard*, Clarksville, Texas, 4/08/1860. Similar news was published in the *Los Angeles Star* on 15 September, and in *New London Daily Chronicle*, 28/09/1860.

<sup>10</sup> He wrote a detailed account: 'Personal Narrative of Louis Schlesinger, of Adventures in Cuba and Ceuta', published in three parts in the *Democratic Review* between September and December 1852.

<sup>11</sup> ANDERLE, Ádám: 'A 48-as magyar emigráció és Narciso López 1851-es kubai expedíciója' [The 1848 Hungarian Emigration and the 1851 Narciso López Expedition in Cuba]. *Századok*, Vol. CVII, 3/1973. 692.

<sup>12</sup> Czetz has been studied by various Hungarian scholars. See: ANDERLE, Ádám: 'A modern argentin hadsereg megteremtésének kérdéséhez: Czetz János' [On the foundation of the modern Argentinian army: János Czetz]. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, Vol. II, 1970. 225–233; CSIKÁNY, Tamás: 'Két ország katonatudósa: Czetz János' [János Czetz, soldier and scholar of two countries]. *Új Honvédségi Szemle*, Vol. II, 2005. 100–105; CSIKÓS, Zsuzsanna: 'Czetz János, egy magyar tábornok Argentínában' [János Czetz, a Hungarian general in Argentina]. *Interpressz Magazin*, 1987. 41–43; HERMANN, Róbert: 'Örmények a szabadságharcban' [Armenians in the War of Independence]. In Bona, Gábor: *Az 1848/49-es szabadságharc örmény hősei*, Budapest, Országos Örmény Önkormányzat, 1995; KEDVES, Gyula: *Czetz János, A szabadságharc legifjabb tábornoka* [János Czetz, the youngest general of the War of Independence], Budapest, Országos Örmény Önkormányzat, 1996; NAGY, Miklós Mihály: 'Negyvennyolcas katonautazónk, a pampa felfedezője: Czetz János' [János Czetz: a soldier and a traveller, the discoverer of the pampa]. *A Földrajz tanítása: Módszertani folyóirat*, Vol. VI, 3-4/1998. 29–37; SIPOSNÉ KECSKEMÉTHY, Klára: 'Két életút, két hazában: 194 éve született Czetz János' [Two walks of life in two home countries: János Czetz was born 194 years ago]. *Hadtudomány*, Vol XXVI, 3-4/2016. 131–144.

founders and the first director of the Argentine military academy (*Colegio Militar de la Nación*).<sup>13</sup>

Despite the names and examples listed above, it is rather difficult to get a general picture of the 1848/49 exiles in Latin America. The very first problem we encounter is the lack of data. This is especially conspicuous if we compare these people to those who arrived about 15 years later in the 1860s, as members of the Volunteer Corps of Maximilian of Habsburg, and of whom there is a complete register in the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna. We know where and when they were born, what their original profession was, what rank they had in the army, and whether they perished in Mexico during the existence of the Volunteer Corps.<sup>14</sup> For the exiles of the 1848/49 Revolution, however, we do not have concrete numbers, only estimations based on Hungarian details, more personal than official (letters, articles, and diaries), and Latin American sources. We mainly know about people who were out of the ordinary, or who became famous, like Stephen Zákány/Zakany.<sup>15</sup>

### *Stephen Zakany*

However intriguing the life of Zakany might have been, investigations face various difficulties. As he fought and lived in various places of the world including today's Hungary, Romania, Italy, the United States and Mexico, the available data is very much scattered and scarce. The fact that he changed his name after the defeat of the 1848/49 Revolution in order to avoid persecution further complicates research, for it is a challenge to connect his childhood and adult life. Besides, this new name was written in slightly different formats in different languages. His nationality was not consistent either in the texts: he is mentioned as Hungarian, Austro-Hungarian, American (U.S. citizen) and even as Polish.

<sup>13</sup> 'El Colegio Militar. Reseña histórica hasta nuestros días'. [colegiomilitar.mil.ar/esp/el-colegio-militar\\_historia.html](http://colegiomilitar.mil.ar/esp/el-colegio-militar_historia.html) [17/07/2017].

<sup>14</sup> The archive materials were selected and published. TARDY, Lajos: 'Az 1864–1867. évi mexikói "önkéntes hadtest" magyarországi résztvevői' [Hungarian Participants in the 1864–1867 Volunteer Corps in Mexico]. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, Vol. CIII, 2/1990. 145–171. Studies on Hungarians fighting with Maximilian include JANCSÓ, Katalin: 'Húgaros en las tropas de Maximiliano, emperador de México'. *Iberoamericana Quinquecclesiensis*, Vol. IX, 2011. 419–430; and VENKOVITS, Balázs: "A császárságnak buknia kellett". Habsburg Miksa és a magyarországi Mexikó-kép alakulása' ['The empire was doomed to fail'. Maximilian of Habsburg and the Image of Mexico in Hungary]. *Aetas*, Vol. XIX, 2/2014. 28–46.

<sup>15</sup> Zákány is the Hungarian spelling, whereas Zakany is the version that most often appears in foreign texts; it was possibly this latter version that he used abroad.

*Roots*

What was the original name of Stephen / Esteban / István Zakany? Various hints can help us:

1) The register of István Zákány at the Hungarian legion in Italy states that he was born in Szeged in 1834;<sup>16</sup>

2) He also used the name Esteban *Csala* de Zakany in Mexico;<sup>17</sup>

3) He corresponded with his sister called Anna Csala, resident in Szeged;<sup>18</sup>

4) He is referred to as József Csala, the son of István Csala, in Domokos's book. The latter detail is very important, as most articles note that his original name was Csala but would simply add István (Stephen) to it, not considering the possibility that he might have changed his first name as well;

5) The article of *Fővárosi Lapok* calls him József Csala Zákány, and describes him as a sugar factory owner, assassinated in Mexico. Later it is added that his mother, Ágnes Riskás, was still alive, living in Szeged.<sup>19</sup>

Based on Church Records in Szeged, the following can be confirmed: the couple Stephanus Csala and Agnes Puskás / Riskás<sup>20</sup> had a boy named Josephus on 5 May 1834 and a girl named Anna on 2 April 1843. Both births were registered in Szeged, Alsóváros.<sup>21</sup> The above-mentioned Josephus Csala is most probably the later Stephen Zakany.

The novel *General Zákány in America* includes an interesting anecdote with respect to this change of name. Completely exhausted after fleeing from the Austrian troops where he was enlisted by force, Csala got to the property of a Polish nobleman in Wallachia, who hid and cured him and, using his contacts as a merchant, acquired a passport for him under the name of Stefanu Zakanu. Csala was a little unhappy with his new name – according to the story – as it did not seem Hungarian. ‘All good sounding Hungarian names should end in a “y”, shouldn’t they?’ – said the Pole and changed the ‘u’ to a ‘y’ on the document. Then Csala took the pen and put the diacritics on the vowels, thus the family name was transformed into Zákány. ‘We happen to have a *puszta* on the outskirts of Szeged named just like this,’ said the brand new Stephen / István Zákány with satisfaction.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> LUKÁCS (1986): 426.

<sup>17</sup> TORBÁGYI, Péter: *Magyar kivándorlás Latin-Amerikába az első világháború előtt* [Hungarian Emigration to Latin America before WWI], Szeged, SZTE, 2009, 43.

<sup>18</sup> ‘A mexikói magyar tábornok gyilkosai’ [The Assassins of the Hungarian General in Mexico]. *Pesti Hírlap*, 18 January 1894. 10; Ács, Tivadar: ‘Kossuth Lajos, Hermann Ottó és a Szegedi Iparos Párt megalakításának kísérlete (1875)’ [Lajos Kossuth, Ottó Hermann and the attempt to form a political party in Szeged (1895)]. *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, Vol. VIII, 3/1962. 117.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Egy szegedi család sorsáról’. *Fővárosi Lapok*, 22 July 1889. 1471.

<sup>20</sup> Riskás can easily be confused in a handwritten document with Puskás, a more common surname.

<sup>21</sup> Hungary, Select Catholic Church Records, 1636–1895, Josephus Csala, film No 642646, ref. ID 367, Anna Csala film No 622647, ref. ID 311.

<sup>22</sup> DOMOKOS, László: *Zákány tábornok Amerikában*, Szeged, Engel ny., 1904, 115.

*On his way: in Italy and the United States*

István Zákány joined the forces fighting in Italy on the side of Garibaldi, becoming a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Company of the Hungarian legion in April 1861 in Naples. The highest rank he reached was that of quartermaster sergeant. Zakany left the legion in August 1862.<sup>23</sup> According to data disclosed by Tivadar Ács, Zákány had fought in Italy since 1859, and was engaged in the battles in the south, around Nocera, Calabria and Basilicata. Ács adds that Zákány crossed to the United States and joined military corps (cavalry) operating principally in Texas and California, thus playing an active role in the U.S. Civil War.<sup>24</sup> At this moment, I have no other source to confirm this, as I have found no trace of Zákány or Zakany in studies written on the U.S. conflict. More is known about his activities in Mexico.

*Mexico*

The itinerary of Zakany led from the United States to Mexico. His contact was possibly the governor of Sinaloa,<sup>25</sup> Plácido Vega, who had been entrusted to secure arms and recruit people for the Republican side. Zakany did not arrive empty-handed: he brought munitions sent by Antonio Godoy, consul of Mexico in San Francisco. There is some disagreement over the numbers: Eustaquio Buena mentions 100 thousand percussion caps,<sup>26</sup> whereas Carlos Grande wrote about 5 thousand munitions handed over on 31 March 1866.<sup>27</sup> Zakany was incorporated into the Army of the West led by Gen. Ramón Corona, and soon became one of the key officials (the Chief of Staff, in fact). Thus, he had a crucial role in the tactical decisions of one of the two major armed forces of the Republican side. After being injured in the battle of Callejón de Barrón<sup>28</sup> on 6 May 1866, Zakany was promoted to commander.<sup>29</sup>

Zakany was not only lucky in war, but also in love. He married Serapia Ochoa, a lady from an opulent North Mexican family. The couple settled in Sinaloa, on the property of the Ochoa. Stephen Zakany established a sugar factory in 1876 in Ahome, which was the second in the region after La Aurora in Culiacán, owned by Joaquín Redo.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> LUKÁCS (1986): 426. The information on Naples was obtained from: ÁCS (1962): 147.

<sup>24</sup> ÁCS (1962): 117–118.

<sup>25</sup> State in Northern Mexico.

<sup>26</sup> BUELNA, Eustaquio: *Breves apuntes para la historia general de la guerra de intervención en Sinaloa*, Mazatlán, Imprenta y Estereotipia Retes, 1884, 212.

<sup>27</sup> GRANDE, Carlos: *Sinaloa en la historia: De la independencia a los preludios de la Revolución Mexicana*, Sinaloa, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 1998, 238.

<sup>28</sup> Near Presidio (Villa Unión).

<sup>29</sup> RENTERÍA, José: *Recuerdos. 'Letras sinaloenses'*, Mazatlán, Tip. De M. Retes, 1903, 112.

<sup>30</sup> NIEBLA OJEDA, Elvia Carolina: 'Negocios agroindustriales en Sinaloa: El caso Culiacán, 1970–1982'.

By 1905 the factory of the Zakany was one of the most modern. It had electric installations from General Electric Co., its 20-horsepower engine was an 'Atlas Automatic.' Besides, it was also equipped with steam machines imported from Hamburg, Germany. This technology permitted the production of sugar cubes which were very popular in Mexico, whereas unrefined sugar was exported to the U.S.<sup>31</sup>

The factory had the capacity of milling 150–200 tonnes of sugar cane and employed around 200 men, 50 women and also some children.<sup>32</sup> It was situated within the hacienda La Florida of the Zakany family whose area surpassed 6000 hectares, 5000 being uncultivated in 1904, and 1000 irrigated and cultivated.<sup>33</sup> Besides the principal product, sugar cane, maguey and corn were also grown. The hacienda had 1000 coffee shrubs and 2500 orange trees. Cattle raising was also important.<sup>34</sup>

We can get a closer look at the hacienda and the life of Stephen Zakany and his family thanks to a manuscript written by William E. Blake on the basis of his trip in 1883.

After a mile of dusty travelling, we came to the plaza of a miserable Indian village – Ahome – 100's of years old. We saw just one respectable looking house. It occupied one half of one side of the plaza. We thought it must be a custom house, but riding up to it, we asked if it was and were told it was the residence of Estevan Zakany [...].

Estevan Zakany is a Hungarian exile of 1849 of the times of Kossuth, [and] was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in that war. Then he went to Italy and joined Garibaldi in 1861, and was with him [as] a first Lieutenant. Then coming to the U.S., he remained until January 1866, having by that time drifted to California. In January 1866 he came to Mexico, joined the Mexican Army during the Maximilian War, became Chief of Staff for Genl Corona. After the close of that war, he was granted a body of land, ½ a league square near Zaragossa, a few miles distant from Ahome, but finding many complications arising in the matter of his title, he abandoned it, came to Ahome, and purchased 4,000 acres of raw land for \$400 and has built up here his present wealth. To me it was an Oasis in the desert. [...]

.....  
In Mandujano Arroyo, Humberto – Bravo Olivares, Manuel Alfredo – Moreno Soto, Román (eds.): *Memoria del primer encuentro de historia económica*, Mexico, UNAM, 2012, 165.

<sup>31</sup> SANTIAGO RAMÍREZ, Araceli: 'Trabajadores de las haciendas azucareras en Sinaloa durante el porfiriato'. Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, maestría en historia, 2010, 37–38.

<sup>32</sup> SANTIAGO: op. cit. 37.

<sup>33</sup> SANTIAGO: op. cit. 37.

<sup>34</sup> WILSON, Robert E. – TAYS DUNN, Linda – BLAKE, William E.: 'An Iowan Visits Sinaloa: Observations by William E. Blake in 1883'. *Arizona and the West*, Vol. VIII, 3/1966. 259; Industrias y empresas de Sinaloa año 1898, Documentos de la historia de Sinaloa, México. Fábrica de Azúcar La Florida, Ahome. Zakany Sucesores, sinaloa.space/industrias-empresas-de-sinaloa-ano-1898/[03/03/2018]

[Sr. Zakany] was a man thoroughly posted on the politics, religion and commerce of the entire world. He took and read newspapers in the following languages: Hungarian, Italian, German, French, Spanish and English.<sup>35</sup>

The Zakany had five children: Juan,<sup>36</sup> José,<sup>37</sup> Estevan, Natalia<sup>38</sup> and María.<sup>39</sup> After the untimely death of Stephen Zakany, assassinated in 1888, the family faced a rather difficult situation: they were heavily indebted and with no grown-up children. 'Despite the fact that Zakany was one of the most prominent entrepreneurs of the era, he was also the one with most debts. In 1886 he owed \$50 000 to the Casa Hernández Mendía in Mazatlán, and \$9 100 to Teodoro Miranda. When Esteban died, he left a debt of \$15 879 to his family. Six years later his widow, Serapia Ochoa, and their son, Juan, set up the Zakany Sucesores Co. with an initial capital of \$61 612.28, and at the end of the century this firm and the Casa Wholeer Baartning Sucesores formed the company Destilería Savalle<sup>40</sup> for the production and sale of alcohol (rum). José Zakany was sent to the United States to further his education and he studied business in Berkeley College, California. Upon turning 18, he took over the administration of the hacienda and the sugar factory in 1893. He was able to manage the family business successfully until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, by 1910, he went bankrupt, and the factory together with other properties was sold to Manuel Borboa. The Zakany family nonetheless maintained prestige, as José Zakany, the grandson of Stephen Zakany, was candidate for governor of Sinaloa in 1912.<sup>41</sup>

### *Death of Stephen Zakany*

The death of Stephen Zakany is the most documented part of his life. Both American and Hungarian newspapers wrote about the assassination, with certain differences. More than a dozen U.S. papers informed their readers between 4 and 20 July 1888 that 'an American named Stephen Zakany was assassinated near Ahome, Mexico, by a well-known Mexican bandit' and that 'the authorities are active in

<sup>35</sup> WILSON – TAYS DUNN – BLAKE: op. cit. 256–257.

<sup>36</sup> He studied at Sackett School, Oakland, California, a private preparatory school. He was reported as a new student ('John Zakany, son of Gen. Zakany, of Cinaloa [sic], Mexico') in 1885 (*Oakland Tribune*, 18 July 1885, 5) and had an honourable mention for the gold medal for excellence in the commercial course two years later (*Oakland Tribune*, 19 May 1887, 3).

<sup>37</sup> 1875–1933. Husband of Justina Almada.

<sup>38</sup> Natalia Zakany was born in El Fuerte in 1879. Later she married an Englishman, Harold F. M. Postlethwaite.

<sup>39</sup> WILSON – TAYS DUNN – BLAKE: op. cit. 258.

<sup>40</sup> LOPEZ LOPEZ, María de Jesús: 'Los Empresarios del valle de El Fuerte durante el porfiriato de Francisco Padilla Beltrán'. R, reseña., *Clío*, Vol. VI, 22/1998. 148–149.

<sup>41</sup> TORBÁGYI: op. cit. 46.

his pursuit'. No details were disclosed on the circumstances of the murder. The Hungarian *Fővárosi Lapok* published an article with the title 'On the Fate of a Family from Szeged' (*Egy szegedi család sorsáról*), and wrote that it was possible to know details of the assassination due to a letter sent to Ágnes Riskás, mother of István Zakany. On the basis of this document, written by one of Zakany's sons in Spanish, the newspaper reported that the crime was committed in a cowardly fashion by a hitman. A stranger who pretended to be sick asked Zakany for medicine. As he was trying to help, he was shot in the back and died 13 hours later.<sup>42</sup> The assassination case re-appeared in the press a few years later. *The New York Times* (1 July 1893), *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (29 July), *The Daily Commercial Herald* (5 August), *Davenport Morning Star* (12 September) and the *Weekly Republican – Traveller* (15 March 1894) all wrote about the arrest of the assassin and those who induced him to commit the crime. Yet, curiously enough – and despite the fact that *The New York Times* had published an article on Zakany in 1888 describing him as American – this time Zakany was presented to the readers as a Polish merchant and nobleman. It was also stated erroneously that he had arrived in Mexico some 15 years before, that is, in 1880, when in fact his arrival dates back to 1866. The same year as the *Weekly Republican – Traveller*, the Hungarian daily *Pesti Hírlap* also published a related article. Similar to the writing in *Fővárosi Lapok* in 1889, the indicated source of information was a letter sent by the son of Zakany, this time directed to his father's sister, Anna Csala. The article informs the readers that the murderer was Santiago Miranda, who had been hired for 250 pesos. The authors of the crime included 'Darín Castro, the four Luque brothers and Camillo Lopez.'<sup>43</sup> The murder had a political background, insists the paper. It adds that several of the above-mentioned people would be shot.

The information can be complemented using the volume *Los Mochis: Oral History of a City*, which states:

Esteban Zakany was assassinated on 5 May 1888. It was revealed in 1895 that Martín Valdés from Mavari was the one who hired Santiago de Miranda for that deed. Miranda was contracted for 200 pesos, of which he obtained only 40. It is said that Valdés was entrusted by a family in Ahome, irritated by the land concentration. Miranda was arrested, and sentenced for 20 years. [...] [Due to his good behaviour], he was released in 1902, that is, 7 years after giving himself up and 14 years after committing the crime.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 'Egy szegedi család sorsáról'. *Fővárosi Lapok*, 22 July 1889. 1471.

<sup>43</sup> Possibly Darián Castro, the Luque brothers and Camillo López.

<sup>44</sup> HUMPHRIES, Reba: *Los Mochis. Historia oral de una ciudad*, 2nd edition, Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Universidad de Occidente, 1986, 286.

*Conclusion*

The present paper is meant as a springboard for further investigations both on 1848/49 Hungarian exiles in Latin America and on the activities of Stephen Zakany in particular. Locating his correspondence could be a great step forward in getting to know more about his life abroad and the way he saw and interpreted the world, as well as whether he kept in touch with other exiles, whose documents could also widen and deepen our pool of data.

We are approaching the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1848/49 Hungarian Revolution, and this anniversary hopefully could prove to be an opportunity to use a relatively new, Inter-American perspective for investigations – as most exiles began their American experience in the United States and then continued their activities in Latin America – and to shed more light upon the Kossuth emigration, doing away with some unrealistic or simplistic interpretations.

The latter tend to consider Hungarians abroad as a homogeneous and unified group, fighting for sublime goals, always on the ‘right’ side. The exiles themselves were divided – increasingly so with the passing of years – and they did not necessarily have the same answer for the challenges they had to face. For example, a lot of them fought on the side of Lincoln in the U.S. Civil War, but there were others who supported the opposing camp. In the 1860s there were Hungarians fighting on both sides in Mexico: the majority supporting Maximilian (members of the Voluntary Corps sent from Europe), and a minority (deserters from the Voluntary Corps and some former 1848/49 revolutionaries, including Stephen Zakany, the Chief of Staff of Ramón Corona) struggling against him. The conflict in Mexico could actually be interpreted by the 1848/49 exiles as a new opportunity to combat the Habsburgs. Yet this does not mean that all Hungarian exiles residing in Mexico would fight the French and later Maximilian, joining Juárez. Some, already with civil professions, preferred to leave the country and not take up arms again, such as János Xántus (1825–1894), Félix Nemegeyi and Károly László (1815–1893).<sup>45</sup>

Some exiles became famous, others infamous; some fought as soldiers, others as mercenaries and pirates; some turned into wealthy entrepreneurs, others died poor. All of them form part of our history. It is the diversity of this emigration that should be explored, examined and shown.

<sup>45</sup> For more on their lives, see SÁNDOR, István: *Xántus János* [John Xantus], Budapest, Magvető, 1970; VENKOVITS, Balázs: ‘Revisiting the Legacy of János Xántus: An Inter-American Approach’. In Ruttikay, Veronika – Gárdos, Bálint (eds.): *HUSSE II. Proceedings of the 11th Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English*, Budapest, L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2014, 495–510; VENKOVITS, Balázs: ‘“We Are Clearly Deceived at Home”: Inter-American Images and the Depiction of Mexico in Hungarian Travel Writing During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century’. PhD thesis, University of Debrecen, 2014; VENKOVITS, Balázs: ‘Letters from a Revolutionary: Károly László in Mexico and the USA’. *Round Table: Partium Journal of English Studies*, Vol. II, 1/ 2009, 1–8.

*Abstract*

*Within the general context of Hungarian emigration to the Americas after the defeat of the War of Independence in 1849, this study traces the activities of the Chief of Staff of General Ramón Corona and later hacendado and sugar factory owner, Stephen Zakany. With the help of 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspaper articles and different registers (birth certificate, army register) his original identity (József Csala) is established. The paper follows the milestones of his life and emigration, focusing on his economic and social integration into Mexican society.*

Keywords

Sinaloa, Ochoa family, sugar, Hungarian War of Independence, Benito Juárez

*Összegzés*

A tanulmány Ramón Corona vezérkari főnökének, a későbbi földbirtokos és cukorgyáros Esteban Zakanynak az életútját rekonstruálja az 1848/49-es emigráció kontextusában. 19. századi újságcikkek, anyakönyvi iratok, továbbá katonai nyilvántartások segítségével sikerült fényt deríteni a gazdag sinaloi vállalkozóvá vált Zákány eredeti nevére (Csala József). A tanulmány életének főbb mérföldkövei mellett elsősorban mexikói tevékenységét vizsgálja, a mexikói társadalomba való gazdasági és társadalmi integrációra helyezve hangsúlyt.

Kulcsszavak

Sinaloa, Ochoa család, cukor, magyar forradalom és szabadságharc, Benito Juárez