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### **TRACTORS FOR THE HUNGARIAN VILLAGES OF TRANSYLVANIA to enable them to work and live!**

The pact of friendship between Hungary and Romania has been signed by the leaders of the two nations. The Hungarian consulate at Kolozsvár has finally been reopened, and the new friendship was celebrated. People cried for joy, Hungarians and Romanians alike; the Hungarian flag swayed proudly in the breeze on the facade of the building of the consulate. Soon, however, some Romanian youngsters simply stole the flag from the building. The consul raised it anew and our hopes for reconciliation were rekindled, even if some Romanian extremists dubbed the flag-thieves as national heroes.

What is to be done? We, Hungarians abroad, who have the fate of Transylvania at heart, must find ways to support the Hungarian nation of Transylvania in their hopes and constructive endeavors. We must support our sisters and brothers there in their endeavor to preserve their culture and land of birth. We must inform the civilized West that the Hungarian State on Transylvanian soil enacted religious tolerance for the first time in world history (Torda, 1568), while ruthless wars of religion were being waged in the more developed West, and "human rights" were not even mentioned anywhere. We must also inform the world that in Transylvania, much as in Hungary proper, all nations were able to preserve their mother tongue over a period of a thousand and one hundred years.

What is our task? We must strengthen the people of Transylvania economically, to enable them to develop, multiply and preserve their birthright. In order to attain these fundamental objectives the Universe Publishing Company, along with the Hungarian Historical Research Society, publishes Hungarian historical works and collections of documents, and turns the profit from the sales for the purchase of tractors for Hungarian villages. This project enjoys the full support of György Jakubiny, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Gyulafehérvár, and László Tokes, Bishop of the Reformed District of Királyhago, as well as of the Hungarians of the World.

Among the works published in hard-cover are the English language memoirs of former prime-minister Geza Lakatos, which acquaint the reader first-hand about the facts of the life and death struggle of Hungary in the Second World War. The price of all hard-cover books is \$25, 50% of which is transferred to the Hungarian farmers, by way of the Hungarians of the World and the National Association of Hungarian-Americans. This sum (\$12.50) is earmarked for the purchase of tractors and may not be diverted for administrative expenses, hence it is income-tax deductible by the buyer; whereas the remainder of the sum is used to reprint the published works, expand our mailing list (so that everyone will have a chance to contribute), and possibly for the production of further books.

We are seeking volunteers to distribute the books, volunteers who would acquaint and convince non-Hungarian friends and acquaintances of the importance of the works and the tractor project. If the Hungarian farmers cannot cultivate the land distributed to them, it will be taken away from them. We request that the volunteers include a self-addressed envelope, so that we may send them the required number of English-language flyers.

In order to expand our mailing list we may want to resort to the system of chain letters among Hungarians and non-Hungarians alike. More specifically, our supporters would meet our expectations most effectively if they would mail our flyer to a minimum of five persons, with the proviso that each recipient undertake to send the same to five friends in turn. Of course, the success of the method depends on a judicious selection of the recipients.

We request all those willing to apply this chain method to identify themselves along with the five additional persons they have selected, so that we may express our gratitude for their work and contributions. (Please read the order form on the last page of our announcement. We ask for your indulgence if you have received more than one copy of our flyer).

[TRANSLATION OF LETTER]

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Mr. GEORGE RÉDEY  
New York

Esteemed Mr. Rédey,  
My dear brother George,

Acknowledging with great joy the assistance that you offered for the benefit of Hungarian social concerns during the course of our meeting in the United States, and in answer to the message relayed to me through the World Federation of Hungarians and personally by my brother József, I am communicating to you the following:

I have concluded your plan to provide agricultural assistance - in the form of tractors on a case by case basis - to the Hungarian villages of Székelyföld and Partium to be helpful and essential, and for this reason and in the interest of this public good I accept the role of honorary sponsor of the four books (listed below) you and your company intend to publish, provided and in the hope that this offer of assistance for the common welfare of Transylvania becomes a reality.

Wishing you health and strength and the best of luck in this noble effort of yours,  
I remain

[SEAL]

With brotherly greetings

[SIGNATURE]

László Tőkés  
Bishop

Nagyvárad, April 10, 1996

Books offered in support:

- 1 / The Journey and Fate of the Holy Crown/Sándor Hahn
- 2/ Memoirs and Essays/Ferenc Koszorús
- 3/ The Thorn Birds/Colleen McCullough
- 4/ The Tragedy of Hungary - As I Saw It/Géza Lakatos

[END OF TRANSLATION]



VITÉZ GÉZA LAKATOS  
COLONEL GENERAL, PRIME MINISTER

REVIEW

# AS I SAW IT

## THE TRAGEDY OF HUNGARY

Géza Lakatos

After Adolf Eichmann was captured by Israeli commandos in Argentina and put on trial in Jerusalem, the one-time coordinator of the deportation of Jews in Hungary made the following statement:

*Horthy's action was the only instance in all of Hitler-occupied Europe, in which an regular army allied with Germany was utilized to save Jews. I had never heard of such a thing; at first I thought that the reports were erroneous, or that I was dreaming. But later, Lakatos expelled me from Hungary altogether.*

The action Eichmann referred to is associated with the name of General Ferenc Koszorus of the Hungarian Army General Staff.

During the Nazi occupation of Hungary, the Gestapo - with the help of László Baký and László Endre - planned a coup to attack the Jewish Ghetto in Budapest.

Koszorus had been stationed in the neighborhood of Esztergom with his "invisible" army, whose existence was unknown to the Germans. At Horthy's verbal directive, he deployed his forces in Budapest and ordered the 2,000-man gendarme unit to leave the city at once, or he would expel them by armed force. This historic date was July 6, 1944.

In 1994 we saw the film *Schindler's List*, about a German businessman who saved the lives of 1,100 Jews. When will they make one about Ferenc Koszorus, who saved 250,000 Hungarian citizens of Jewish faith, as well as thousands of Jews who fled from neighboring countries into Hungary?

It was this event that convinced Regent Miklós Horthy to fire the Sztójay cabinet, which had been forced upon him after Hungary's occupation by the Nazis, and to entrust Colonel General Géza Lakatos on August 24, 1944 with forming a new Government. Lakatos had commanded the First Hungarian Army, deployed on the eastern front to face the overwhelming Soviet advance, then later in Galicia and the Northeast Carpathians.

Regent Horthy had thrust a superhuman task onto General Lakatos. Under German military occupation and in an atmosphere of extreme tension he was expected to extract Hungary from a losing war and to sue the Soviets for an armistice.

Horthy and the Hungarian Government had been trying to conclude a peace treaty with the Allies on the West since 1942. London and Washington, however, were not prepared to negotiate a separate peace treaty. They told Hungary to request a cease fire from their eastern ally, the Soviet Union.

Barely two weeks before the German military occupation of Hungary, General Lakatos received an invitation to German Headquarters. He arrived in Berchtesgaden on March 12, where he was introduced to Hitler by General Keitel. Hitler spoke to Lakatos for half an hour, saying "Hungary is mistaken if she believes she can conclude peace separately with Soviet Russia," and "Hungary must bring much greater sacrifices that she had done so far. Everyone must go to the front, to the last man..." Lakatos remembers: "Hitler appeared old and sick, and his glazed eyes were fixed and piercing," and he became more and more furious as he spoke. "He informed me, furthermore, that a weapon was being devised to retaliate against England, and which would wipe out everything in its path." [The basis for the extensive propaganda about the German wonder weapons was the work being carried out at the Atomic Laboratory at Peenemunde.]

Lakatos related his audience with Hitler to Horthy as follows: "My general impression is that we are dealing with an aggressive, rigidly stubborn and possessed madman, who will inevitably lead the German Reich to disaster and, unfortunately, drag us along as well."

By March 17, Lakatos had returned to the front, where he learned of the occupation of Hungary. He told the envoy sent to him by General Mannheim, commander of the Heeresgruppe Sud, that the occupation was "a political blunder, which revealed a complete lack of understanding of the Hungarian soul and our history."

The Government formed by Lakatos on August 29, 1944 served until October 16 of that year: a mere six weeks. Its cabinet included Lieut. Gen. Gusztáv Hennyey [later promoted by Horthy to the rank of Colonel General], Foreign Affairs; Miklós Bonczos, Interior; Lajos Csatay, Defense; Gábor Vladár, Justice; Oliver Markos, Commerce; Tibor Gyulay, Industry; Ivan Rakovszky, Religion and Education. Two other ministers, who were Nazi sympathizers, completed the picture: Lajos Reményi-Schneller, Finance and Béla Jurcsek, Agriculture and Procurement. Bonczos, who became ill in October, was replaced by Baron Peter Schell, who, as it turned out, served in this capacity for only a few days.

It is interesting to note that sometimes cabinet discussions were conducted with the full knowledge that ministers Reményi-Schneller and Jurcsek would immediately inform German Ambassador Edmund Veesenmayer, who was a veritable Gauleiter. Of course, Veesenmayer himself was kept in *check* by Gestapo General Winkelmann.

Before embarking on his peace mission, Lakatos set up a secret council of experts who would reassess the military situation. The council had six members representing the military: retired Colonel Generals Vilmos Roder, Hugó Sonyi, and István Náday, Defense Minister Csatay, and Chief of the General Staff János Vörös, and Foreign Minister Hennyey; as well as four civilians: Count Gyula Károlyi, Count Móric Eszterházy, Kálmán Kánya, and Baron Zsigmond Perényi. At the first meeting of the council, Count István Bethlen was also present.

Since the complete halting of the deportation of the Jews by Horthy, members of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party and some politicians of the extreme right conducted a propaganda smear campaign, labeling the Government and its members as "a clique of traitors". In the meantime, recalls Lakatos, "our army was weak and lacking in modern weapons and there was no help from the Germans, despite the unstoppable might of the Soviet forces."

Lakatos remembers with gratitude Count Béla Teleki, whose personal agents managed to infiltrate the German Embassy. He was sorry to see Teleki return to his birthplace in Transylvania to await the arrival of the Russian troops there. The Romanians eventually pulled out of the German alliance and attacked the retreating German army.

The entire cabinet was not informed about the separate peace mission; only Csatay and Hennyey were aware. The delegation sent by Horthy to Moscow set out, across Slovakia in the last days of September. It consisted of Lieutenant General Gabor Faraghó, Count Géza Teleki, and Domokos Szentiványi. They chose a route through the estate of Count Ladoér Zichy, whose brother-in-law, Baron Daniel Bánffy, acted as liaison between Horthy and the delegation.

October 15 was the fateful day when the Regent's proclamation was read over the radio: Hungary is pulling out of the war. Although Lakatos had not countersigned the proclamation, he was meeting with Horthy when a German officer entered the room and declared to Horthy: "the Prime Minister wants to speak with you." "What Prime Minister?" "Herr Szálasi." Horthy went, into an adjoining room and upon his return informed Lakatos: "Szálasi wants me to hand power over to him. I threw him out."

The proposed armistice turned out to be a complete fiasco. Lakatos lists the following factors: 1) the overwhelming superiority of the German occupation forces, which the Arrow Cross could rely upon; 2) the capture of the young Miklós Horthy as a hostage; 3) collaborators among the Regent's immediate entourage; and 4) the broadcasting of the proclamation before the armistice had been signed.

"It is certain," commented Lakatos, "that under no circumstances would Horthy order an attack on the Germans." Lakatos has also stated, and this, too, is of historical significance, that he never, resigned from his position as Prime Minister, nor was he ever relieved of his duties by Horthy.

While the battles were still raging, Lakatos made this observation: "We should not condemn those soldiers who followed the orders of their superiors. Undoubtedly, those at the front were not members of the Arrow Cross. We know that everyone was being terrorized into swearing allegiance to Szálasi. The younger officers followed the example of the older ones, and carried out their orders. Many well-meaning soldiers felt that, whatever their political views, the time had come to show their patriotism and courage."

We know Horthy's fate: at the order of the *Führer*, he and his family were arrested and taken to Germany. Lakatos and his wife were first transported to Tihany, then via Pannonhalma to Győr, then Sopron, and eventually to prison in Sopronkőhida. There he found himself in illustrious company: Miklós Kállay was there, as was Vilmos Nagy de Nagybacon, Prince Nándor Montenuovo, Prince Lajos Hohenlohe and his wife, former Chief Justice Géza Töreki, Generals Hennyey, Ferenc Szombathelyi, and Imre Ruzsiczay-Rudiger, several high-ranking officials from various ministries, actor Pál Jávor, and actress Ilona Titkos. General Lajos Veress had been placed in solitary confinement to await his death sentence.

Lakatos remembers with deep gratitude the Benedictine monks who had welcomed and accommodated him and his wife with great kindness at Pannonhalma, Győr, and Sopron. He is also indebted to two doctors, Professor Sándor Lumniczer and Imre Haynal, who were treating him for a serious stomach ulcer.

When the Soviets occupied Hungary, they interrogated Lakatos through an interpreter, evicted him from his Budapest apartment, interned him in Kiskőrös, made him testify at Szálasi's trial and on several other occasions, and sentenced him to internal exile in Egyék. And how did the nation - and history - repay this outstanding soldier after forty years of service? Even his pension was revoked. The Jewish religious community, remembering the hundreds of thousands of Jews whose lives he saved, offered him an annuity of 1,000 forints per month, which Lakatos politely and respectfully declined.

Meanwhile, Lakatos was attacked by the Communist press as "Horthy's last standard-bearer." He kept in touch with Ferenc Nagy, who was, with Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, one of the political prisoners taken to Germany after the occupation, and whom Lakatos managed to free and repatriate. He also remembers József Kôvágó, Lord Mayor of Budapest, with gratitude.

In July of 1956, Géza Lakatos, the Colonel General and one time Prime Minister, was "permitted" to join a cooperative in Budapest, where he hand painted set patterns on handkerchiefs. He also painted First Communion and Confirmation certificates, as well as greeting cards for Christmas and Easter.

On October 23, 1956, the day of the uprising, he was living in Érd, just outside Budapest. On November 6 he was taken ill and had to be hospitalized. In 1960, his beloved wife passed away, In 1963, Lakatos completed his memoirs. In 1965, after several attempts, he was finally granted a "visitor's passport" to see his children and their families in Australia. He died there in 1967, and is buried in Adelaide.

Géza Lakatos's story is absorbing, and his memoirs make exciting reading. It took quite while for them to reach a publisher. His daughter, Maria Lakatos Szent-Ivány, promised him before his death that she would publish his memoirs. In 1977, poet and journalist Tibor Tollas visited Australia. It was he who took the Lakatos manuscript to Munich for publication in Hungarian [Aurora Publishing].

The English language edition has just been published in New York by George Rédey. The foreword by Professor John Lukács, the well-know American Hungarian historian, stresses that Géza Lakatos had remained loyal to Horthy and to the ideal of Hungary's independence. He tried to save his nation during one of the most difficult periods in its history. In her preface, Lakatos's daughter expresses her gratitude to Mr. Tollas, George Irsay (her cousin, who financed the first edition in Hungarian), and Mr. Rédey.

Many are unfamiliar with that period of Hungarian history which began in March of 1944 with the occupation of Hungary by Nazi Germany, and ended on April 4, 1945 with the Soviet occupation, which lasted another fateful 45 years. From Lakatos's memoirs, it is clear that Hungary's people, including her high ranking military officers, did not succumb to the superior forces of the Nazis, and saved more people than any other country in Europe.

The struggle for freedom and national independence are evident in Lakatos's memoirs. In Hungary's 1,100th year and 40th anniversary of the 1956 uprising, it is important that as many people as possible read the book, and give copies of it to American friends.

by John Fercsey  
translated by Ildi Wetherell, 1996

*As I Saw It - The Tragedy of Hungary*, by Colonel General Géza Lakatos, with Foreword by Professor John Lukács.

## **FERENC KOSZORÚS**, colonel of the Royal Hungarian General Staff, Commander of the First Armored Division

### **Memoirs and Essays**

Published by the Hungarian Historical Research Society - 528 pages

The writings of Colonel Ferenc Koszorús contain wealth of fascinating and informative data relating to a critical period of Hungarian history. -Based on personal experiences, his writings portray the tragic fate of Hungary- during--the Second World War including the chaos caused by internal tension. These writings, moreover, not only chronicle certain key political and military events they also offer solutions to exceedingly complex problems within the framework of high moral bearings, without which solutions prove to be ephemeral.

Col. Koszorús military competence, expertise, and outstanding character enhanced his clear-sighted judgement. The self-dedication he exhibited also characterized his family. He is descended from Transylvanian nobility, born into a family that voluntarily relinquished its special privileges during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 in a demonstration of solidarity with the Hungarian nation. In this spirit, Col. Koszorús acted decisively to further the interests of his beloved homeland, motivated solely by a desire to serve the common good, even at great personal risk to himself. He was not drawn to any form of political extremism at a time when many could not resist the lure of seemingly simple answers to intricate questions or career advancement.

In an extraordinary action taken in July of 1944, Col. Koszorús intervened to block an attempted coup by Laszlo B. Koszorús valiant effort preserved the remnants of the legitimate Hungarian political system, prevented the overthrow of the Regent, thwarted the deportation of the more than 250,000 Jews concentrated in Budapest. Only in Hungary did a military unit employ force against an attempted coup supported by Nazi collaborators, the German occupation forces, and Adolf Eichmann.

Col. Koszorús's merit was not only that he carried out the Regent's order at a time when such orders were generally disobeyed, but that he voluntarily offered his services to block Baký's perfidious act. He specifically requested the Regent's order by way of the Commanding Officer of the Royal Guard, General Károly Lázár to preserve the legality of his

intervention and thereby remain faithful to his oath. It was his unshakable convictions that "without trustworthiness there is no 'soldier', without strict adherence to a soldier's military oath, there is no trustworthiness."

After blocking the Nazi coup, Col. Koszorús was sought by the German Gestapo. To avoid certain arrest and execution, he first fled to western Hungary, and then after becoming ill he took a medevac train to Austria and ultimately to Bavaria. He arrived in the United States with his family in 1951, after which he continued to serve both his former homeland as well as his adopted country, working for the U.S. Topographic Command.

In October of 1951, during the Truman administration, Congress authorized funds to organize and train legions of European immigrant veterans for the eventual liberation of their homelands. Finding Col. Koszorús to be untainted by either Nazism or Communism and judging him to be a reliable military man, the U.S. entrusted him with the task of establishing the Hungarian veteran armed force.

In addition to his new career, Col. Koszorús continued to research and write on a variety of topics relating to Central and Eastern Europe. Out of modesty, he did not initially publicize his voluntary and historic intervention against the conspirators. Only after becoming aware of the misunderstanding and disinformation surrounding the Baky affair did he take the advice of friends and publish in 1961 his version of the events, so that "this episode be preserved for posterity in a factual and objective manner."

Col. Koszorús died in 1974.

Gabriella F. Koszorús-Varsa, 1989

#### SÁNDOR HAHN: THE JOURNEY AND FATE OF THE HOLY CROWN, 1944-1978

This work opens up an unknown chapter of the history of that famous treasure. Several books have been written by art historians about the Holy Crown of Hungary as to its artistic value, or its historical and legal aspects, but the events of World War II and the subsequent years of the Crown's journey provide us with new information.

The author, who became head of the Hungarian Restitution Mission in 1946, followed the path of this royal coronation relics and documented their torturous journey. He gathered information from several sources, such as the National Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as from personal recollections and letters.

After the forced abdication of Regent Nicholas Horthy in October of 1944, the leader of the Arrow Cross (Hungarian Nazi) Party, Ferenc Szálasi assumed power. He ordered the Crown, the coronation mantle, and the various other regalia to be removed from Budapest to Veszprém, then to Kőszeg in December, and finally to Velem where his personal bunker shielded him in his westward flight. Colonel E. Pajtás, Commander of the Royal Crown Guard, followed this itinerary without ever leaving the relics unguarded. In March of 1945 these national treasures were taken to Mattsee, Austria where Col. Pajtás, buried the Crown hidden in an empty gasoline tank during the night, while the local pastor, Father A. Strasser, hid the mantle, the reliquary of the right hand of King St. Stephen, and the silver table service of Emperor Franz Joseph I. The reliquary was later transferred into the custody of the Archbishop of Salzburg and eventually returned to Budapest.

As head of the Hungarian Restitution Mission, Sándor Hahn was entrusted to verify the authenticity of the Crown, sword, scepter, orb, and other treasures removed from Hungary, which were by that time already in Munich in U.S. custody.

Some groups felt that the Holy Crown should rightfully be transferred to the Vatican, since it was Pope Sylvester II that had sent it originally to King Stephen in 1000, while others pleaded that it remain in American hands. The latter view prevailed, and Fort Knox became the new home of the coronation regalia until 1978, when President Carter returned them to the Hungarian people.

Hahn's book contains data and an extensive collection of photographs of earlier coronations, official and private documents, as well as photographs taken by the author. This painstaking work helps complete our knowledge about this dramatic journey, and would be a great addition to any historical or art library.

#### THE THORN BIRDS

Colleen McCullough's prize-winning novel is now available in Hungarian. The translation itself is so outstanding, that this book can serve as an excellent study aid for a Hungarian speaker studying English, or vice versa. It can also make an wonderful gift for Hungarian speaking parents, relatives, and friends.

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- I would like to join the HUNGARIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY; my \$5 dues are enclosed by separate check.
- I do not wish to join the Society at the present time.