

Ambassador Almqvist Remarks
EU Heads of Mission Reception Hosted by President Báka
19 October 2026

Tisztelt Elnök Úr, kedves Kollégák, kedves Barátaim,

Három a Magyar Igazság. Es három éve élek itt a gyönyörű Magyarországon.

Elfoglalt voltam. Megpróbáltam kirakni a rubik kockát. Megpróbáltam megtanulni magyarul. És megpróbáltam megérteni a magyar politikát.

Nehéz volt. Sajnos nem tanulok olyan jól, mint a francia barátom, Jonathan.

But one thing, at least, has come easy.

Understanding how it was that, across the ages, the Magyar and the Irish forged a friendship as deep as the Danube – a river named after a Celtic goddess.

Because we are kindred people.

Fiercely proud of our unique cultures.

Famed for our dark humour and strong spirits.

And framed by our hard histories too – eras of occupation and revolt that forged in us a deep resilience.

Ireland and Hungary formally established diplomatic relations in this month 50 years ago.

But our ties stretch back almost to St István.

In our long struggles for independence, our revolutionaries – politicians, poets, patriots – inspired each other often.

One of our Parliament's first Speakers, Arthur Griffth, penned *"The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland"*, a copy of which our Taoiseach gifted Prime Minister Magyar in June.

While amongst the first published poems of William Butler Yeats was a peon to the patriots of 1848, with a salutation from what our laureate labelled *"the Hungary of the West."*

A month ago, Mr President, you addressed the UN General Assembly – where, with characteristic moral clarity, you condemned Russia's aggression and underlined that *"the freedom Hungarians demanded in 1956 is a freedom we must uphold for Ukrainians today."*

It was at the UN, seven decades ago that, in our maiden intervention as a member state, Ireland affirmed solidarity with the Hungarian heroes of 1956.

Speaking at a special assembly, our ambassador proclaimed that:

“For us in Ireland... any mention in the future of national independence ... or the right of self-determination by any spokesman of the Soviet Union will always evoke in our minds a single name, a name on which the courage and endurance of a very gallant people have shed a great and undying glory, the name of Hungary.”

Weeks later, our state – then, by a distance, Western Europe’s poorest – welcomed over 500 Hungarian refugees fleeing those Soviet tanks.

A small fraction of the thousands forced from their homes and granted sanctuary across the states represented here tonight.

Those refugees, as Gyorgy Faludy put it, carried Hungary in their shoes.

Many returned here when the wall fell. But others remained – building proud Magyar communities across our continent.

Their connection home was strengthened when, in 2004, Hungary joined the EU.

On what was christened “the Day of the Welcomes”, your predecessor, President Mádl, joined fellow heads of state in Dublin to celebrate the EU’s greatest enlargement.

As EU Presidency then, Ireland was proud to welcome Hungary home.

As EU Presidency now, we’re pleased to have you back as a committed partner.

Of what, for us, as much as a single market, has always been a community of values.

Rooted in democracy, fundamental rights, and rule of law.

Mr. President, one of the privileges of my years here has been to meet so many Hungarians who – at great cost – have shown real courage in protecting those values.

Tonight, alongside my fellow ambassadors, I’m honoured to meet another.

“We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles,” US President Jimmy Carter once remarked.

Tisztelt Elnok Ur, you have lived great changes here in Hungary.

But throughout your principles have remained a lodestar. Your integrity an inspiration.

As President, we see that they guide you today as you help the citizens of this great Republic adjust to these changing times.

And seek to foster, as you so eloquently put it in your inaugural address, *“a democratic and functioning constitutional culture... in which limits on power are not obstacles, a political opponent is not an enemy, and compromise is not a sign of weakness.”*

Tisztelt Elnok Ur,

Három a Magyar Igazság,

And three are the leaves of St Patrick's shamrock also.

So let me end by asking, dear friends, that you join me in raising your glasses.

And tipping them three times.

To the Hungarian heroes of 1956 – whose memory we honour this week and always.

To the very gallant people of Ukraine – whose freedom we must uphold today.

And to the values of the European Union that we're privileged to call home. And which our gracious host this evening has done so much to protect.

Koszonom szépen.