

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

Memoirs and Essays

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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 selfless 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 Baky. Koszorús valiant effort preserved the remnants of the legitimate Hungarian political system, prevented the overthrow of the Regent, and 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 Baky'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