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HUNGARIAN-USA

The First Hungarian To Give His Life
In Defense Of American Liberty

Colonel-Commandant

MICHAEL de KOVATS

Drillmaster of Washington's Cavalry

By

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Foreword By

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FOREWORD

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Nowadays we hear a great deal about "rejection of traditional standards", and that "humanity is at the crossroads"; the symptoms are a loss of ideals for which it is difficult to find substitutes. Those with little faith in values or with no faith at all succumb easily to cynicism or despair, and prophesy a dire future for mankind. Of course, one cannot deny the tragic conditions of the present; on the other hand it would be wrong not to recognize certain constructive forces which aim to inject order into universal disorder. Problems should be scanned in the light of history; thus we get a clearer picture of contemporary issues and develop a better perspective as to their significance. With reference to the American scene it is necessary to consider the past that made our liberty possible. It helps us to have a serene, if not cloudless view regarding the various alternatives that are facing us today. It points out the great lesson that no true goal is ever reached by ignoble means, and there is no genuine progress without sacrifice.

We gather strength for the realization of our immediate national obligations by comprehending the historical position of those who fought for American freedom. For Americans of Hungarian descent, in fact for all Americans, it is an honor to pay tribute to George Washington's Hungarian officer, Colonel Commandant Michael de Kováts, as it is a matter of honor to remember Marquis de Lafayette or Count Pulaski. Col. Kováts was a distinguished soldier in Washington's army. He was an immigrant, that is to say an American by choice; in promoting the cause of this country he must be judged as a pathfinder of those countrymen of his who—for political, social or economic reasons—arrived on the shores of America in later decades. To be sure, he was a Hungarian, and as La Rochefoucauld succinctly remarked in his *Maxims*, the accent of a man's native country dwells in his mind and in his heart as well as in his speech; but Col. Kováts was destined to become an American, similar to those early Scotch, English, Welsh, Irish, Dutch, French and other immigrants who were potential Americans even before they chose the New World for their home.

The publication of this essay is indeed timely. It is timely for two reasons. It gives information about a man who dedicated his life to the principle of American democracy; this statement must be taken literally because he died in defending American freedom. The effect of his daring spirit and heroic life upon Americans of Hungarian descent cannot be measured just by this essay, published by the Verhovay Fraternal Insurance Association, but by the fact that this year the American Hungarian Federation issued a stamp commemorating the 175th anniversary of his death, and that in several American-Hungarian communities Kováts-festivals are arranged. Furthermore, it should be stressed that as a symbol, Col. Kováts stands for the ability of America to absorb foreign elements without coercion or threat.

Today when in many parts of the world human beings are subjected to terror and incredible indignities, Col. Kováts is a reminder to all of us — regardless of racial ancestry — that he too lived in an era of "human crisis", and that he had to fight unpredictable adversaries. He showed how to face responsibilities and how to meet with fortitude seemingly unsolvable problems. There is something profoundly reassuring in the memory of a man who knew what to live for and what to die for.

*A*LMOST EVERY COUNTRY OF EUROPE has made some outstanding contribution to civilization. The world, however, tends to remember only the contributions of the larger nations, or of those nations whose language is wide in circulation or of easy comprehension.

Hungary, relatively small and with a language as exotic as the Finnish, falls in this latter category. The other nations have tended to go their way unaware of the Magyar Record.

My modest aim is to modify this situation in certain respects. I will try to acquaint you with the life of Colonel Michael de Kováts and his achievements. Even most Hungarians have only a vague knowledge of him. I will endeavor therefore to give you a brief glimpse of this Hungarian and his accomplishments. I hope it will prove enlightening.

Colonel Michael de Kováts was born in 1724 in Karczag, Hungary. Of his youth little is known; his name does not appear in history until 1744. It was then that the twenty year old Kováts joined the Jász-Nagy-Kun Huszár Regiment as a junior officer. He fought in the Second Silesian War as a member of Empress Maria Theresa's army.

After the Peace Treaty of Dresden was signed in December 1745, Kováts received an honorable discharge. We learn from a document dated December 14, 1761 that he had distinguished himself in this war. His two years of soldiering seems to have impressed him deeply, for it was at this time that he decided on a military career.

First, he attempted enlistment in the standing Austrian Army. Frustrated in this attempt, he enlisted in the Prussian Army and became a member of the First Huszar Regiment. After six years of hard service, he was appointed a second lieutenant.

There is another version which claims that during his services in the Austrian Army he became a prisoner of the Prussians, and after the Peace Treaty was signed he was forced to serve as a private in the Prussian Army. In the Eighteenth Century this was not unusual.

He took a very active part in the Seven Years War. His Commander, Colonel Michael Székely led the First Prussian Hussar Regiment. This regiment took part in the battles of Pirna, Gotha, Lobositz, Prague, Torgau and Leitmeritz. Kováts received very serious wounds in the Battle of Gotha. In 1760 Kováts became a captain and commander of the so-called "Gersdorf" Free Hussars.

In the Library of Muhlhausen there are several documents signed by Captain Kováts and two illustrated publications contain his pictures.

We do not know why, but certain documents show that on March 12, 1761 he resigned his Army commission. We can only guess that he did not like his military assignment which forced him to be the tax collector and oppressor of certain territories occupied by the armies of Frederick the Great.

After he was honorably discharged from the Prussian Army, he went to Poland. He spent four months in Poland and while there was closely connected with the Royal Court. He left with a Polish passport. Count Sternberg, who was then the Austrian ambassador to Poland, took steps to arrest him, but the Polish authorities refused this request. The Austrian War Council looked upon Kováts as a deserter and on April 25, 1761 issued a warrant for his arrest.

In the meantime he was informed of the amnesty granted by Empress Maria Theresa. On the strength of this amnesty, he felt secure that there would be no repercussions because of his service in the Prussian Army. However, when he reached Késmárk in May 1761, he was arrested and charged with high treason. The Minutes of the Court Martial proceedings indicate the importance of our hero. The Minutes comprise several volumes and include among other documents, seven personal letters of Frederick the Great addressed to Kováts.

After Kováts spent more than a year in military prisons, the highest military court of Austria forwarded all the papers to the Empress Maria Theresa, who ordered Kováts freed and all his personal and real property returned to him. But the wise Empress gave Kováts even more satisfaction. She wrote him a letter personally assuring him of his pardon and of her continued good will.

Kováts was freed on June 13, 1762 and on January 31, 1763 the Empress rewarded him by appointing him a major in a Hussar Regiment and granting him a yearly pension of five hundred florins.

On May 20, 1763 Major Kováts married Frances the daughter of Zsigmond Szinyel-Merse. The marriage was not a happy one, and after his son died at the age of 3, the couple separated.

During the following years Kováts wandered around Hungary. The Austrian military authorities kept an eye on him and their reports indicate that he lived in Eperjes, Eger and in Buda-Ujlak.

In 1774 he was in Leipzig and offered the invention of a new gun-metal to Maria Theresa, but activities such as these only made him restless and sharpened his appetite for military life. In the new world the Colonists had signed the Declaration of Independence. Having followed with keen interest happenings in America, it is not surprising that Major Kováts decided to help the great cause of George Washington and the Revolutionists. He immediately applied for a passport,

and it was not long before he was journeying westward to the Colonies.

We do not know his itinerary but we have a report signed by the military commander of Buda which states the following:

"...Major Kováts left Buda in August 1776 and according to my information, he went to Bordeaux which is a port in France, from there he left for America and joined the Military Forces of the United Colonies."

What route he followed from Buda to Bordeaux is unknown but we have proof of his presence there. His letter to Benjamin Franklin (then American Ambassador to France) dated January 13th, 1777 bears a Bordeaux postmark.

Kováts was fifty-three years old when he wrote that letter and had been in military service for thirty-three years. This letter is truly an historical document. At present it is in Philadelphia at the Library of the American Philosophical Society among the papers of Benjamin Franklin. This letter speaks for Kováts and for his cultural standing. In his letter to Franklin, he wrote in classical Latin:

"Golden freedom cannot be purchased with yellow gold. I, who have the honor to present this letter to your Excellency, am also following the call of the Fathers of the Land, as the pioneers of freedom always did. I am a free man and a Hungarian. I was trained in the Royal Prussian Army and raised from the lowest rank to the dignity of a Captain of the Hussars, not so much by luck and the mercy of chance, than by most diligent self-discipline and the virtues of my arms. The dangers and the bloodshed of a great many campaigns taught me how to mould a soldier and, when made, how to arm him and let him defend the dearest of the lands with his best ability under any conditions and developments of the war."

"I now am here of my own free will, having taken all the horrible hardships and bothers of this journey. I beg Your Excellency to grant me a passport and a letter of recommendation to the most benevolent Congress."

"At last, awaiting your gracious answer, I have no wish greater than to leave soon, to be there where I am needed most, to serve and die in everlasting obedience..."

"Fidelissimus ad mortem" (Faithful unto death).

It is not known whether Benjamin Franklin answered this letter. Later events tend to show that Kováts arrived in America without the letter of recommendation to Congress. He arrived in the New World sometime after the 13th of January 1777 and before the end of that same year.

It is more than just a matter of speculation to see what his American plans were. He was a professional soldier, a specialist in a branch of light cavalry, one of the few by his breeding, training and experience embodying the idea of the Magyar Hussars. He knew

that Washington had no cavalry in the professional sense. The four so-called mounted regiments, commanded by Colonels Moylan, Bland, Baylor and Sheldon, were mere mounted infantry without the least elementary training or organization in the true cavalry sense.

At this time light cavalry had no part in England's conception of the art of war, and Washington, a product of the English military knew very little about it. They knew even less concerning the Hussars, who represented a very specialized type of light cavalry. As a matter of fact it was not until twenty-eight years later (1805) that the first Hussar regiment was organized in England.

Now Kováts knew more and thought differently on the subject of the Hussars. He was one of them; perhaps the best, but definitely second to none in America. Cavalry had existed since ancient times, reaching its zenith under Frederick the Great. Of Frederick's twenty-two battles fifteen were won by his cavalry and Kováts was one of his cavalrymen. Training was the secret of Frederick's success and Kováts was trained by Frederick. Organization was Frederick's success and Kováts organized for him. Kováts learned in fifteen victorious battles the dominating influence of his hussars. It was for this — and no other purpose, that he came to America, i.e. to organize hussars for Washington.

He knew his worth, he was reasonable in assessing his professional importance. He was reasonable in assuming that his standing among professional cavalrymen was sufficiently high to warrant responsible assignments. It is understandable then, that he should become impatient when no letter from Franklin was forthcoming. It is characteristic that he should sail for America without Franklin's recommendation.

In the strict sense of military history he failed. Cavalry never became of any importance in the Revolutionary War. The English prejudice against cavalry was too strong for him to overcome and another three generations of Americans had to die before the seeds sown by him started to germinate in a more fertile soil. The military ideals he nourished became dominant through the pressure of adversity during the latter part of the Civil War.

He failed only so far as the Revolutionary War itself is concerned. His glory is the glory of the pioneer and he can rightfully be called the Father of the United States Cavalry.

Providence was to give Kováts but two short years in which to transform his ideas into realities. He must have arrived sometime during the summer of 1777, although his name does not appear in any documents until December 29th of that year. Nothing is known of his activities during his first few months here, but thanks to an industrious biographer, Aladar Poka-Pivny, Kováts' career from De-

ember 1777 on is fairly well documented. Considering the service and experience he offered to the Revolutionists, Kováts was certainly deserving of a warm reception. Recorded history, however, is silent on this point and we must assume from this, and other evidence, that his arrival was received with some indifference. His own silence during this period is indicative of the disappointment he must have felt.

That his noble gesture was received coolly can only be explained in the light of Washington's English-born prejudice in favor of infantry and against cavalry. Thus was a great dream frustrated in its inception. It was characteristic of our hero that he survived these disappointments and was able to some extent to surmount the barriers. He was a soldier, nay more, a Hussar; quick and flexible, stubborn in his aims but, fortunately, willing to compromise. He seemed to realize as early as September or October the impracticability of the direct approach and thereafter set about finding another approach towards his goal. As the first snow fell that year in Pennsylvania we find him in the company and service of Count Casimir Pulaski.

Predestination seems to be the rule rather than the exception for the great and romantic figures of history. Count Casimir Pulaski was no exception. His starting point, as a potential hero of liberty, was set so high by Fate that he had to become a champion of freedom by the sheer weight of destiny. He was the son of Count Joseph Pulaski, first in a long line of Polish national heroes. He fought as a young man at the side of his father for the cause of his dear country. He was only twenty-three and already a leader of his compatriots and not yet twenty-four when he learned to suffer the bitter life of a political exile. He left Poland in 1772, spending the following five years in Turkey and France. In 1777 he offered his fortune and fiery zeal to the cause of American freedom. He signed an agreement with Deane Silas, in Paris, the latter serving there as business agent for America. Within two months, by the end of July, Pulaski was already in Boston. He fought and distinguished himself at Brandywine, and four days later, September 15, 1777, on the strength of his agreement with Silas, was made a brigadier general and the Commander-in-Chief of Washington's Cavalry by the Continental Congress.

Such are the ways of fate and destiny. Our Kováts, the expert, the soldier, the obvious man for the job, suffered obscurity; the hero of freedom was given the job by destiny, effortlessly and perhaps against the wish of the selected.

Casimir Pulaski was a young man, being twenty-nine at that time. His military experience just could not be compared with that of Kováts. But Pulaski was a born leader. He knew the difference between commanding a non-existing cavalry and creating one. Somehow he found

Kováts, or Kováts found him. They needed each other; they complemented each other; they formed a perfect combination, and both knew it.

Poka-Pivny, the biographer of Kováts, speculates at great length on the possibility of an earlier friendship existing between the two men back in Europe. He refers to various possible dates of their meeting, such as 1761 in Poland, 1765 and 1771 in Eperjes, Hungary. From this supposition he draws rather important conclusions: their meeting in France, arriving together in America; being old friends, and, by implication, a mutual plan made by them in France concerning the organization of the American cavalry. If true, this would disprove the initiative of Kováts and put him in the shadow of Pulaski. The biographer is definitely mistaken. Casimir Pulaski was born in 1748, making him Kováts' junior by 24 years. They could not have drunk together and enjoyed other manly pastimes at sports: nor formed a lasting friendship in 1761, Pulaski being only 13 years of age at that time. The difference in their ages is too great. The same applies to their possible meeting at Eperjes, when, though the age difference becomes relatively smaller, it is still too great to allow the formation of a real friendship. The biographer's mistake is obvious; he mistakes father for son. A meeting, or even a friendship, between Kováts and the older Pulaski, Joseph, is more than possible, but Joseph never came to America.

Poka-Pivny's supposition leads to more romanticism, but birth dates are sometimes inconvenient facts. Thus we believe that even if they knew of each other, each came to this country on his own: Pulaski to serve the cause of American freedom in any way he was able, and Kováts to create a light cavalry for Washington.

But they formed a friendship here in America: a lasting one. Their background, philosophy, aims, military principles and methods show a similarity. They recognized each other's importance and were inseparable until death parted them. Pulaski was the official head of a cavalry yet to be organized, and Kováts was to be the organizer.

In the memoranda Pulaski submitted to Washington, in November and December of 1777, on the principles of cavalry organization the name of Kováts appears over and over again. Pulaski recommended the Prussian service regulations, though he was antagonistic to anything else Prussian. There was not a word which would even indicate Polish, Turkish or French influence. All the methods and principles were clear-cut Prussian, and in one case at least, typically Hungarian.

Pulaski's recommendation contained not just the general principles of light cavalry but principles that were definitely Hussar in character. It is quite significant that in one of Pulaski's memoranda to Washington, dated February 4, 1778, he recommended the forma-

tion of a training division of Hussars to be commanded by a Colonel named Kováts. This division would serve to train officers in actual cavalry battle. This concept was the only digression from the strict Prussian method of training. To train in battle, not as a forced necessity but as a calculated plan is as old an Hungarian military principle as Hungary itself. Gorgey's winter campaign is still a standard model for the curricula of all the military academies of the world.

It is rather peculiar that in all this time of planning and organizing Kováts was still without official recognition. He was with Pulaski at his headquarters. Pulaski addressed him as "Colonel" and referred to him as his Master of Exercises but there was no official sanction from Washington.

As mentioned above Pulaski continually referred to Kováts in his memoranda to Washington. He was reasoning, praising and recommending the cause of Kováts, urging Washington for an official recognition of our hero in the form of a colonelcy. We know of at least four such communications dating from November 1777 to March 1778, but the only official reaction Pulaski was able to arouse was a letter from Washington dated January 14, 1778, in which Washington wrote:

"As so much has been said of the character and abilities of Mr. Kováts, I have no objection to his employment in the capacity of Master of Exercise for a few months."

We note that Washington expressly calls Kováts "Mr.", though Pulaski referred to Kováts in all his communications to Washington as "Colonel Kováts."

The relationship between Pulaski's headquarters and Washington's was strained. Perhaps Washington had a subconscious objection to Pulaski's command which originated far away in Paris. Perhaps it was his wisdom not to prefer foreigners unduly, but in any case, his inhibitions against cavalry was always more than enough reason to explain his attitude towards Kováts.

Kováts, the professional soldier-organizer, and Pulaski, his official promoter and interpreter, did their best to create a modern cavalry in the European sense for Washington. They were full of enthusiasm during the months of November and December of 1777. Washington's letter on "Mr." Kováts in January seemed to cool their spirits considerably. In February the situation deteriorated further. On March 1, Washington ordered Pulaski to join General Wayne. Two days later they battled the English at Haddon's Field. They lost, and Pulaski, feeling he had enough, resigned his command of the cavalry. His resignation was accepted by Congress. It seemed again that for Kováts this was the end.

Kováts and Pulaski undoubtedly meant well. They firmly and rightly believed in the decisive superiority of modern cavalry. They

took it for granted that their expert approach to the creation of this dominant military factor would be met with approval. They made the unfortunate and common mistake of trying to use old world methods in the New World. There is a difference in organizing cavalry for armies numbering hundreds of thousands and being scientific and routine-like for Washington with his meager four thousand men. It hurt the feelings and professional dignity of these heroes when their detailed recommendations concerning cavalry uniforms were gently ignored by Washington. Perhaps they even blamed him for having a layman's ignorance of the disciplinary importance of a soldier's dress. No doubt they were disheartened by the bitter smile on Washington's face while reading a memorandum of theirs on boots and shining buttons. But only five days before Washington had written from Valley Forge:

"We have this day no less than 2,873 men unfit for duty because they are barefooted or otherwise naked."

His strength altogether was barely 4,000.

Pulaski's resignation from command of the cavalry seemed to be sudden and dramatic. There is however, enough evidence to show that his resignation had been part of a calculated plan. Pulaski and Kováts had considered this move as early as January when they had first realized that a direct approach would avail them nothing. They held off their resignation only long enough for their new plans to mature.

They seemed to realize that their potential authority was too great not to meet with all possible objections from the Army Headquarters at Valley Forge. The Cavalry was, at least on paper, just as important as the Infantry, and in theory, they had control over one half of Washington's potential army.

Also they were of too active a nature not to feel that at the cavalry headquarters, they were more bureaucrats than soldiers; they planned on paper, organized ideas and principles only, and there was still no Cavalry with which to work.

They preferred action to the writing desk. Theories can be great but they wanted a living Cavalry. They wanted to train, above all, officers, without whom they could not make a Cavalry.

Their new plan was clearly outlined in Pulaski's already mentioned memorandum of February 4 on the formation of a Training Division of Hussars.

They seemed to reason that such a Training Division, being more real than a theorizing headquarters, would provide them with a better foundation on which to build a Cavalry.

This way they would have been able to train and organize living men instead of figures. Once they had the nucleus of a real Cavalry it would have been only a question of time before it was enlarged and

they could return to the headquarter's command.

They also realized that by resigning they were giving up a potential authority which had no doubt caused some envy and concern at Valley Forge.

How right they were!

Pulaski's resignation was accepted on March 20th. On March 28th the formation of a Pulaski Legion was sanctioned by Congress. A short week later Washington recommended Kováts as Colonel in command of the Legion. Congressional approval came within a week.

Obviously starved for action, they wasted little time in getting started. Perhaps too, they both felt that time was running out for them. As it happened, both were dead within the year.

They erected their headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland and started enlistments at once. Kováts recruited at Easton, Pennsylvania, Major Henrick Betken in Trenton, New Jersey, and Count Montfort, another major, in Baltimore itself.

In less than three months' time they enlisted 320 men; 62 more than they had originally counted on. This is quite remarkable considering that Washington had only 4,000 men at Valley Forge and had to contend constantly with desertions.

By the end of July they joined their recruited forces at the headquarters in Baltimore and, in order to train their officers in Cavalry-Infantry cooperation, they formed three Cavalry and three Infantry companies.

Kováts had a free hand now to put his ideas into practice. He took care of all the details of organization, and the Cavalry he created was, consequently, typically Hussar; Hungarian in form and in spirit.

During the summer months he had opportunity to train his Cavalry on the frontier, fighting Indians.

By the end of September, Washington ordered the Legion to Princeton, New Jersey. Kováts could now fight the English also. In October he joined the battle with the English on two occasions; at Osborne Island on the 10th and at Egg Harbor on the 14th.

At Osborne Island his casualties were 22 men, but at Egg Harbor he suffered a more serious loss. An officer, originally English, named Juliet, seemed to be an habitual traitor. Assigned to the Legion by the Board of War, he changed his colors again, going over to the English. With his help the English surprised the Legion's Infantry at their night quarters and killed some 30 men, including the Infantry Commander, Colonel Bose. The English claimed 60 killed, including 6 officers, and their simultaneous statement that the English lost only 1 man makes their claim improbable.

With the approach of winter the Legion was ordered from Trenton to Sussex Court House, then on November 10 to Cole's Fort, which was

their winter quarters. Here Kováts fell back on Indian warfare again and the first half of the winter passed without any important event.

On February 2, 1779, the Legion went to Yorktown, Pennsylvania and received orders from Congress to march to South Carolina to join the forces of General Lincoln.

The Legion's complement had been reduced not only at Osborne Island and Egg Harbor but also by the adversity of the winter weather. Congress decided on February 4 to enlarge the Legion's complement and sent instructions to the Board of War to this effect. The Board of War tried to do this but failed and Kováts found it necessary to start recruiting again. He succeeded in raising the total enlistment to 336 men. On the 18th of March, after six weeks of preparation, the Legion's Infantry left Yorktown for South Carolina and on the 28th the Cavalry followed.

In a month's time we find them in Salem, North Carolina. There is a record which tells us how soldierlike and decently they behaved. It is to be noted that they paid for all their necessities rather than adopting the age old custom of commandeering. We are also told that they had forty cases of smallpox, two resulting in death.

Between Salem and Charleston, a distance of a week's march, the smallpox took a great toll. They arrived at Charleston with only 150 men.

Charleston was under siege by the English. The situation was quite bad and the population urged surrender. Kováts arrived on the 11th of May, attacked with 120 men on the same day and was killed. The English buried him at the corner of Huger Street on the lot of John Margart. His opponent, the English Brigade Major Skelly, said the requiem over his grave; he said: "The best cavalry the Rebels ever had".

Pulaski was left alone. A month later in June, he still believed in the future of his Legion. On August 19 he wrote as if his heart were broken. Two months later he was in Savannah. On the 9th of October 1779 he was mortally wounded and two days later followed his comrade to the grave.

Colonel Michael de Kováts was the most representative soldier of the Baroque period. As a son of Eighteenth Century Hungary, he was one of a long line of soldiers who continue to fight for the most idealistic endeavors of mankind.

Our late President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, undoubtedly referred to him when he said:

"Men of Hungarian blood, many of them exiles from their Fatherland, rendered valiant service to the cause of the Union, their deeds of self-sacrifice and bravery deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance."

In the 1934 issue of the Hungarian Military Review, we find the following about our hero:

"Michael de Kováts was one of the outstanding men of his century, he embodied great initiatives, undertaking abilities and quick decisions — the very qualities we attribute to modern Americans. He had a quick wit; he was courageous; he had no handicap. He was an excellent commander, able leader and a stern disciplinarian. He was above all a gentleman, even to his enemies, and the saviour of those needing protection. His excellent qualities were always appreciated. Both the English when he made the supreme sacrifice and the Austrian War Council when he was a prisoner of war, gave him full recognition for his deeds. On his personal documents we find the signatures of Maria Theresa, Frederick the Great, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington. His life was dynamic. He was born in the East. He takes part in every great movement of his period, always rising and moving to the West. He becomes one of the great leaders of the Revolutionary War — then disappears without any trace. After one hundred and fifty years his name reappears so that his deeds may shine in eternal glory."

In 1932, when America was celebrating the two Hundredth Anniversary of the Birthday of George Washington, in New York there was formed the "Colonel Michael de Kováts Society." The aim of the Society is to strengthen the American-Hungarian historical connections and to discover more data proving the importance of our hero.

On May 11, 1932 a Memorial Celebration commemorating the heroic death of Colonel Kováts was held in New York City in Central Park, during which two trees were planted in his memory. The memorial services were attended by Edward, Prince of Wales, King Albert of Belgium, General Pershing and by civilian and military leaders.

In 1939 the Hungarians of America presented a beautiful plaque to the New York Historical Society. This plaque, created by the Hungarian artist Alexander Finta, depicts our hero on a horse, with drawn saber. In the background, the walls of Charleston can be seen.

The American-Hungarian War Bond Committee of Western Pennsylvania, through its diligent efforts, sold nearly four million dollars worth of War Bonds and had the privilege of naming a Liberty Ship. The name chosen was, "Colonel Michael de Kováts." The ship was launched in St. Petersburg, Florida on September 16, 1944.

On one of the squares in Washington, D.C. there are four beautiful statues, each representing a military hero of foreign birth. Here is the Polish Pulaski, the German Von Steuben and the French Lafayette and Rochambeau.

The statue of the Hungarian Kováts is missing.

His sacrifices, military knowledge and experience made it possible that freedom and independence were not only won but preserved for centuries to come.

HIS STATUE BELONGS THERE!

Michael Kovats de Fabricy's letter to Benjamin Franklin is reprinted here by kind permission of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. He wrote the letter in Latin evidently because he assumed or somehow discovered it to be the only language common to both of them.

Magnificentiſſimæ Domine!

Aurum Libertas fulvo non caditur auro:

Propugnatorum Libertatis Antiquitas audiebatur Patres
Patris, Ego quoque qui ſpirantes Litteras & Magni-
ficentia Vre proſperare honore habes, ſua Libe-
tate & Natione Hungaria præditus, in Cateris Reip^u
Domus non tantum dicitur, sed etiam ab uno Patria
Vra, ad Instigum Praefecti Superiori Vigilantia
in tua Cita, quam Victula Bellica, non tam fide, quam
delegat formæ Subordinatione vocatus, In omnibus
Circumstantiis bellis periculis & incertis didici, quæ
sunt omni accepta in ad formidans Tyrone, illosque
multis Studiis per Veteranos factos, idem auroque
Arms ad propellens hostes, non tam in omnibus Evoluti,
nisi Tribuitur, & Divisionibus bellis delictum pro
vultu defuncta Patria.

Utere itaque
ſpontaneæ, comensio ita vero laboribus & flegis
hæc adoci, in his omnibus quæ in discrimine
& in maximis periculis ab hostibus bellis legunt
si possunt, pro defunctis & Reip^u, non minus pro
Hæc illius illas Congregationis, tota re
fidelissima & sacrificatorum, ubi, Cooperant &
vultu fidelissima: assistentibus, Tomio Federil
Civitate inquisitatore, non minus flegis
& Inſta Causa Diverſoſtatore. Decem
Navalem sua rector, Nomine Catharina Ann
Damonit, Cajus Capitaneus Whiffy.

Proinde rogi illa,
quificatione Vestra, ad Laſuales & redemptio
Litteras ad illam Congregationem omni mittere
dignetur proſperâ; & formidans ad hoc se expecto
qui nondum hic Comperimus, & Magnificenti Vre
que vultu Patria & Reip^u Commensio vultu pro
vultu erit, & Tomio Federil, aut alius, illas
Vestris hinc bene flegis & Commensio dederit,
Cum illi bene perveniant, quo Citius ad illam Congre-
gationem transmittantur.

Postremum, ad quæ
vultu Reip^u flegis & Tomio, nihil tenet
ter opto, quam cito proficiat, ubi ubi, quo cito
ma necessitas bellis postulatent juſſi. Cum
ſegris vultu & Reip^u

Magnificenti Vre, nec non Universæ
Congregationis

Bordeaux die 13^a Jan^{is}
1777

Fidelissimus & non
Michael Kovats de
Fabricy

P. S. Paradoxi & Magnificenti Vre, cum eam expecto
Pallie vel Anglice admodum Scian, receptos Litteras vel
Germanice scribere.

The following is a translation of Michael Kovats letter printed on the preceding page.

MOST ILLUSTRIOUS SIR:

"GOLDEN FREEDOM CANNOT BE PURCHASED WITH YELLOW GOLD"

I, who have the honor to present this letter to your Excellency, am also following the call of the Fathers of the Land, as the pioneers of Freedom always did. I am a free man and a Hungarian. As to my military status I was trained in the Royal Prussian Army and raised from the lowest rank to the dignity of a Captain of the Hussars, not so much by luck and the mercy of chance than by most diligent self-discipline and the virtue of my arms. The dangers and the bloodshed of a great many campaigns taught me how to mould a soldier and, when made, how to arm him and let him defend the dearest of the lands with his best ability under any conditions and developments of the war.

I now am here of my own free will, having taken all the horrible hardships and bothers of this journey, and I am willing to sacrifice myself wholly and most faithfully as it is expected of an honest soldier facing the hazards and great dangers of the war, to the detriment of Joseph and as well for the freedom of your great congress. Through the cooperation and loyal assistance of Mr. Faedevill, a merchant of this city and a kind sympathizer of the Colonies and their just cause, I have obtained passage on a ship called, "Catharina From Darmouth", whose master is a Captain Whippy. I beg your Excellency to grant me a passport and a letter of recommendation to the most benevolent Congress. I am expecting companions who have not yet reached here. Your Excellency would be promoting the common cause by giving Mr. Faedevill authorization to expedite their passage to the Colonies once they have arrived here.

At last, awaiting your gracious answer, I have no wish greater than to leave forthwith, to be where I am needed most, to serve and die in everlasting obedience to Your Excellency, and the Congress.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

MICHAEL KOVATS DE FABRICY

Bordeaux, January 13th, 1777

P.S. As yet I am unable to write fluently in French or English and had only the choice of writing either in German or Latin; for this I apologize to your Excellency.

COLOMAN R. BERTALAN
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VERHOVAY FR. TERMA INSURANCE ASSOCIATION
DISTRICT OFFICE:
3609 LORAIN AVE. CLEVELAND, OHIO
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