The EIGHTH TRIBE
HUNGARIANS IN AMERICA

VOL. III. — NO. 6
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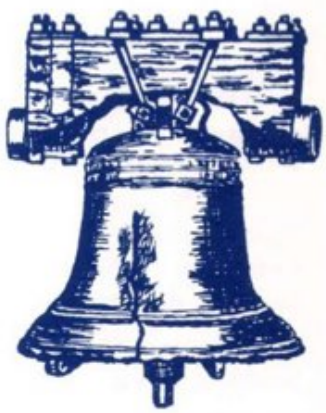
The 200th Anniversary of the United States of America

AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL 1776-1976 ™

1776-1976 BICENTENNIAL

EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1896-1976



LIBERTY BELL
Let Freedom ring forever.

Send Form 3579 to The Eighth Tribe—Circulation Department, Bethlen Press, Ligonier, Penna. 15658

NYOLCADIK TÖRZS

WHAT IS THE EIGHTH TRIBE?

The Hungarian Nation when entering the Carpathian Basin in the 9th century A.D. was composed of seven Magyar tribes of Scythian origin. Many hundreds years later some of the people left Hungary for a newly discovered land — and this segment became the Eighth Tribe.

To those who were born in this land, speaking or not the Hungarian language, Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic or any other faith, even if only a trace of Hungarian origin in them, to these this Magazine is dedicated.

The first issue of The Eighth Tribe was published April, 1974.

☆ ☆

A NEW WAY TO CELEBRATE . . .

Our cover story depicts two important dates in our lives as Americans and Hungarian-Americans. We are celebrating the 200th birthday of our country, and at the same time, we, as Hungarian-Americans, are observing the 80th year of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America — an organization that has inscribed its name in the history of America.

This year, both as head of the Bethlen Press and Editor of this magazine, I've had the opportunity to learn many important facts about our ancestors who came to this country, and how they carved their way into our society and history. Some fought in our War for Independence, some the Civil War. Hungarians were always willing to fight when someone's freedom was in question. They were pioneers, forging their way across the prairie to a brighter future.

We Hungarian-Americans don't brag about our pioneer ancestors; we don't bask in their achievements as some nationalities do. Like so many other Southern Europeans, our ancestors didn't come on the Mayflower to found a nation for a noble cause. Our forefathers had a land they loved, but they were forced to leave it when domineering tyrants, disguised in many coats, deprived them of their precious freedom. America was their dream too, and they embraced its principles fully, offering it their courage, their knowledge, their heritage and their lives.

Reading through the books published by the Bethlen Press this year, one can learn how these early Hungarian-Americans played an amazingly important role in making our nation what it is now. It is regrettable that my generation didn't have the opportunity to learn the legends, the folklore and the history of ancient Hungary. Many of us came as youngsters in our teens -- who were almost forced to forget all our old ways just to remember all the new ones we had to adapt to. Now with young children, grown sons and daughters and grandchildren, we find it difficult to explain why it is called the "Bethlen" Home, the "Kossuth" House, the "Szent Istvan" Church, the "Lorrantfy" Care Center, the "Rackoczi" March. Why were these men and women so important that their names live on — that we continue to dedicate buildings to them?

And that is the purpose of the Eighth Tribe. So the coming generations will know why their names are perpetuated. Why the heritage of Hungary is one to be proud of, not to scoff off when someone asks, "How'd you ever get a name like that?" Be proud of what Hungary was and the vibrant nation it still is. Even Communist rule could not dampen the spirit of Magyars, as it leads the communist block nations in the freedom it is allowed.

Above all, learn. Be proud for a reason, as we've a right to be in this 200th anniversary of our nation's birth. The Eighth Tribe is your tool to use. It can be a rusty hoe left out in the rain to rust, or it can be clean and shiny, with rich soil clinging to the blade. Let yourself dig into the richness of Hungary, and the Eighth Tribe will be there to help you.

THE EIGHTH TRIBE

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PORTRAIT OF A SOLDIER

a bicentennial commemoration of MICHAEL KOVATS, founder of the U.S. Cavalry, the first Hungarian-American to give his life for America in the defense of Charleston, South Carolina, on May 11, 1779.

a play in one act

by

ANNA EGYUD

CAST

COLONEL-COMMANDER MICHAEL KOVATS
ILONA
THE PHANTOM LIEUTENANT
THE WATCHMAN

Time: Night of the battle

Place: the outskirts of Charleston, S.C.

A restless, windy night. When curtain rises the stage is dark. Soon, the night WATCHMAN appears, an old man swinging a lantern and singing in a monotonous tone:

WATCHMAN

Ho-o-oh-o
ho-o-ooh-o - TIME
for the nocturnal caller,
Time for the city of jasmins,

Time to rest....
dream... sleep... dream...
it is past the hour of prayers,
dream it is past the hour of ten,
dream... sleep... rest...

while the Watchman crosses the stage slowly stepping out of view with his lantern, we notice KOVATS in the dimly lighted background leaning against the pole of a tent. He follows the disappearing Watchman with his eyes.

KOVATS

One string to your bow, one phrase
to your ballade:
"dream... sleep... rest..."
Very good, old man, go on, sing!
Lull the enemy into a soft, warm sleep,
let the trenches doze off...
on the eve of the battle sing of peace.
As for me, I refuse to dream—
I forbid myself to dream...
No time tonight, sorry...

he picks up a glass of wine from a table next to the tent

Enough meditation.
(he drinks)
Let me see...

he goes through some papers on the table

In pursuit of victory —
any last minute chore?
any particular assignment?
None.
(he puts the papers down)
All is ready...
men, time, history, this moonless
night (our ally), and all we can do
right now is let TIME slip through our
fingers and wait for the midnight call.
Ah, but when midnight will sound,
when the horses will start out,
on their savage race....
(tone changed, annoyed)
Here, I am dreaming, already.
Lieutenant!

A "face" appears in the background, an unnaturally pale face that strikes us as the face of death. Kovats, facing the audience does not look back at him and does not see this "phantom" lieutenant

LIEUTENANT

Commander Kovats, Sir.

KOVATS

What are the men doing, Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

They are waiting behind these rocks, as ordered.

KOVATS

Do they believe that they can defeat the British?

LIEUTENANT

You've given them swords and horses
and you taught them how to fight.
A man in the saddle feels confident.

KOVATS

What about the envoy from Augusta?

LIEUTENANT

Not in sight, Sir.

KOVATS

The relief troops?

LIEUTENANT

Not in sight.

KOVATS

Then, the odds are ten to one in favor
of the British, and victory must be
achieved on the strength of faith...
he picks up a booklet from the table
as for the diary of the legion, suffice
it to say:
(sits and writes)
in Charleston, South Carolina...
(looking up)
the date, Lieutenant:

LIEUTENANT

May 11,
(with a malicious smile)
according to a certain Gregorian calendar.

KOVATS

(writing)
May 11, 1779...
Our situation is desperate! We are surrounded.
flings book and pen on the table and pronounces the words that follow with immense annoyance, even hate
"Surrounded"!
The word tastes bitter, like bile—
I would like to spit it out!
"Surrounded"! It sounds like defeat!
(pours wine)
Here!
Share a drink with me, Lieutenant!
The Lieutenant does not move, Kovats turns to him
Lieutenant!
seeing the "phantom" he shudders
But you are NOT my lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT

(grinning)
I am everybody's Lieutenant, Sir.

KOVATS

But you are not real!

LIEUTENANT

Not real? Ask your men in an hour, Sir.

KOVATS

Monster, I know you now —
by your stink, that certain odor....
Get away from here.

LIEUTENANT

But I've come in a most important
matter, Commander.

KOVATS

Get away, I said.

LIEUTENANT

A very special bargain, a rare gift, a gem

KOVATS

Away!

LIEUTENANT

A word:
VICTORY!
hearing it, Kovats lowers the sword he has picked up from the table

LIEUTENANT

Thank you, Commander. Your chivalry,
as always, touches me...
like your slogan...
"Fidelissimus ad mortem"!
loyal unto death!
You've always uttered these words with
such conviction, such elegance —
at times I felt almost tempted...
(with a leer)
really tempted...
Well, I'd better make it brief.
One should not joke about loyalty
and besides, in the
carnival of war, time is a precious
commodity for a soldier.
What I propose: is victory, as I said,
and I know the road that would take you there

KOVATS

The road...

LIEUTENANT

The only road.

KOVATS

(eager)
Show it to me!

LIEUTENANT

It's over there — beyond the river.
A hidden path...
patches of mud, jasmins, flowerbeds,
enough softness to swallow the noise
of a thousand hoofs....
It leads right to their barracks....

KOVATS

Lead me there!
Can you lead me there?

LIEUTENANT

I alone can lead you there.

KOVATS

The price?

LIEUTENANT
(faking amazement)
Commander!

KOVATS
There is always a price — I know.

LIEUTENANT
Now, you sound like a merchant, Commander.
First of all, allow me to ask:
are you really interested, Sir?

KOVATS
Give me this battle, give me
victory, and in return:

LIEUTENANT
(interrupting him)
a word, a simple idea:

KOVATS
(rapidly)
Anything,

LIEUTENANT
LOYALTY!
Kovats turns

LIEUTENANT
Ah, but you are turning from me.
You can't bear the sight of me.
I understand.
Like most men, you look at me in
the least favorable light.
light effects change; we see a tall, slender Lieutenant dressed in his best Sunday black
Look at me now!
Do I indeed appear so ugly?
Forget the paleness of my cheeks,
this hollow voice and these pupilless eyes.
Look at my hands.
Look at them!
he holds up his hands revealing his bejeweled fingers
are these the hands of a destroyer?
No, Sir. These are the hands of a creator.

KOVATS
Blasphemer!

LIEUTENANT
(undisturbed)
True, not much will remain of what we see
here tonight, but does that matter? Progress
is the grave of the old and who knows. . . ?
In a hundred years, on this very spot the
dwellings of men may court the skies. . .
in 200 years: a trip to the moon!
From the tent to the universe!
THE UNIVERSE, if you care to set a limit.
And all this, not because of the inhuman battles
we both despise, not because of any shortsighted
speculation on my wickedness, but because
of a single idea, a word, your favorite, the
word I cherish: LOYALTY!
he steps closer to Kovats
and loyalty to the cause of revolution demands
that your men follow you — and you follow
ME. . . .
(a brief pause)
Well?

KOVATS
Well. . . what do you expect?
You steal to me like a thief in the thick of the
night. You send off a barrage of words in MY
camp. . . and you expect me to trust you.
(at the top of his voice)
Why do you think of me as a fool?
(with threatening calm)
My dear "Lieutenant" you are suspect
of a double game!
(reaching for his collar)
Admit it!

LIEUTENANT
(trying to free himself)
I swear!

KOVATS
You are about to approach the British

LIEUTENANT
Certainly not. . . oh. . . please. . .

KOVATS
Convince me!

LIEUTENANT
That is easy!

KOVATS
Then do it!

LIEUTENANT
having freed himself—and sheepishly
I've already approached him—this evening,
(laughing, wholeheartedly)
and he threw me OUT!
(explaining)
He was playing cards — he was winning.
(with a shrug)
No hard feelings ——— on my part.
I've yet to meet a man who'd listen to
the words of reason while winning at cards,
Commander.

(looking in the distance)
He is still playing...
he is still trapped by his own "Joker"....
(meaningfully)
Well? What is your answer?

KOVATS
You are sure of that hidden path, "Lieutenant"?

LIEUTENANT
I'm a master at reconnaisance, Commander!

KOVATS
You are sure that it will be victory?

LIEUTENANT
A gem of a victory, Commander!

KOVATS
Fair enough!

LIEUTENANT
You agree, then?

KOVATS
I said: fair enough!

LIEUTENANT
As expected.
And now, if I may, I shall accept that glass of wine you've offered earlier, Commander.

he picks up the glass of wine
Sweet?

KOVATS
dry — should it make any difference to you....

LIEUTENANT
To our alliance!

his lips touch the glass and he offers it to Kovats

LIEUTENANT
mere formality....

KOVATS
(after tasting it, amazed)
sweet...

LIEUTENANT
like victory, Commander Kovats,
like victory.

Kovats empties the glass and puts it back on the table

LIEUTENANT
Well, the bargain so gallantly executed,
I see no reason further to arrest your thoughts.
Remember, Sir, that your men should leave
no later than the second call of the Watchman.

KOVATS
as planned.

LIEUTENANT
At midnight.
And now, may I bid you a phenomenal victory
and a paragraph in the history books under:
"American Revolution" and
"American-Hungarian", Commander?

he vanishes. Offstage, the distant call of the Watchman is heard again:

WATCHMAN (offstage)
Oh-oh-oh-oh
oh-oh-oh-oh
time.....

KOVATS
(looking up)
One hour to midnight.
What dreary night.
Dark and silky and treacherous
and hiding a thousand wounds in her dark robe.
All is silent.
Only the wind is howling
and the dogs.
Man is quiet.

on the distant horizon an orange light rises
Halt! Who's there!
Anyone crossing the lines over there?

music rises, distant and melancholic; wonderingly and overcome Kovats turns toward the light
(the music may be Kodaly's "Dunan innen, Tiszan tul" from Hary Janos)

KOVATS
The sun!
How extraordinary!
A midnight sun.
Of course! how foolish of me—
it is the sun rising beyond the ocean...
Since the world is sharing, but one sun,
day must be breaking over there... and
my village, for some reason my village
has the most unusual appearance this
morning.... I wonder why....?

as if passing on the far-side of a transparent veil of memory, we see young men and women move away in slow motion. They are dressed in embroidered, colorful Hungarian peasant costumes.

KOVATS
It is solemn, almost dignified...
the girls are wearing their embroidered skirts
and the men stopped swearing....
(as if suddenly remembering)
Well, it is Sunday!

(calling out to the group)
Hey men! Stop! Remember me?
Do you know from where I am calling
I have reached the land of the Bible, I am
treading the ground of the Promised Land....
Won't you stop, please?

but the group walks away quietly, paying no attention to his call. Only one girl, whose face is shielded by a red scarf and whose dress (as we shall see in a moment) is more stylish than the costume of the other girls, stops, giving Kovats a distant glance. But Kovats turns without noticing her.

KOVATS
It was not the sun, after all.
It was only the Atlantic turned crimson.

the girl approaches Kovats stopping at the far side of the stage. By now, the orange light in the background has faded out and the girl is standing in a strange semi-darkness

THE GIRL
Michael...

Kovats listens, as if the voice would rise from the very depth of his soul. But he does not turn.

KOVATS
that voice....

THE GIRL
(somewhat louder)
Michael...

KOVATS
that voice sounds so familiar....

THE GIRL
Is the voice more important than the person?

KOVATS
(turning to her)
Ilona

ILONA
Who else?

KOVATS
uncertain, and with eyes half closed
...Ilona...are you in my dreams or
am I in yours?

ILONA
I am not sure, but does that matter?
I've come to tell you that I still love you, Michael
that the garden is full of bloom,
that I put fresh, lavendel-scented pillows on the bed,
that the gate to the park is open.
Is your horse fast enough to bring you here?

KOVATS
Oh, Ilona, moments ago I was rising toward the stars; now you are dragging me back to the past, back to earth, back to the very scent of your garden.
Why do you torture me, Ilona?

ILONA
Why did you leave me, Michael?
(a pause)
It has been fourteen long months, you know.

KOVATS
(wonderingly)
Fourteen....

ILONA
Crows and vagabonds are feasting on the fruits that still grow in your orchard

KOVATS
let them eat their fill!

ILONA
Your house: a shelter for brigands

KOVATS
no objection!

ILONA
for runaway serfs,

KOVATS
Excellent!

ILONA
But why, Michael!
There must be a reason?!

KOVATS
Why...
(impatient)
I do not know why....!
Perhaps because there is too much
dirt, too much mud, too much poverty
piled up in the huts of men —
perhaps because there are too many
fancy pearls in the crowns of rulers....

ILONA
Is this why you've joined that war over there?

KOVATS
This war over here is called: Revolution!

ILONA
It is but a word, an expression: "revolution",
must it upset everything?

KOVATS

(softly)

Put out the light, Ilona...
Europe is still resting,
Europe, the old servant is drunk with sleep....
But someday, someone will say the
right words, over there,
light the right fuse,
sound the drums.....

ILONA

(very gently)

But until then

(desperate)

Oh Michael, let others worry about
the crowns of kings, and let us prepare
our own future.
It is spring here — like it is spring over there
and spring is growing impatient.

(with warmth)

Do you still love me, Michael?

KOVATS

The hour is not fit for words of love.

ILONA

We are in a dream, remember? and honesty is
the only rule of dreams.
Do you love me, dear?

KOVATS

I remember you, Ilona.
Our walk in the forest, the music in the park,

ILONA

But do you love me, Michael?

KOVATS

our last dance...

a few stylish dance steps by Kovats alone

how well I remember them, Ilona.

ILONA

You do love me, Michael, I can tell by the tone
of your voice and your love settles the matter.
You'll take the boat and sail...

KOVATS

(dreamily)

toward the stars...

ILONA

Home, Michael.
What harm is there in following the
dictates of the heart?

WATCHMAN (offstage)

OH-oh-oh-oh
oh-oh-oh-oh —
time...

ILONA

It is our love, our life, are you coming, Michael?

WATCHMAN (offstage)

Night of silence, night of dreams...
dream... sleep... rest...

ILONA

(urging him)

The idea of dying is: insane,
the idea of victory is: delusive
Come home!
Hurry, Michael!

yielding, Kovats takes a step toward her when the Lieutenant enters

LIEUTENANT

Stop!
Stop dreaming and begin to live: forever!
Are you ready, Commander?

KOVATS

(as if awakening)

Ready....?

ILONA

Ready for what?
Choose between two visions:
romance and revolution?

LIEUTENANT

picking them up from the table

Your cloak, Sir,
your sword!

ILONA

Beauty and bayonets?

LIEUTENANT

It is midnight.
Victory is signalling through the throat
of the Watchman. Shall we let it begin, Sir?

ILONA

(a last appeal)

Michael!

an even drumbeat begins. This agonizing beat of the tom-tom will be heard throughout the scene.
Kovats takes the sword and the cloak

KOVATS

(turning to her)

God keep you, Ilona.
In saddle, men!

Follow me!
Straight ahead!
Attack!

he leaves, followed by the Lieutenant. Ilona remains alone.

ILONA

He is gone and I feel frightened.

she slowly covers herself with her shawl:

I feel suddenly lost and I am frightened!

(running toward unseen shadows)

What are those strange sounds over there,
those painful moans?
Is it the sky splitting asunder, or is it
the birth of a child?

(wonderingly)

child....

(with sorrow)

I could be his woman now,
I could be the mother of his child, now
were it not for this black spot under my foot

(slowly bending down)

this dark, suspicious splash of water.....

touching the spot on the ground and then rising with horror:

ILONA

...this pool of blood!
Michael!

she collapses backstage swallowed by semi-darkness. Kovats enters wounded

KOVATS

What battle!
What swift, unbelievable battle!
One for the books.
Death was galloping over the trenches, snatching
half of their men... the redcoats—ours too,
more than half... still, victory.
I can sense it! I can see it! Charleston is
saved! Victory!

(with a shudder)

It's getting cold..... I'm shivering.
No! I am suffering the heat of hell, I am
breathing fire!
Water!
Who is fetching water from the brook?
Water!

getting very weak, he sits

How red suddenly the sky is, like the
scarf around Ilona's neck.

(looking around)

Ilona... are you still here or am I dreaming...
an old... old... habit....

(as if she had helped him)

Thank you, my dear, but I am not dead — yet.
My character is still in the making, history is
puzzled: who am I? A hero of the American
Revolution, or a simple fool in love with whom
— what — a great lady, of course, a splendid
creature, a giant, your RIVAL! Yes, Ilona
YOUR RIVAL!

(pointing in an indefinite direction)

There... over there... you can see her now with
a lighted torch in her hand, a golden wreath
around her forehead,
as great, as sweet, as generous as FREEDOM
itself... my true lady...

(sitting up, a last effort)

My sword!

(shouting)

Let someone bring me my sword!

(powerful)

In pursuit of tyranny:
Follow her, men!

(collapsing)

Ah, what a lovely lady... freedom....
and what an incorrigible dreamer: MAN.

he dies. Lights slowly dim while a distant bugle sounds a final farewell to the Soldier.

☆ ☆

"FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH" — by Laszlo L. Eszenyi — a book on the life of Col Kovats, printed by the Bethlen Press. The book is written in two languages, Hungarian and English: one book to serve all members of the family.

Price of the book is $5.00, plus 50c postage.

* * *

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