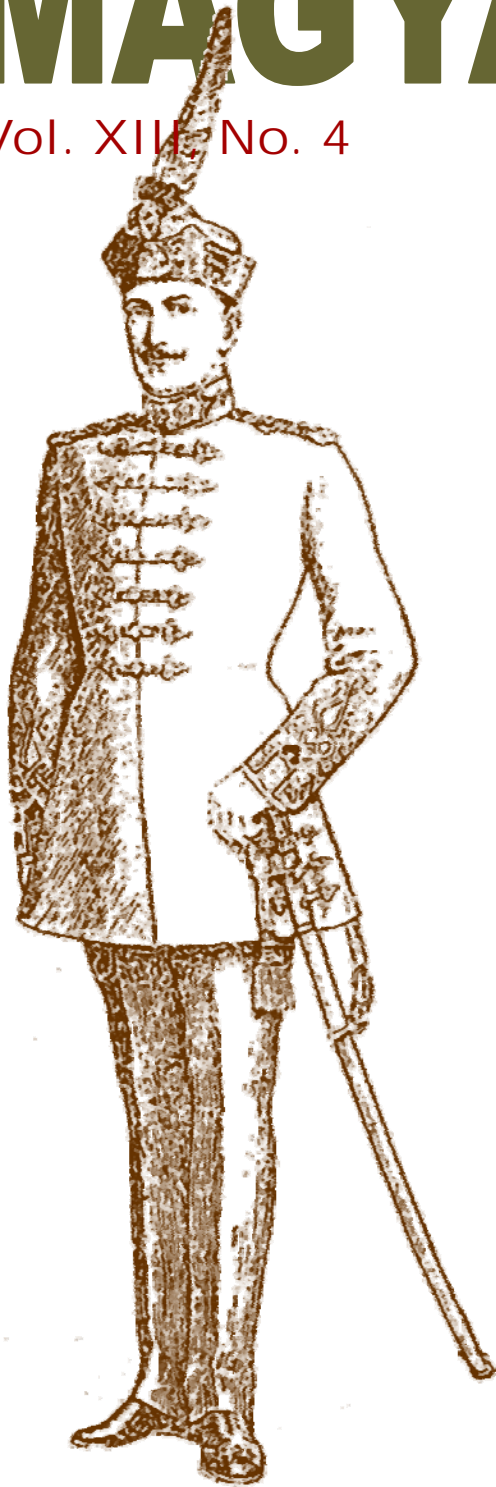


MAGYAR FRONT

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Fall 2011



THE HUSSAR
AND HIS ATILLA:
HUNGARY'S GREATEST
AND MOST ENDURING
MILITARY EXPORT



CZINK COLLECTION

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Membership in the
International Hungarian Military History
Preservation Society is \$40.00 annually,
and includes the *Magyar Front*.

The original *Magyar Front* was the
weekly newspaper of the Frontline
Fighter's Association, and was
published from the early 1930s until
the end of the Second World War.

A note from the Editor

When I decided to dedicate this issue of the *Magyar Front* to the Hungarian *huszár*, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to familiarize our readers with one of my most cherished volumes – *Hussar's Picture Book* by Pál Kelemen (Indiana University, Bloomington, 1972). It's long out of print and usually expensive when you find a copy, however, I think it should be considered recommended reading for anyone interested in military history. Another reason for this review is to set a record straight – this is an obscure work, and little information is out there, even online.

The well-known online encyclopedia *Wikipedia's* entry pops up first (with little else to follow it), and a reviewer states: "*The memoir presents a fairly positive view of the author's service. Written in a different time period, it could easily have passed for pro-war propaganda... For most of the novel, the view of the war is a positive one and the author's personal experiences harken back to the romantic and idealistic notions of war.*"

Nothing could be more incorrect. This book, written in English, is the diary of a World War I Hungarian hussar officer – it's honest and rough around the edges – just like a genuine memoir should be. Kelemen graphically shares his first-hand experience of hair-raising 20th Century cavalry skirmishes:

"Hundreds of swords fly out of their sheaths. The spurred horses plunge forward, and with yelping shouts the two lines clash. At first the Cossacks defend themselves with their lances... Now the curved sabres leap forth and one after another riders fall out of their saddles in the furious butchery.

New Cossacks surge in to strengthen the thinning lines. The horses trample the fallen... Those fighting in front jerk the heads of their horses around and spur them to get out of the terrifying chaos... The attack breaks on the barbed wire. Machine guns pick off those who come nearest... Hussars are spitted like bloody puppets on the fence stakes and swim between the rows of wire..."

Published in the United States of America in the 1970s, one would expect the usual cold-war rhetoric, but Kelemen praises his Russian enemy as valiant adversaries, and his work is a condemnation of violent conflict: "*This is where the Red Cross commissioned officers should come from their offices in the capital... to see war... in all its vile barbarism.*"

What makes Kelemen's perspective even more interesting is his life story. Born in Budapest in 1894, he was a violinist, published writings on the fine arts and literature before his eighteenth birthday, and attended universities in Budapest, Munich, Paris and Oxford. Following his service in the Hungarian cavalry, he met and married an American lady in the Italian Alps, and lived in Florence before moving to the USA. He then devoted his time to the study of pre-Columbian antiquities, which took him on numerous trips to Mexico and Central America.

During World War II he worked on the committee for the protection of artistic monuments in war-torn areas, and later he became a leading authority on pre-Columbian art and civilization of America. He published major works in seven languages, and in ten countries. His wife Elisabeth, an American-born opera singer, gave up her budding career to become Kelemen's fellow explorer and photographer.

There is another bonus in owning *Hussar's Picture Book*. It's beautifully illustrated by Gusztáv Végh. Born in 1889, Végh was also a frontline fighter in the First World War, and finished his service in 1918 as a war invalid. He became a well known award-winning artist and graphic designer, passing away in 1973.

The graphic icons with which he chose to illustrate *Hussar's Picture Book* have always impressed me, and I have used a few of them to decorate Jack Keir's excellent article in this issue of the *Magyar Front*. I have been unable to make contact with anyone who would be able to grant me official permission to use the illustrations, however, I sincerely hope that I will be excused for taking such a liberty, as my only intention is to do my best to create awareness of this wonderful, yet neglected Hungarian treasure.

P.Cz.

Our Cover

An M1926 lieutenant general's (*altábornagy*) *atilla* and decorations.

In the background, regulation drawing of the M1924 officer's parade/mess-dress uniform. Photograph by Lorraine Weideman.

A token of thanks: Frontline Fighter Style

The International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society's Badge of Honour has been instituted as a token of gratitude for IHMHPS members, honorary members and non-members alike. A great deal of voluntary work is so often overlooked and undervalued, however, it is the intention of the IHMHPS to always ensure that exemplary dedication to the preservation of Hungarian military history, and to our organisation, is properly acknowledged.

The insignia is the traditional *diszjelvény*, or badge of honour – a large version of an organization's emblem, signifying outstanding merit and dedication. Like the *diszjelvény* of the Frontline Fighters' Association, our badge of honour is a 5cm, full-colour version of our membership pin.

The IHMHPS Badge of Honour will be awarded to members of the organization who consistently go out of their way to actively participate in the preservation of Hungarian military history by supporting the IHMHPS, involving themselves with our activities and working on our projects. Non-members who are involved with similar activities and associations, and support the IHMHPS, who distinguish themselves by particular dedication, are also eligible to receive the badge.

Anyone may nominate a potential recipient, and the final decision is made by the leadership of the IHMHPS. Each badge is backed, in Hungarian military fashion, by a piece of coloured cloth – red for IHMHPS leadership, white for IHMHPS members, and green for non-members.

Right:

A Hungarian Army General, photographed in the inter-war period, wears the Frontline Fighters' Association Badge of Honour on his left pocket.

Below:

IHMHPs Badges of Honour, shown actual size, with coloured red backing for the IHMHPS leadership, white for regular and honorary members, and green for non-members.



Lieutenant Colonel, Lieutenant General
and Captain wearing the M1926 atilla.
The light blue general's atilla was styled after
the *hechtgrau* coloured pre-1918 general's uniform.



LABORC COLLECTION

Atilla Tunics of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Army

by Tamás Baczoni

In 1920, when the new uniform of the Nationalist Army (later called the Royal Hungarian National Army, and finally the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Army) was planned, it was decided that due to financial shortages, no parade dress uniform would be introduced. Despite this declaration, four years later the so called "Csáky" (named after Minister of Defence Count Károly Csáky) historically inspired parade/mess dress uniform was introduced, following the costume traditions of the 17th Century. This uniform was very unpopular and short lived.

Right:

M1931 cavalry
captain's atilla

Left:

M1926 atilla of
a bureau official



HUNGARIAN MILITARY
HISTORY MUSEUM UNIFORM
COLLECTION

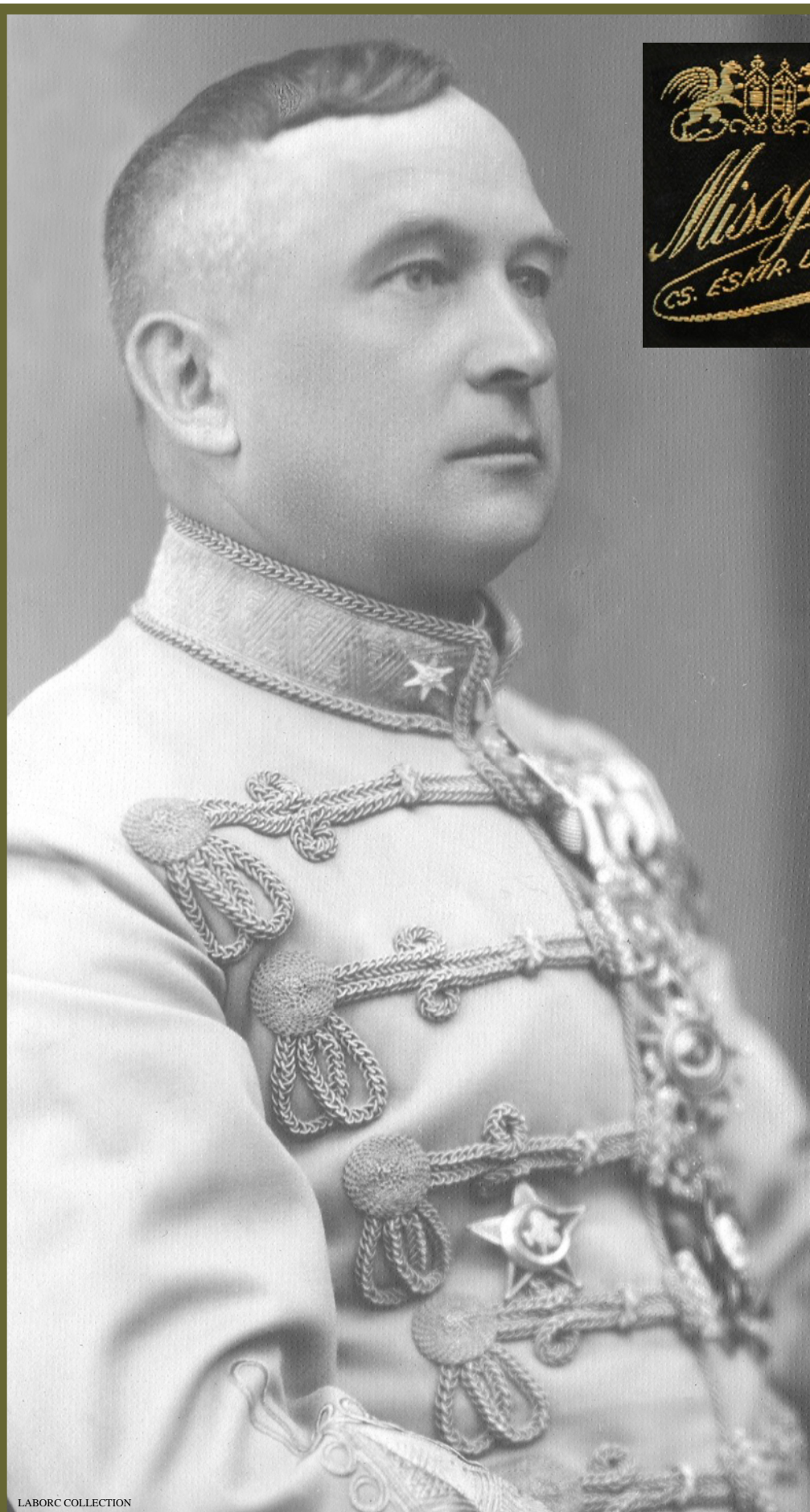


HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY
MUSEUM UNIFORM COLLECTION

In 1926 a new mess dress uniform was introduced, following pre-1918 traditions - officers received *atilla* tunics in branch-of-service colours, with the traditional red-piped black trousers and black officer's cap. The *atilla* was named after the King of Huns, and in the 1830s it was still being referred to as the *atilla*-dolman - the new version of the traditional Hungarian dolman. At that time the dolman was a waist-length coat, while the *atilla* was knee-length, and by the mid-19th Century longer coats became fashionable - even frock coats were replaced by longer ones in the Western fashion for both civilian and military use. The term *atilla* is still in use today and is spelled slightly differently from the given name of Attila.

It was a clear turn-back to the monarchist tradition, neglecting the fashions of the early 1920s, when modern style service and combat uniforms were designed for the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Army. The cut and decoration of the *atilla* tunic followed that of the M1849 general's *atilla*, but with different cuffs and rear braid. The *atilla* tunics were prescribed in different branch colours:

Text continued on next page 8...



CZINK COLLECTION

Above:
Tailor's label from the
general's *atilla* pictured
on this issue's cover.

Left:
A general wearing his light
blue *atilla* - note the unique
general's chain-braid.

Below:
Cuff detail of a Medical field
-grade officer's
M1926 *atilla*.



HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY
MUSEUM UNIFORM COLLECTION

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BRANCH	ATILLA COLOUR	COLLAR COLOUR	INSIGNIA
Generals	light blue	scarlet red	
Infantry	dark green		
Engineers	dark green	steel green	collar badge
Signal Corps	dark green	steel green	collar badge
Cavalry	dark blue		
Artillery	dark brown	scarlet red (from 1931)	
Railway Troops	dark brown	dark blue (until 1931)	collar badge (until 1931)
Mechanized Railway Troops	dark brown	dark blue (until 1931)	collar badge
Customs (Border Gd. from 1932)	dark green		collar badge
Armoured Troops (from 1931)	dark green		collar badge
General Staff	According to their original branch	black-scarlet red	
Military Bureau		white	
Territorial Officers		orange	
Medical Officers (from 1933)	brown	black	collar badge

All officers of non-combat troops and institutes had black *atilla* tunics with distinctive colours on the collar and cuffs.
(Colours shown are approximations - cloth samples vary greatly, and age can also affect shades and hues.)

BLACK ATILLA			
BRANCH	CUFFS (CLOTH)	CUFFS (VELVET)	COLLAR (VELVET)
Medical Officers		black	black
Chemist Officials	black		
Judge Advocates		madder red	madder red
Justice Officials	madder red		
Commissary		dark carmine	dark carmine
Auditors	dark carmine		
Economics Officers	dark carmine		
Instructors		violet	
Conductors, Fencing Masters	violet		
Engineering Staff		cherry red	cherry red
Technical Officials	cherry red		
Bureau Officials	parrot green		
Veterinary Service		dark blue	

...continued from page 5

Adjutants of the Regent and head of the military bureau had what was called "reverse colour" decoration - they wore silver buttons; from lieutenant to captain silver rank stars; and from major to colonel, gold rank stars on silver braid. Adjutants also wore a small button on their collar beside their rank badges. In 1926, a parade-cap, parade-belt and a parade/mess-dress greatcoat was also planned, but due to financial shortages they were never introduced, and the *atilla* tunics were worn with the pre-1918 style black officer's cap and red-piped black trousers.

In 1931, the cuff and back decoration of the *atilla* tunic was modified, making it the same as the pre-1918 *atilla*. The main problem with this garment was its very high price. The cost of an *atilla* tunic was between 214 and 434 *pengő* (depending on the quality of the braid), and even the lowest price equalled the monthly pay of a lieutenant. The other issue was that they weren't worn very often by most officers, and the braid would oxidize in two to three years (and had to be changed), which meant that the *atilla* tunic became an overly expensive part of the officer's wardrobe. Because of this, when the mess-dress tunic (the so called "small *atilla*") was introduced in 1931, the use of the *atilla* was limited, and in 1937 the *atilla* tunic ceased being an option. From that time on, the mess-dress tunic had to be worn instead of the *atilla* tunic for social occasions (when civilians wore frock coats or dinner jackets). Only general officers, the Military Bureau, the Royal Body Guard and the Crown Guard retained the *atilla* tunic for ceremonial occasions.

Although the *atilla* tunic was a very beautiful garment, and carried on the finest Hungarian military traditions of the 18th - 19th Centuries (originally it was the coat of the *huszár*), it became an anachronism by the 20th Century, and its very high cost made it a problematic garment for the officer corps. 🏹



A lieutenant colonel of the infantry, wearing the M1926 *atilla*.
Note the aide-de-camp aguillette, worn on the right breast.

LABORC COLLECTION



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The Conquering Hussar

by Jack Keir

The hussar, as we know him today, is Hungarian - a rough and ready Hungarian with Austrian sophistication (the Viennese makeover caused a fashion stampede that swept across Europe). This is only a brief and highly selective look at hussar fever and a few of the men and actions which exemplified hussar tradition and reputation - Hungary's greatest and most enduring military export.

The Early Hussar

The origin of the hussar, and even the name itself, is the subject of debate. Hussar units were first employed by the Habsburg army during the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648). Following the lifting of the Siege of Vienna in 1683, the liberation of Hungary from Ottoman rule began, and the more formal and enduring incorporation of hussars into the Habsburg army began thereafter. The Imperial regime which replaced that of the Ottomans greatly contributed to the formation of hussar units in foreign armies.

It is with the incorporation into the regular army that the hussar as we now recognise him came to be - Austrian style was applied to the Hungarian concept. The Habsburg regularisation of the hussar commenced in 1688 with the first regiment being raised, and by 1751 there were fourteen hussar regiments in the Habsburg army. In that year, the first and most significant regulations were published for the training and uniform of the hussar, and although much was already in place, those regulations provided for the uniform with which we associate the hussar today, and which was copied by many other countries.

The 1751 regulations provided for a uniform and equipment as follows:

Kalpag: A fur conical hat topped with a hanging cloth bag, more commonly described in the English speaking world as a "busby." The *kalpag* was attached to the uniform by a cord to prevent loss if dislodged from the head.

Dolman: A short tunic reaching just below the waist with horizontal braiding and coloured cuff and collar lining. A densely braided dolman could provide some protection from a slashing blow from an enemy sabre, so was practical as

Continued on next page...

well as decorative.

Pelisse: A short jacket trimmed with fur with rows of horizontal braiding, the *pelisse* could be worn over the *dolman* in wintertime, but is more commonly slung over the left shoulder and secured by a cord. Like the *dolman*, its dense braiding could afford some protection to the left side of the body.

Breeches: These were made of cloth and were commonly a different colour from the *dolman* and *pelisse*, usually with vertical braiding descending from the waist.

Boots: Leather boots in various colours, of a traditional design reaching to just below the knee, trimmed at the top with the same braiding as on the *pelisse* and *dolman*, and with spurs attached.

Waist Sash: These appeared in a variety of designs - the bottom of the *dolman* protruded beneath the sash.

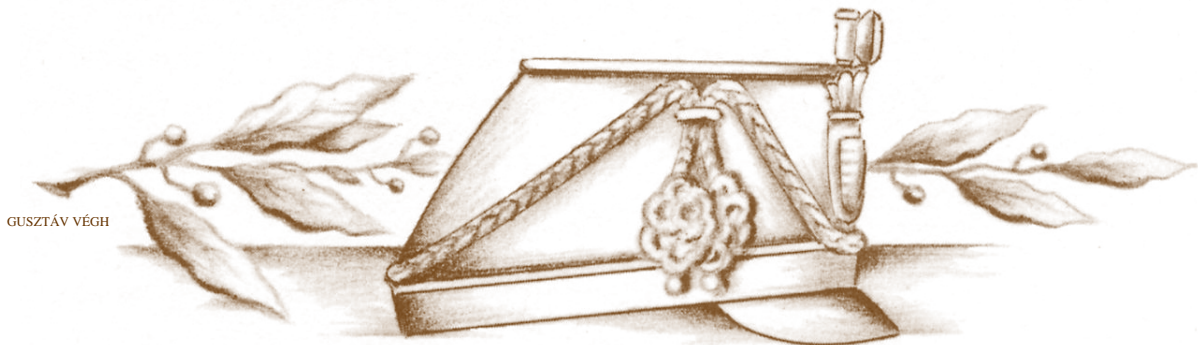
Sabre: The hussar sabre was of a kind used long before the regulations were published. The pattern followed that of the Ottoman scimitar, being a curved single edged weapon for hacking and slashing.

Sabretache: The hussar uniform was tight and did not allow for much to be carried on the person - the *sabretache* was a leather bag for personal effects. A decorated cloth cover was applied to the front, and the *sabretache* was slung from the waist, with the sabre, and when on foot the bottom edge would hang around calf level. A cloth cover attached to the front originally bore the regiment's own cipher or arms, but from 1769 they featured the reigning monarch's cipher.

Firearms: Along with the sabre, hussars were also armed with the 1744 carbine, which measured 90cm in length and had a bore of 17mm; and the 1744 pistol which was 48.5cm in length with a walnut handle. Occasionally, troopers would also be armed with a *trombon* - an early form of single barrel shotgun.

In addition to the prescribed uniform, hussars wore their hair in a bound ponytail at the back, with the hair at the temples worn braided and hanging in pleats, along with a moustache, of course. This added significantly to his exoticism, and lent him a piratical air. More than that, it marked him out clearly as a hussar whether in or out of uniform. It should not be forgotten that for all the smart uniforms with which they were clad, hussars maintained their reputation for being wild and fierce fighters. They were the bad boys, not just of the cavalry, but of the whole army.

As was common in most European armies, many regiments were raised and funded by wealthy aristocrats or would have such a gentleman as their colonel - in the Habsburg army he was called the *Inhaber*. Discretion was allowed to each *Inhaber* as to details when it came to the uniform worn by his men. Accordingly, the colour of the *kalpag*, *dolman*, *pelisse*, boots and buttons varied from regiment to regiment. Reds, greens and blues were the most common colours employed.



The Heavy and Light Cavalry

Eighteenth century military tacticians began to recognise the desirability of having two rather different types of cavalry, broadly described as "heavy" and "light." The heavy cavalry concept was big men on big horses who would advance knee to knee upon the enemy infantry. If the psychological effect of seeing and hearing this advance did not cause the enemy to flee, then the heavy cavalry would ram through them (Dragoons and Cuirassiers were the most common types in this category). The heavy cavalry was normally armed with a long, straight double-edged sword for thrusting and stabbing.

The light cavalry concept was fast and nimble, lightly armed horsemen who would carry out reconnaissance, engage in skirmishes, conduct raids on enemy encampments (often appearing from nowhere) and harry fleeing and disarrayed enemy forces. In short, what the Hungarian hussars had been doing for ages. The hussar and the lancer (*ulan* or *uhlan*) were the main types of light cavalry, although others, such as light dragoons and *chasseurs a cheval* also belonged to this category, who often dressed in hussar or hussar-like uniform. The light cavalry sabre was a curved, single-edged weapon for hacking and slashing.

The Habsburg cavalry in the 1750s consisted of German and Hungarian types. The hussars were exclusively from Hungary (I use the term to refer to all the lands of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen), and apart from a single regiment of Galician lancers, formed the light cavalry units. The rest came from the German parts of the Habsburg territories, including a significant element from the Czech lands. This remained pretty much so, with the addition of lancers, principally recruited from the Polish speaking areas, until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918.



The Hussar Abroad

Up to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it was not uncommon to find regiments comprised of men of one nationality or state serving in armies of other states. The reasons for this are too complex to be gone into here but the widespread use of mercenary soldiers and officers, the political structure of the time and the displacement of peoples and soldiers following wars and rebellions, were all contributing factors. In relation to the use of Hungarian cavalry by other states, one of the principal reasons for their availability was the fall-out from the Rákóczi rebellion against Habsburg rule in Hungary between 1704 and 1711.

Exiled or specifically recruited Hungarian cavalymen found themselves serving in other armies, and took with them their knowledge and experience as hussars. Various states took advantage of the displaced hussars, or actively recruited Hungarians with this experience. The reputation of the hussar had travelled wide, and the value of cavalry of this type became well recognised. Well before the 1751 regularisation, exiled Hungarians were busy forming cavalry units *à la mode hongroise* for their new armies.

By the time of the regularisation of hussars into the Habsburg army, many armies had begun to have a light and heavy cavalry, however, once that regularisation had started, nearly every army wanted hussars modelled on the Habsburg/Hungarian variety - even those which already possessed Hungarian cavalry.

France

The French were the first to adopt the name and the uniform of the hussar. As early as 1685, bodies of Hungarian exiles served in the cavalry of King Louis XIV. In 1692, the first Hungarian cavalry regiment was raised as the *Hussars-Royaux* and a further five regiments of Hungarian cavalry fought for the king in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701 to 1714). These early French hussars wore bright uniforms with fur trimmed caps, and an animal skin *pelisse*, plus they wielded a curved sabre. These regiments were short lived.

In 1719, Count László Bercsényi formed a regiment of hussars while in exile in the Ottoman Empire. He sailed to France with them, and offered his service to King Louis XV. This was accepted, and the regiment became the *Hussards de Berchenay*. Before the revolution in 1792, four other regiments were added, including the *Hussards d'Esterhazy* formed in 1764. The first Republican regiment was the *Hussards Défenseurs de la Liberté et de l'Egalité* formed in November 1792. As the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars progressed, a total of fourteen French hussar regiments served in the French Army. It is with Bercsényi's regiment that the sustained French hussar tradition began.

French hussars traditionally wore their hair in the Hungarian style, and referred to the bound ponytail as a *queue* (French slang word for penis) - Napoleon, however, disliked this coiffure and banned it.

Prussia

The Prussians first formed two hussar corps in 1721 - they were raised, trained and organised by Hungarians. During the War of the Austrian Succession of 1740 to 1748, the King of Prussia found that the hussars in Habsburg service were particularly effective, and set about poaching officers and troopers to serve in his own army. The army of Frederick the Great counted nine hussar regiments by 1758. Many of these were not only manned by exiled Hungarians (and Poles), but commanded by Hungarians (Regiment number 1 was named von Szekely). Frederick the Great exempted his hussars from the harsh discipline found elsewhere in the Prussian Army. Perhaps the most striking Prussian hussars were the Life Hussar Regiments which dressed all in black save for a poppy red trim to the collar and cuffs (1st Regiment only, the 2nd Regiment dressed entirely in black) with white cords and buttons. Both regiments had as their cap badge a large silver skull and crossed bones. The Life Hussars continued in service until 1918, always maintaining a fearsome reputation, and a number of well known Prussian military men were Life Hussars - Blücher, von Seydlitz and von Mackensen. In November 1922, when the exiled Kaiser Wilhelm re-married, he wore the uniform of a Life Hussar.

Continued on next page...

Great Britain

Of the major European armies, the British Army was the last to adopt the hussar. In 1783, the then Prince of Wales became Colonel of the 10th Dragoons, which had been raised in 1751. The regiment became the 10th or Prince of Wales Own Light Dragoons. The Prince, later King George IV, was one of the most extravagant men in Europe, not only a slave to, but also a setter of fashion, and with an appetite for excess. It is perhaps not surprising that he soon began to dress his regiment as hussars and a trend was set. The 10th were quite outrageously attired with yellow boots, and they sported a *mirliton* (a high conical cloth cap with a long, tapered, flowing bag), later converting to a rather tall busby. By 1801, the *pelisse* and *sabretache* were common to light dragoons, and in 1806 the 10th formally became hussars. The following year, two other light dragoon regiments were renamed hussars. The British method of naming some of the converted regiments is unusual - the 7th, or Queen's Own Light Dragoons became the 7th (Queen's Own) Light Dragoon Hussars. The British seemed loathe to abandon the light dragoon, albeit they more often than not dressed as hussars.

In 1814, the Prince of Wales was appointed Honorary Colonel of the 5th Hussar Regiment of the Habsburg Army, and held the position as both Prince and King until his death in 1830. Their regimental standard, showing the Hanoverian style British coat of arms, is preserved in the Military Museum in Budapest.

The light dragoons were equipped with the 1796 pattern light cavalry sabre which was a particularly brutal weapon. It was modelled on the Hungarian hussar sabre of the time, but was heavier and with a wider blade. It could inflict quite dreadful injury and earned the nickname of "the butcher's blade." This weapon continued in use for regiments converted to hussars, and the Prussians copied this design for use by their hussars. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the British hussars were the most expensively attired of all European cavalry. The British, having been late starters, went into overdrive in the ornamentation of their uniforms and horse furniture.

In 1861, all remaining light dragoon regiments were renamed as hussars. There are two hussar regiments remaining in the British Army today, the Queen's Royal Hussars (Queen's Own and Royal Irish), and The King's Royal Hussars. Although there is also the Light Dragoons, all of these regiments are the final amalgamations of the British hussar regiments.



The Austro-Hungarian Hussar 1914-1918

At the outbreak of the First World War, the military strategists of the five main European powers still held the view that the cavalry was a potent force which would sweep them to victory. That notion quickly came unstuck on the Western Front, and many cavalry regiments were deployed as infantry. On the Eastern Front the war was more fluid and allowed for an easier deployment of cavalry against the less mechanised Russians, however, during the early conflicts, a large number of horses were lost and could not be replaced, causing many hussars to be used in infantry roles.

The Imperial and Royal Common Army possessed sixteen regiments of hussars in 1914, still wearing their distinct uniform, and the Honvéd had ten additional regiments. By then the once colourful uniforms of the Common Army regiments had disappeared, and the clothing of the hussar comprised of a light or dark blue *atilla* with red breeches, black boots and shako in grey, blue, white or red.

While the hussar regiments participated in many campaigns and actions, their significant contribution was not in any one major decisive battle, but in doing what they did best – reconnaissance of enemy positions and the lightning attack, and on at least one occasion early in the war on foot, at Limanowa on 11 December 1914.





GUSZTÁV VÉGH

The Hungarian Hussar 1939-1945 - the End of the Line

In 1939, the Hungarian cavalry comprised of two brigades each of two regiments of hussars plus support. The 1st Cavalry Brigade consisted of the 3rd Count Nádasdy Ferenc Regiment and the 4th Count Hadik András Regiment, together with the 13th and 14th Bicycle Battalion and the partly motorised 1st Cavalry Artillery Group. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade consisted of the 1st Ferenc József Regiment, the 2nd Prince Árpád Regiment, together with the 15th and 16th Bicycle Battalions and the partly motorised 2nd Cavalry Artillery Regiment.

In 1939 the Polish Army was still a heavy user of cavalry, and the heroism with which they engaged the Germans is legend, but mounted cavalry regiments were also utilised to some effect by the armies which participated in the war against the Soviets. German, Italian, Romanian and Hungarian cavalry units all saw action. The vast open flat lands of the plain were good territory for horsemen. Most German cavalry units acted as mounted infantry, but there were occasions when cavalry, in its traditional role, engaged the enemy. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was part of Hungary's contribution to the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. A reorganisation of the Army in October, 1942, saw the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Hussars as part of the Mobile Troops, which combined armoured, bicycle, motorised and cavalry units under one command.

One engagement, of what has been identified as the 3rd Hussars led by Colonel Pál Pongrácz, where the traditional charge with the sabre in true hussar fashion occurred, was recorded by Erich Kern, a German infantry officer:

"It happened in early August 1941, south of Uman, in the area of Pervomajsk. German troops were pinned down behind a railway embankment by strong Red Army forces. German infantry attacked the enemy four times, but were repulsed each time by superior forces. The battalion commander cursed, and tried to push his men into a new attack in vain, as the Russians steadily held their positions. It was then, when instead of the artillery barrage we were repeatedly asking for, that a Hungarian cavalry squadron showed up. We were laughing. What do these guys want to do here with their sleek horses, armed only with swords? Suddenly, we were stunned by astonishment. These Hungarians went mad! Squadrons followed the others, coming from our rear. Following a loud command, the huszárs drew their swords and charged the enemy, virtually glued to their horses, with the swords' metal blades shining in the sun. They were led by a middle-aged, sword-swinging colonel, with gold rank insignia sparkling on his uniform's collar. Several light armoured cars covered the flanks. Seydlitz must have charged in the same fashion, I thought! Forgetting the imminent danger, we stood up and watched the unbelievable scene. It looked like an extraordinary cavalry movie. The Russians initially fired at their unlikely attackers, but the shots became more sporadic and finally ceased. We watched in astonishment how the Soviet battalion, which thus far fanatically defended its positions, panicked and hastily retreated under the pressure of the charging cavalry. The Hungarians, savouring their success, cut the running soldiers down with their swords. This time, incredibly, ancient weapons and war technique triumphed over modern technology." (from Grosse Rausch, Zürich, Switzerland, 1948, pp 54-55)

In March, 1945, the remnants of the 1st Cavalry Division comprising the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Hussars fell back after the failed German counter-offensive, following the fall of Budapest, and were lost near Thiess, thus ending the long, proud and distinguished history of the Hungarian Hussar. That was not, however, the final appearance of the Hungarian Army hussar. In 1951 a company of hussars was formed to act as a parade unit wearing a uniform based upon that used during the War of Independence of 1848-1849. The company was disbanded in 1956.

The Hussar Today

Some 250 years after the 1751 regulations brought us the uniform with which we associate the hussar, there are regiments of hussars still in service today. Three regiments or corps, are of particular interest. The Dutch Army has three hussar regiments, the earliest of which can trace its foundation back to 1577, although not as hussars. While each of these regiments is a fully functioning armoured regiment they collectively carry out ceremonial functions as the *Cavalerie Ere-Escort* in traditional uniform. The principal duty undertaken is to escort the monarch at the state opening of Parliament in The Hague each September. All regiments wear a blue *atilla* and breeches and black boots. A black busby with cloth bag and white cockade

Continued on next page...

tops it off. The most traditional regiment in terms of dress is the Danish *Gardehusarregimentet*. In its ceremonial form, it provides an escort to the Danish monarch. The uniform is a blue *atilla* and breeches, black boots and a red *pelisse*. A *sabretache* bearing the cipher of the reigning monarch (presently an M for Queen Margrethe), is also worn, as is a blue shako with a white cockade and horsehair plume. The regiment was founded in 1762, and is the only surviving hussar regiment which still wears the *pelisse*. Perhaps the most unusual remaining hussar regiment is the French *1er Régiment de Hussards Parachutistes (1er RHP)*, airborne hussars and successors to the *Hussards de Bercheney*.

Some Great Hussars

Count András Hadik was probably the greatest Hungarian hussar. The son of a cavalryman, Hadik joined the cavalry at twenty years of age, in 1730. He rose quickly through the ranks, and by 1747 had achieved the rank of general, in command of a cavalry brigade.

During the Seven Years War, Hadik conducted what is probably the greatest hussar action in history. In 1757, while the Prussian armies were engaged in a southward advance, Hadik took his cavalry corps of mostly hussars at breakneck speed around the Prussian positions and moved against Berlin. On October 16th, Hadik appeared from nowhere (in hussar fashion) taking the city by surprise. The attempted defence by infantry was met with a charge by the hussars, which quickly saw off the Prussians. The city was ransomed, and Hadik and his men left two days later. For this bold action, which Frederick the Great never forgave, Hadik was not only awarded the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa, but was promoted to Field Marshal. He was also presented with a stunning sabre, which was later presented by his family to the Military Museum in Budapest.

Hadik continued to serve in many capacities, as a Governor and military commander, well into his old age. He is remembered today as the greatest hussar leader, and an equestrian statue of him is a prominent feature in the Castle District of Buda where he served as Governor from 1763 to 1764. The Slovak Military Academy is named after him, Hadik's family having originated in Upper Hungary.

Blucher

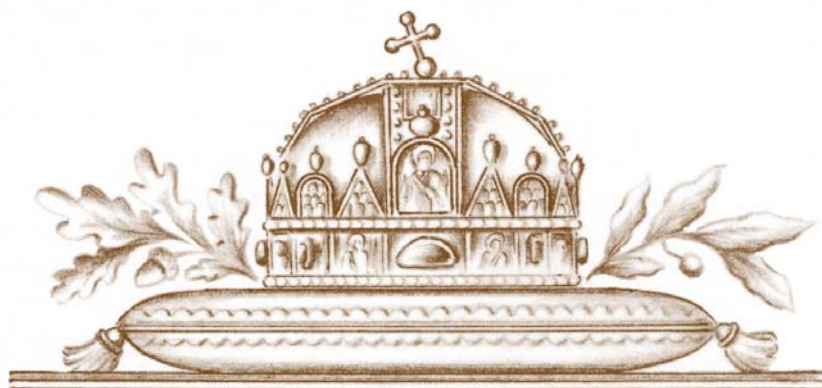
Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher began his military service in the Swedish Army as a hussar at the age of 16. In 1760, during the Seven Years War, while a cadet with the Morner Hussars, he was captured by a troop of Prussian Life Hussars and was prevailed upon to join the Prussian Army. Blucher was quite wild even for a hussar, and resigned his commission in 1773, having been refused a promotion principally due to his excessive behaviour. He returned to service in 1787 as a major in the Life Hussars. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Blucher saw both victory and defeat, and Napoleon had no greater adversary. Blucher had a distinguished career, and after his victory at the Battle of Mockern, in 1813, he was appointed Field Marshal, however, it was at Waterloo, in 1815, that Blucher's intervention at the head of the Prussian Army secured the final defeat of Napoleon.

Mihály Kovats de Fabriczy

Kovats was a Hungarian hussar, born in 1724, who served in the armies of Maria Theresa and then Frederick the Great, rising to the rank of Captain. While living in France in 1777, he heard of the revolution in the American colonies, and offered his services to the revolutionaries. His offer was accepted, and he left for America where he was appointed as Colonel-Commander of the Pulaski Legion. Kovats organised and trained the Continental Army cavalry as hussars and led them in combat. He is credited as being the founder of the US Cavalry, the tactics of which have since reflected their light cavalry origins.

Kovats was killed in action in 1779 at Charleston - his British adversaries acknowledging his cavalry as the best the revolutionaries possessed. He is remembered today by a dramatic statue of his fall, in the grounds of the Hungarian Embassy in Washington, as well as by a medal awarded by the American Hungarian Federation. 🇹🇷

I am very grateful to Dr. Gergely Sallay and Major Dr. Tamás Bacsoni of the Military History Institute and Museum in Budapest for their helpful comments and suggestions during the preparation of this article, any errors are however mine.

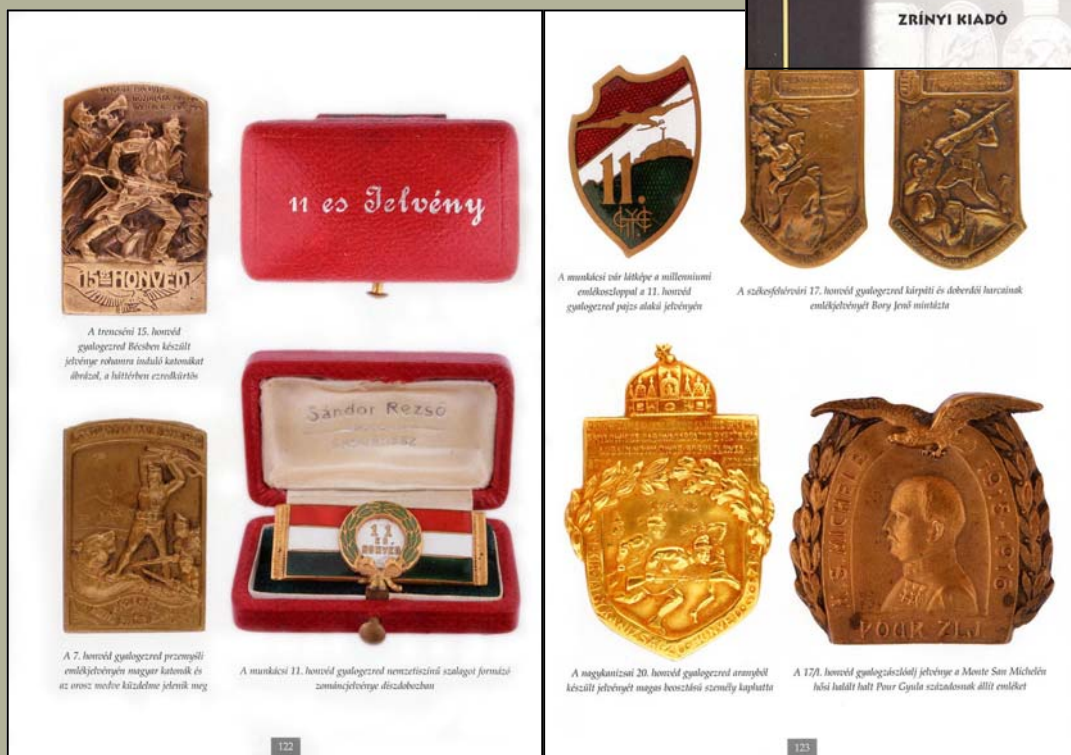
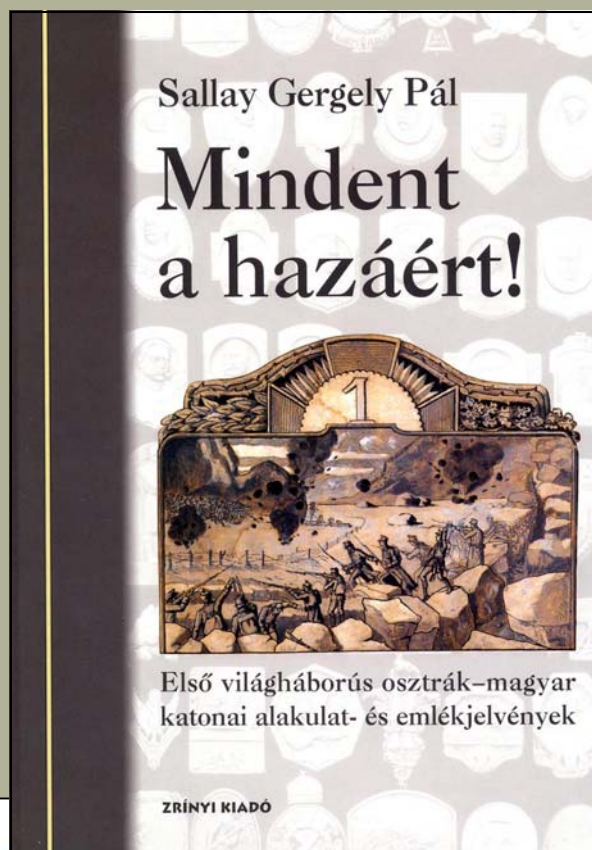


GUSZTÁV VÉGH

Hungarian Military History Museum curator and IHMHPS member Dr. Gergely Pál Sallay's new book on Austro-Hungarian cap badges of the First World War.

This (1.5cm x 19.5cm x 25cm) 182-page full-colour volume is full of detailed images of the numerous cap badges that were so popular with WW I soldiers. The array of insignia range from the sombre to the breathtaking, and Sallay's new work isn't simply a documentation of badges – he also explains the protocol for wearing them, features their manufacturers and designers, and even presents examples of cap badge enthusiasts who accumulated their collections during the First World War.

The text is in Hungarian, however, the book is so richly illustrated, anyone interested in the period's insignia and iconography will be sure to enjoy it.



Badges are pictured in colour, and cover all of the Austro-Hungarian branches-of-service.

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