

# The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II



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Illustrated by Darko Pavlovic

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#### Abbreviations used in the text and orders-of-battle

AAB = Anti-Aircraft Brigade  
AABn = Anti-Aircraft Battalion  
ABn = Artillery Battalion  
AF = Air Force  
AFRR = Air Force Rifles Regiment  
AMD = Armoured Division  
AMFD = Armoured Field Division  
AMRBn = Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion  
BiBn = Bicycle Battalion  
BGB = Border Guard Brigade  
BGR = Border Guard Regiment  
BBn = Border Battalion  
BRB = Border Rifles Brigade  
BRBn = Border Rifles Battalion  
BRD = Border Rifles Division  
BRG = Border Rifles Group  
CABn = Cavalry Artillery Battalion  
CB = Cavalry Brigade

CD = Cavalry Division  
CR = Cavalry Regiment  
CRB = Cavalry Replacement Brigade  
CTBn = Cavalry Tank Battalion  
CWO = Commissioned Warrant Officer  
disb = disbanded  
FIC = Fortress Infantry Company  
FR = Fortress Regiment  
FRD = Field Replacement Division  
GHQ = General Headquarters  
GR = Grenadier Regiment  
HABn = Horse Artillery Battalion  
HD = Hussar Division  
HOG = Hungarian Occupation Group  
IB = Infantry Brigade  
ID = Infantry Division  
IR = Infantry Regiment  
LD = Light Division  
LMG = light machine gun

MABn = Mountain Artillery Battalion  
MB = Mountain Brigade  
MBn = Mountain Battalion  
MBRBn = Mountain Border Rifles Battalion  
MTABn = Motorized Artillery Battalion  
MTB = Motorized Brigade  
MRB = Mountain Replacement Brigade  
MTBn = Motorized Battalion  
MTHABn = Motorized Heavy Artillery Battalion  
MTB = Motorized Brigade  
MTR = Motorized Regiment  
PR = Parachute Regiment  
RD = Reserve Division  
SABn = Székely Artillery Battalion  
SBBn = Székely Border Guard Battalion  
TCo = Tank Company  
TBn = Tank Battalion  
TR = Tank Regiment

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## Editor's Note

Technical restrictions have prevented the depiction of all Hungarian diacritics in this text.

In order to offer readers as much information as possible in the available space, we have used abbreviated dates, and numerals for most numbers.

NB: Hungarian date designation forms for uniform and equipment items, e.g. '1926 M.', have been reversed in this text to our house style e.g. 'M1926'.

## Artist's Note

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# THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was established in April 1867 with the Habsburg Franz-Josef as Emperor and King of Hungary. On 5 December 1868 the *Magyar Királyi (M. Kir.) Honvédség*, the Royal Hungarian Army (literally 'Defence Force') was established.

In 1914 Hungary comprised 109,218 square miles (282,876 sq/km) with 20.8 million inhabitants – 55 per cent Magyars and Székelys (a Hungarian-speaking people of uncertain origin), 45 per cent Romanian, German, Croat, Serb, Slovak, Ruthene, Jewish, Roma, Slovene and Italian. During World War I Hungarians fought in the Austro-Hungarian Common Army and Royal Hungarian Army against the Entente nations.

On 3 November 1918 Austro-Hungary, hard-pressed but undefeated, signed an armistice anticipating a formal peace treaty. The Common and Royal Hungarian Armies were abolished; and from November 1918 the Entente demanded that Hungary immediately cede Slovakia to Czechoslovakia, Transylvania to Romania and Croatia, and the Bácska-Baranya districts to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS – later, Yugoslavia). Some 70,000 Czechoslovak, Serbian and Romanian forces occupied these areas before advancing further into Hungary. On 23 March 1919 a Hungarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed, and the 25,000-strong Hungarian Red Army, under experienced former Austro-Hungarian General Staff officers, fought valiantly; but on 1 August the Republican government resigned, and on 4 August the Romanian Army occupied Budapest.

An anti-communist government operated in Arad, later Szeged, southern Hungary, 5 May–9 August 1919, with Vice-Admiral Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya, the last commander of the Austro-Hungarian Fleet, as minister of war. On 9 August, Horthy united various military units into a 25,000-strong National Army (*Nemzeti Hadseveg*) at Szeged, and by 16 November 1919 he controlled Hungary. Horthy ruled as Regent from 1 March 1920,





A member of the Parliamentary Guard, wearing the scarlet palace ceremonial uniform with white braids, and white metal helmet with brass edgings. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

but in 1921 prevented Károly IV, the former Austro-Hungarian Emperor and King of Hungary, from regaining the throne.

### The Treaty of Trianon

On 4 June 1920 Hungary signed the Treaty of Trianon. The national territory was reduced by 67 per cent to 35,918 square miles (93,030 sq/km); the other regions, with significant Magyar populations, were awarded thus: Slovakia and Ruthenia (600,000 Magyars) to Czechoslovakia; Transylvania (1.7 million Magyars and Székelys) to Romania; Bácska, Baranya and western Bánát (now Vojvodina), Croatia, Medjimurje, Prekmurje (314,000 Magyars) to SHS; Burgenland (26,000 Magyars) to Austria; parts of Árva and Szepes counties to Poland; and Fiume (now Rijeka) to Italy. Hungary's population of 7,987,000 – 39 per cent of the 1914 total – was 90 per cent Magyar and 7 per cent ethnic German, but 2,640,000 Magyars and Székelys lived in neighbouring states.

The Royal Hungarian Army was reduced to 35,000 volunteers, mainly infantry and cavalry, without reserves. Light weapons were permitted, but no heavy artillery, tanks or aircraft. The Military Inter-Allied Commission of Control, with 52 Entente officers, monitored compliance.

Hungarians universally regarded Trianon as unjust and excessively punitive, dealing a blow to national pride from which Hungary has still not fully recovered. A powerful thousand-year old kingdom was reduced to a weak rump state, vulnerable to attacks from neighbours it had once dominated. Hungary became a landlocked 'Ruritania', a kingless kingdom under an admiral with no navy, defended by 9 brigades confronting 60 Czechoslovak, Romanian and Yugoslav divisions. Territorial revisionism – the return of regions taken by Trianon – was a universally popular cause, focusing Hungary's foreign policy and driving her to seek allies. Under the Rome Protocols of 17 March 1934, Fascist Italy backed Hungary's claims if Hungary supported Italy's ally, Austria, against Nazi Germany. When Germany and Italy became allies on 15 October 1936, Hitler supported Hungarian territorial revisionism, but encouraged hostility between Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, only allowing Hungary to regain regions with majority Magyar populations.

## THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN ARMY

### Pre-war organization

The National Army was redesignated the Royal Hungarian Army on 1 Jan 1922 (it was again renamed on 20 Oct 1944, simply as 'the Army' – *Honvédség* – by Ferenc Szálasi). Troops hid from Military Mission inspectors, transferred to the Royal Gendarmerie, civilian police, Customs Guards (from 1925, Border Guards), Finance Guards and the

*Levente* youth organization, or joined cover organizations – the River Guard (Danube Flotilla), Air Office (Air Force), and Police Recruit School (Armoured Troops). These personnel suffered low morale, undertaking non-military duties with civil titles and uniforms, with military officials in plain clothes.

On 11 May 1922, 7 mixed brigades (1–7), 2 cavalry brigades (1, 2), 1 named horse artillery (1) and 3 named engineer (1–3) battalions were formed. One mixed brigade (*Vegyésdandár*), a skeleton corps, manned each military district (I–VII) with 2 named infantry regiments (1–14), single named bicycle and artillery battalions, and hussar (cavalry), signals, supply and motor transport companies. A cavalry brigade had two named cavalry regiments (1–4). The Allied Mission was withdrawn on 31 March 1927, and the Army discreetly updated its weaponry.

On 5 March 1938 Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi announced the Győr Programme of rearmament, under which the armed forces established a five-year expansion plan with 'Huba I–III' revised orders of battle, commencing 1 Oct 1938. National conscription was introduced in 1939.

### Service and training

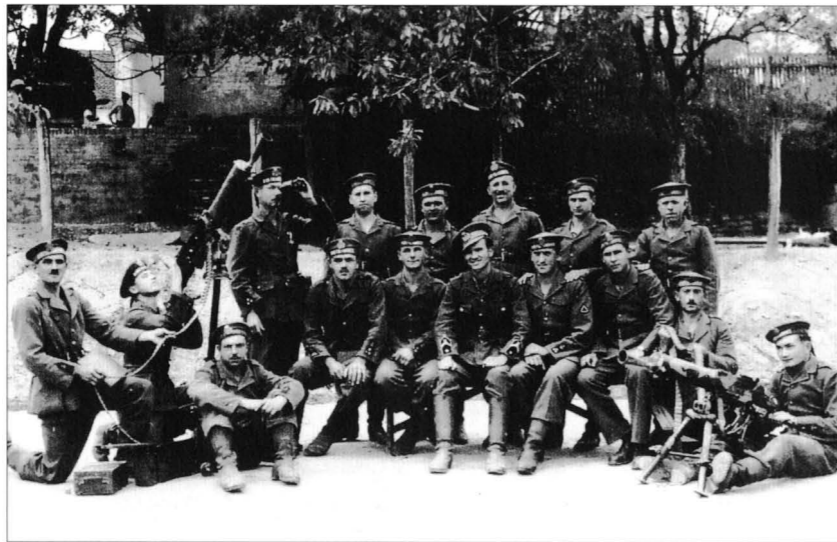
At age 21 (later 19), young men undertook three years' military service, before transferring to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Reserves until age 65 or even 70. Potential career non-commissioned officers progressed through junior NCO (officially 'senior private', to circumvent Trianon limits) and warrant officer ranks, reaching *Alhadnagy* only after 29 years' service. From March 1944, 'commissioned warrant officers' were introduced, and a few WOs were promoted *Zászlóshelyettes* (acting ensign) before the scheme was abandoned on 30 Oct 1944.

From age 10 boys planning an officer's career attended a military secondary school to graduate as ensigns, or a civilian secondary school and then a military academy for a 4-year (in wartime 3 or 2 years) officers' course – at Ludovika for combat branches including Royal Gendarmerie; Bolyai for artillery, engineers, signals and River Forces; and Horthy for Air Force. A cadet (*Akadémikus*) graduated as second lieutenant. Promising lieutenants attended the War Academy or the Technical University of Budapest before becoming general staff or technical artillery staff captains. A high school graduate accepted as a reserve officer candidate was appointed 'volunteer private' (*Karpaszományos Honvéd*), after 2 months lance-corporal, after 5 months corporal and after 12 months cadet warrant officer (*Hadpród örmester*) and later reserve ensign (*Tartalékos zászlós*), with promotion to reserve captain possible.



An officer wearing the M1920 service tunic, with captain's collar patch rank insignia on the stand-and-fall collar, and displaying World War I medal ribbons. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

River Forces personnel pose in their khaki field uniforms, with Schwarzlose machine guns. The warrant officer (seated centre) wears the officers' peaked cap and tunic, the junior NCOs and seamen peakless seamen's caps and enlisted tunics. They all display dark blue cloth cuff patches with Army-style piping and rank insignia, as worn 1925–40; and note the re-enlisted NCO sleeve triangle worn by the leading seaman to the right of the warrant officer. On 1 July 1944 most personnel adopted Army ranks. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



Well-connected and well-educated individuals also entered as volunteers, a practice abolished by the Szálasi government. Ethnic Germans were over-represented in the officer corps, many learning Hungarian and adopting Hungarian names in the 1930s to safeguard their careers.

The rank of colonel-general (*Vezérezredes*) was reintroduced on 29 July 1941 to replace general, giving Hungarian commanders equivalent status to their German counterparts. Field-marshal (*Tábornagy*) was a wartime rank for successful field commanders, but none were promoted during World War II.

### WARTIME ORGANIZATION

Horthy, and from 4 Nov 1944 Ferenc Szálasi, was Supreme Commander (*Legfelsőbb Hadúr*). The defence minister (*Honvédelmi miniszter*), an inactive general officer, controlled the Army under the commander-in-chief, replaced from 1 March 1940 by the chief of general staff, reporting directly to Horthy. Wartime chiefs of staff were: 29 Sept 1938 Gen/ColGen Henrik Werth; 6 Sept 1941 ColGen Ferenc Szombathelyi; 19 Apr 1944 ColGen János Vörös; and 16 Oct 1944–9 May 1945 ColGen Károly Beregfy. General staff officers were officially reappointed from 1930 and technical artillery staff officers from 1931. There were three ceremonial guards: the Crown Guard (for the Holy Crown of St Stephen, representing the monarchy), Parliamentary Guard and Regent's Bodyguard.

### Formations

Hungary formed three field armies (1st–3rd) on 1 March 1940. Each army (*Hadsereg*) was commanded by a general or colonel-general, each with three corps; a separate Carpathian Group was also formed. There were 12 corps, each corps (*Hadtest*) under a lieutenant-general. Seven corps and corps districts (I–VII) were formed on 1 Oct 1938 from the mixed brigades, VIII in Carpatho-Ukraine 15 Sept 1939, and IX in northern Transylvania 4 Sept 1940. A corps comprised HQ battalions and 3 brigades. The Mobile Corps (*Gyorshadtest*) was formed 1 March 1940 with 2 cavalry and 2 motorized brigades; the AA Corps in spring 1941;

and Hungarian Occupation Group (*Magyar Megszálló Csoport*) on 6 Oct 1941.

Of the 45 brigades raised, 27 were infantry: 1–24 formed 23 Jan 1939, and 25–27 on 15 Sept 1940; 3 Bde was disbanded 1 Aug 1941, and 5 brigades (2, 5, 8, 21 & 24) transferred to HOG on 1 Oct 1941 as 102–124 Brigades. A 9,500-man brigade (*dandár*), under a major-general, had HQ companies, supply services, 1× 2-battalion field artillery regiment (7 batteries), and 2 infantry regiments. An infantry regiment (*ezred*), under a colonel, had HQ platoons, 1 MG company and 3 infantry battalions; a battalion (*zászlóalj*), under a lieutenant-colonel, major or later a regular captain, had HQ platoons, 1 MG and 3 rifle companies. A company (*század*), under a captain or lieutenant, had 4 rifle platoons; a platoon (*szakasz*), under a second lieutenant, ensign or cadet WO assisted by a sergeant, had 1 light mortar and 3 rifle sections; each 11-man section (*raj*) was led by a corporal.

The Mobile Troops raised 5 brigades: 1 & 2 Cavalry Bdes formed 1 Oct 1938, and 1 Cavalry Replacement Bde on 1 May 1944; 1 & 2 Mot Bdes on 1 Oct 1938. A cavalry brigade had HQ companies; horse artillery, motorized artillery and 2 bicycle battalions; 1× 4-company (motorized infantry, light tank, tankette and armoured car) armoured reconnaissance battalion; and 2× 2-battalion hussar regiments (each with 1 MG and 3 mounted companies). A 9,000-man motorized brigade substituted 1× 3-battalion motorized infantry regiment for the hussar regiment.

1 & 2 Mountain Brigades were formed 15 Sept 1939 and 10 Sept 1943 respectively, 1 & 2 Mountain Replacement Bdes on 1 May 1944. A 4,040-man brigade had HQ companies, 1 mountain artillery and 4 (1941, 5) mountain infantry battalions. The Customs (1932, Border) Guard, organized into 7 districts (1–7), contained infantry companies, many transferring to the Army in 1938. 1–8 Border Guard Bdes were formed 23 Jan 1939, and disbanded 15 Nov 1940 to provide more Army replacements; 8 Bde was re-formed and 9 Bde (March 1945, division) formed 6 June 1941.

In January 1942 the Germans demanded more Hungarian forces for the Soviet campaign, so Horthy redesignated the 26 infantry brigades (1, 4, 6, 7, 9–20, 22, 23, 25–27, 102, 105, 108, 121 & 124) as 'light' (under-strength) divisions (201 LD was formed 5 Nov 1942). Each light division (*Könnyű Hadosztály*) retained the brigade organization but lost one artillery battery, forcing brigades to fulfil divisional missions without adequate manpower or weapons. The five 100-series infantry brigades (from Feb 1942, light divisions) assigned to south-western Ukraine in Oct 1941 as security units had no organic artillery; they reverted on 1 May 1943 to their brigade numbers (2, 5, 8, 21 & 24).



Reserve Lt István Horthy, appointed Deputy Regent in 1942; he wears the Air Force officer's dark blue dress uniform with black velvet shoulder straps, and gold rank insignia and piping. The pilot's qualification breast-badge was a gold wire crowned 'Turul' hawk on black cloth. Anti-German, pro-British and pro-American (he had worked in a Ford factory in Detroit before the war), István Horthy was a great loss to Hungary when he was killed on the Don front. (László Pál Szabó Collection)

1 Armoured Field Division formed 24 March 1942 for the Eastern Front. It comprised armoured reconnaissance, signals, engineers, 2 artillery and 2 AA battalions, supply services, 1x 3-battalion motorized infantry regiment and 1x 2-battalion tank regiment. The Mobile Corps was reorganized 1 Oct 1942 into I Armoured Corps with three divisions. 1 & 2 Armoured Divs (*Páncélos Hadosztály*) had fully motorized units: armoured reconnaissance, AA, self-propelled AA, engineers, signals and 3 artillery battalions, supply services, 1x 3-battalion infantry regiment and 1x 3-battalion tank regiment (3 companies per battalion). 1 Cavalry Div (*Lovas Hadosztály*), redesignated 1 Hussar Div (*Huszár Hadosztály*) in Sept 1944, had motorized HQ companies, armoured reconnaissance, horse artillery, artillery, AA and bicycle battalions, 1x 4-company tank battalion and 3x 2-battalion cavalry regiments.

On 10 August 1943 the Szabolcs Plan superseded Huba-III. The 27 light divisions were consolidated into 15 infantry and reserve divisions, usually with 2 divisions each in II–IX Corps (I Corps lost its divisions). 12 LDs (1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 26 & 201) were disbanded, and 9 IDs (6, 7, 10, 13, 16, 20, 24, 25 & 27) and 6 RDs (5, 9, 12, 18, 19 & 23) were raised.

A 16,000-strong infantry division (*Gyaloghadosztály*) had HQ companies; engineer, signal, labour and 4 artillery battalions, 1 reconnaissance battalion (bicycle and cavalry companies, 1 armoured car platoon), supply services and 3 infantry regiments; in March 1944 field replacement and 3-battery assault-gun battalions were added. A reserve division (*Tartalékos Hadosztály*) had only 3 artillery and no labour battalions. On 1 May 1944 eight *Szittyá* (Scythian) divisions (2–9) formed, one per corps, as field replacement units training recruits in the field. A field replacement division (*Tábori Póthadosztály*) had 3 infantry regiments, an artillery battalion and services; all had disbanded by March 1945. On 12 October 1944 the élite Szent László Inf Div was established, with 3x 2-battalion regiments: Parachute Assault (paratroopers), Grenadier (Royal Bodyguard & Gendarmerie), and Air Force Rifle (AF ground personnel) – redesignated April 1945 Fortress Regt (former Fortress troops).

#### Units and services

Line infantry included 56 infantry regiments (1–28, 31–36 & 101) and 1 parachute regiment; also 10 mountain (1–4, 10–13, 25 & 33) and 27 Székely border guard (1–27) battalions, some more than 1,500 strong. The 8 border rifle groups (65–72) had 31 battalions: 13 border (16, 20, 22, 23, 31, 34, 52–55, 57, 58 & 66), 9 mountain-equipped border (10–13, 21, 24–26, 32), and 9 customs police (59–65).

Mobile troops included 4 hussar regiments (1–4); 11 tank battalions and 2 companies within 3 tank regiments (1, 3 & 30); 16 cyclist battalions (II–IX, 9–16), later reassigned as tank battalions or reconnaissance battalions; and 6 motorized infantry battalions (1–6). Artillery regiments, engineer and signals battalions and supply services normally carried the corps or divisional number; the 8 assault artillery battalions (1–8) formed during 1943 were given infantry divisional numbers in Sept 1944. Military police duties were performed by gendarmes in the Field Gendarmerie (*Tábori csendőrség*) and Army personnel with Gendarmerie cadres in Provost Marshal (*Csapatcsendőrség*) units.

Supply services included motorized and horse-drawn transport columns, bakery and catering units, field hospitals and a labour battalion, from 1943 also medical and veterinary companies. Unarmed labour battalions were formed 1 July 1939 for construction work and dangerous duties such as mine-clearing; Army officers and NCOs led military labour companies of unreliable Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs, and special (or auxiliary) labour companies of politically unreliable Hungarians and Jews. Uniformed military officials, ranking from colonel to ensign, undertook duties not requiring military personnel.

#### River Forces

The Hungarian Naval Forces (*Hadihajós csapat*) was established in Aug 1919 under the Defence Ministry, to patrol the River Danube. The Royal Hungarian River Guard (*M. Kir. Folyamőrség*) was formed 1 March 1921 as a nominally civilian force under the Interior Ministry; expanded after March 1927, it comprised about 1,700 personnel between May 1930 and May 1945. On 1 Nov 1938 the River Guard was reorganized under the Defence Ministry as the Royal Hungarian Army River Forces (*M. Kir. Honvéd Folyami Erők*), commanded by Capt Guidó Tasnády; from 1 April 1942, Vice-Adm (1 July 1944, LtGen) Kálmán Hardy; and 16 Oct 1944, MajGen Ödön Trunkwalter. From 1 April 1940 it comprised the Patrol Boat Regt (Budapest) in I & II Groups, and a River Security Regt with armoured patrol boats in 1–3 Bns at Újvidék (Novi Sad). In April 1941 the River Forces occupied Bácska, and after April 1944 its minesweepers supported the German Kriegsmarine in clearing air-dropped mines.

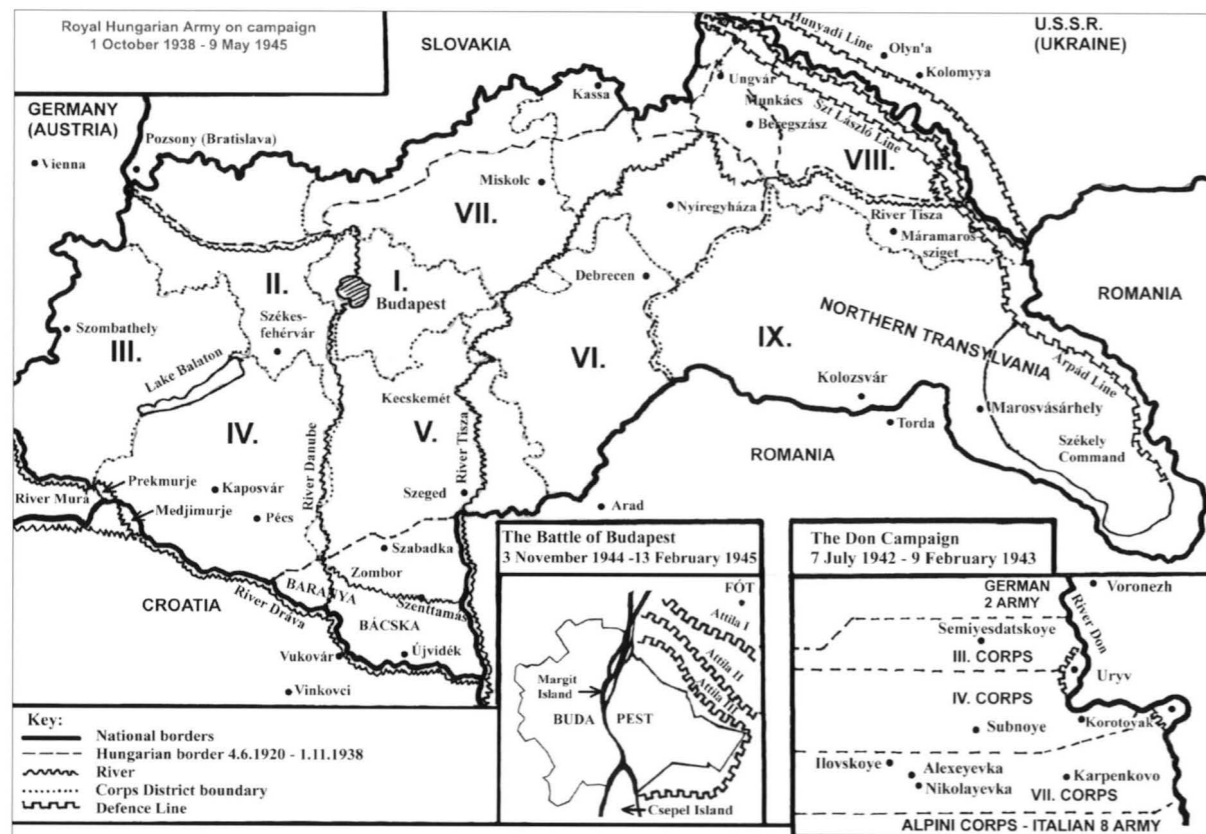
#### Air Force

From Jan 1920 Transport Ministry Department II, and from 10 April 1924 the Air Office (*Légügyi Hivatal*), planned an air force, secretly forming the Royal Hungarian Army Air Force (*M. Kir. Honvéd Légierő*) on 6 Dec 1928; this was publicly revealed 1 Jan 1938. Insufficiently qualified Air Force generals meant a high turnover of commanding officers, some from the Army: 1 Nov 1938, Col László Háry; 24 Dec 1940, LtGen Waldemár Kenese; 1 Aug 1941, LtGen Béla Rákosi; 1 Aug 1943, Army LtGen Sándor Magyarosy; 1 July 1944, MajGen István Bánfalvy; Oct 1944, Army LtGen Emil Justy; 1 Feb 1945, Army ColGen Kálmán Ternegg.

In June 1940 the 5,734-strong Air Force comprised 1 & 2 Fighter, 3 & 4 Bomber and 5 Tactical Reconnaissance Regts and 1 Independent Strategic Reconnaissance Group – 10 groups with 32 squadrons. 1 Air Bde, formed 6 June 1940, fought in Yugoslavia in April 1941, when 1 Parachute Bn made its first combat drop. The brigade also supported



A warrant officer class II (left) in Army field uniform patrols with a probationary gendarme (ranking as corporal) in Royal Gendarmerie service uniform with plumed black hat, whistle and marksman's lanyard – see Plate H3. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



Map by László Pál Szabó

the Carpathian Group 27 June–9 July 1941, and the Mobile Corps 13 July–26 November 1941.

1 Air Group was formed 15 March 1942, redesignated 2 Air Bde on 15 Oct 1942. It suffered significant combat losses supporting 2nd Army in Russia 16 June 1942–1 March 1943; redesignated 102 Air Bde on 1 March 1943, it returned to Hungary in Sept 1944. There were by then over 25,000 men and 29 combat squadrons in Home Defence Command, 101 Air Bde and 102 Air Bde (Oct 1944, Air Div), intercepting US Army Air Force and Royal Air Force bombers from April 1944.

#### Other services

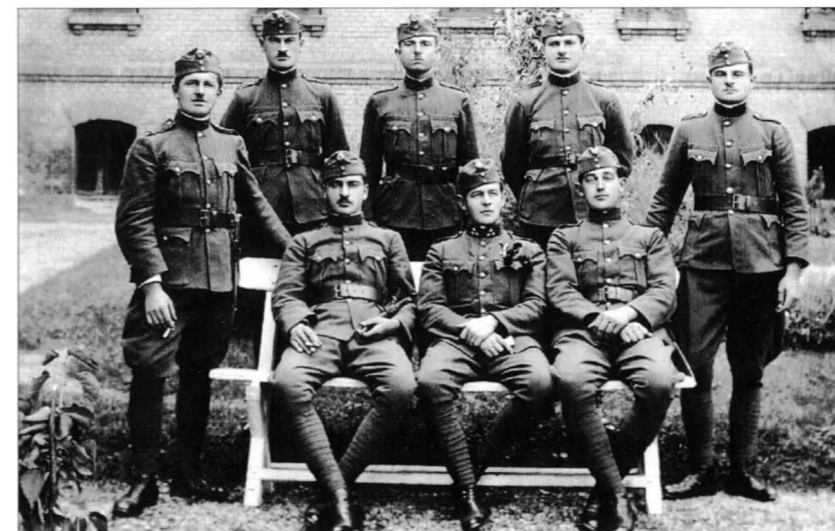
The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie (*M. Kir. Csendőrség*) was a Defence Ministry force, with 22,000 gendarmes in July 1944. The inspector-generals were: 1 Aug 1939, LtGen Márton Nemerey; 15 Nov 1942, LtGen Gábor Faragho; 18 Oct 1944, MajGen Temesvári. In 1920 the Gendarmerie was organized into districts, corresponding to Army corps districts: I–IX by April 1941, plus X (Székely Command). A district was a colonel's command, with 2–5 named battalions, each covering 1–3 counties; a battalion (lieutenant-colonel or major) had 5–12 companies, a company (captain) platoons controlling several guard posts. Gendarmerie and Police commands were combined from 1 July 1944, commanded by LtGen Faragho from 16 Oct 1944 and LtGen József Finta from 6 Jan 1945. The Gendarmerie performed rural police duties efficiently, and anti-partisan duties in Yugoslavia ruthlessly; from Aug 1944 they fought in improvised security units alongside Police and Army personnel.

The Royal Hungarian State Police (*M. Kir. Államrendőrség*), an Interior Ministry force, wore dark blue uniforms with pointed black leather helmets and pre-1918 rank insignia for civilian rank titles. In Aug 1940 there were 12,728 policemen, increasing with Police militarization, organized in 10 districts with 84 sub-districts. Army rank titles were adopted 2 May 1944, with MajGen Pál Hódosy as commissioner. Platoons of the 3,400-strong Royal Hungarian Finance Guards (*M. Kir. Pénzügyőrség*) manned customs posts. The *Levente* youth organization was formed in 1920, with Army officers giving weekly premilitary training to boys aged 12–18 (from 1941, also girls), wearing light brown uniforms. In 1942 there were about 1,300,000 members, and in 1944 some formed assault companies to fight Soviet forces.

## RECOVERING THE LOST TERRITORIES

### Southern Slovakia and southern Ruthenia, 1938

Hungary regarded Hitler's dispute with Czechoslovakia as an opportunity to promote Hungarian territorial revisionism, and in late Sept 1938 she mobilized 200,000–350,000 troops on her northern border, anticipating a German invasion of Czechoslovakia. Following the Munich agreement German troops occupied Sudetenland on 5 Oct, and on 9 Oct Hungary began negotiations with Czechoslovakia over Magyar-populated regions of southern Slovakia and southern Ruthenia. Meanwhile, on 5 Oct, Hungary sent 500 members of the 9,000-man 'Ragged Guard' (*Rongyosgárda*) – an unofficial force formed 23 Aug 1921 – into Slovakia and Ruthenia to apply further pressure. On 11 Oct poorly trained Guard companies were defeated by Czechoslovak troops at Berehovo (Hungarian, Beregszász) and Borzsava (Borszova) in Ruthenia with 350 losses, and talks deadlocked on 29 October. However, on 2 Nov, German and Italian diplomats arbitrating in Vienna granted Hungary 4,605 square miles of southern Slovakia and southern Ruthenia with 869,230 inhabitants (87 per cent Magyar) – the '1st Vienna Award'. Hungarian I, II, VI & VII Mixed Bdes peacefully annexed the region 5–10 Nov 1938.



An infantry section and their sergeant (seated, centre), wearing M1926 tunics with grass-green collar patches with brown piping, and grass-green shoulder straps. The M1920 brown trousers and puttees were not generally replaced by the M1925 tapered-calf trousers until the mid 1930s. The sergeant wears a gold braid marksman's lanyard on his left shoulder, with branch-coloured pompons; his Class III medal marks 6 years' service. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

RIGHT Officers of 101 Anti-Aircraft Battalion parade in M1935 helmets, and service overcoats with M1941 cuff rank insignia; they carry M1904 cavalry swords. The mounted troops' trumpet has a unit banner and battle-honour streamers. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



BELOW A lieutenant in the M1926 mounted troops' service tunic, carrying a cavalry sword. He wears the Austro-Hungarian Order of Military Merit 3rd Class with Swords, Small Silver and Bronze Bravery Medals for enlisted men, and the Bulgarian War Commemorative Medal, but no peacetime Hungarian service medal – this suggests that he is a reserve officer. Note the paired shoulder-cords of the mounted branches. (Tibor Horváth, RegRegMilHun Collection)



### Northern Ruthenia and eastern Slovakia, 1939

Ruthenia (Sub-Carpathian Rus), largely populated by Ruthenians (or Rusyns) related to Ukrainians, was situated in eastern Czechoslovakia. On 30 Sept 1938 it declared itself a Ukrainian autonomous region, in October formed the 2,000-strong Carpathian Guard (*Karpatska Sich*) defence force, and on 1 Jan 1939 was renamed the Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine.

Angered by the loss of southern Carpatho-Ukraine under the Ist Vienna Award, *Sich* troops on 6 Jan 1939 attacked Munkács (now Mukacheve, Ukraine), defended by Hungarian Ragged Guards.

Hitler encouraged Slovakia to declare independence from Czechoslovakia on 14 March. Hungary demanded that the Czechoslovak Army evacuate Carpatho-Ukraine, and Czechoslovak border units attacking Munkács were repelled by Hungarian border guards. On 15 March the Carpathian Group (VIII & Mobile Corps) attacked Czechoslovak and Carpathian *Sich* forces in Carpatho-Ukraine, reaching the Polish border on 18 March; this ended Carpatho-Ukraine's brief independence, and gave Hungary a defensible frontier on the northern Carpathian Mountains.

On 17 March Hungary demanded that Slovakia cede a 7-mile border strip with Ruthenia. Under German pressure the Slovak government assented, but on 23 March the Carpathian Group occupied the area in three hours. A Slovak Army counterattack failed, but Slovak and Hungarian aircraft fought until the German-brokered ceasefire of 25 March, which granted Hungary 400 square miles of territory with 69,620 inhabitants (only 6 per cent Magyar).



Bicycle troops cycle through a town, cheered by the townspeople. The leader, a cadet warrant officer identified by gold tunic cuff chevrons, wears breeches and high boots, belt and holster; his men, from a signals section, carry cable drums mounted on their bicycles. Many bicycle units, considered élite light infantry, later converted to tanks. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

### Northern Transylvania, 1940

When Germany attacked Poland on 1 Sept 1939, Hungary was sympathetic to Poland, and Horthy allowed Polish refugees to transit Hungary en route to France.

The Trianon treaty had awarded Transylvania, a region of 21,000 square miles with 5.5 million inhabitants in 1930 (58 per cent Romanian, 27 per cent Magyar and Székely and 10 per cent German) to Romania. Romania and Hungary each considered the region the historic heart of their culture. On 16 Aug 1940 Hungary began negotiating for territorial revision. The talks became deadlocked, and on 30 Aug German and Italian diplomats granted Hungary northern Transylvania – 16,790 square miles, with 2,485,700 inhabitants (47 per cent Romanian, 46 per cent Magyar and Székely). Hungary had secured half Transylvania and a defensible frontier on the south-east Carpathians – but also a border with south Transylvania vulnerable to Romanian attack.



Although of poor quality, this photo is interesting in showing two mounted cavalry officers, in light green linen summer tunics with brown cloth riding breeches, talking to two infantry junior NCOs in summer tunics with summer tapered-calf trousers. They are on manoeuvres in Hungary – enlisted men could not wear summer tunics at the front. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

### Northern Yugoslavia, 1941

Hungary hoped to regain northern Yugoslav border areas by peaceful negotiation, and Count Pál Teleki, the prime minister, had signed a 'Treaty of Eternal Friendship' with Belgrade. However, on 27 March 1941 Horthy agreed to join the German attack on Yugoslavia; overwhelmed with shame, Count Teleki committed suicide on 3 April (earning Winston Churchill's lasting admiration).

Axis forces attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April. On the 11th, Hungarian 3rd Army occupied the Bácska and Baranya regions (now Vojvodina), with Mobile, IV & V Corps and I & VII in reserve. Seven brigades (10–12 & 14 IB; 1 & 2 MTB; 2 CB) were committed; 11 IB attacked Baranya, while the others had occupied Bácska by 14 April. On 12 April, 1 Parachute Bn captured canal bridges at Vrbas (Hungarian, Verbasz) and Srbobran (Szenttamás); meanwhile Sombor (Zombor) was occupied against stiff Yugoslav Chetnik guerrilla resistance, and Subotica (Szabadka) was taken. On 13 April, 1 MTB & 2 MTB occupied Novi Sad (Újvidék), going on to take Vinkovci and Vukovar (Croatia) on 18 April and Valjevo (Serbia) on 19 April. Other Hungarian forces occupied Prekmurje (Slovenia) and Medjmurje (Croatia).

Hungary gained 11,417 square miles of Yugoslavia with 1,025,508 inhabitants (37 per cent Magyar). From 4 to 24 Jan 1942, in the 'Újvidék Massacre', 15 LD and Royal Gendarmerie units killed 3,808 civilians, mainly Serbs and Jews, during an anti-Chetnik operation. Lieutenant-General Ferenc Feketealmay-Czeydner (V Corps), Col József Grassy (15 LD) and Col László Déak (9 IR) were prosecuted, but escaped on 15 Jan 1944 to Germany, where they were rewarded with senior Waffen-SS rank.

### Order of Battle (1) 1 March 1940–16 February 1942

**GHQ** (Budapest): Mobile & AA Corps, HOG, 101 Artillery Brigade (101–104, 150–154 MTHABn)

**1 Army** (Kolozsvár/ Cluj): I, II, IV–VI, VIII & IX Corps\*

**2 Army** (Budapest): I, II & V–VII Corps\*

**3 Army** (Pécs): I, III–V, VII & Mobile Corps\*

**Carpathian Group** (Kassa/ Kosice): Mobile & VIII Corps\*

**I Corps** (Budapest): 1 IB – 1 & 31 IR, 1 AR; 2 (1.10.1941>, 102) IB – 2 & 32 IR, 2 AR; 3 IB – 15 & 45 IR, 3 AR

**II Corps** (Székesfehérvár): 4 IB – 3 & 33 IR, 4 AR; 5 (1.10.1941>, 105) IB – 16 & 46 IR, 5 AR; 6 IB – 22 & 52 IR, 6 AR

**III Corps** (Szombathely): 7 IB – 4 & 34 IR, 7 AR; 8 (1.10.1941>, 108) IB – 5 & 35 IR, 8 AR; 9 IB – 17 & 47 IR, 9 AR

**IV Corps** (Pécs): 10 IB – 6 & 36 IR, 10 AR; 11 IB – 8 & 38 IR, 11 AR; 12 IB – 18 & 48 IR, 12 AR

**V Corps** (Szeged): 13 IB – 7 & 37 IR, 13 AR; 14 IB – 16 & 46 IR, 14 AR; 15 IB – 20 & 50 IR, 15 AR; 16 BGBn

**VI Corps** (Debrecen): 16 IB – 10 & 40 IR, 16 AR; 17 IB – 11 & 41 IR, 17 AR; 18 IB – 19 & 49 IR, 18 AR; 66 BGR – 20 & 31 BBn, 66 ABn

**VII Corps** (Miskolc): 19 IB – 13 & 43 IR, 19 AR; 20 IB – 14 & 44 IR, 20 AR; 21 (1.10.1941>, 121) IB – 23 & 53 IR, 21 AR

**VIII Corps** (Kassa/ Kosice): 22 IB – 12 & 42 IR, 22 AR; 23 IB – 21 & 51 IR, 23 AR; 24 (1.10.1941>, 124) IB – 24 & 54 IR, 24 AR;

8 BGB – 10–13 & 25 BBn; 2/2, 1/3, 1/10, 2/10, 3/10, 4/11, 1/25, 2/25 & 1/26 FIC

**IX Corps** (Kolozsvár/ Cluj): 25 IB – 25 & 55 IR, 25 AR; 26 IB – 26 & 56 IR, 26 AR; 27 IB – 27 & 57 IR, 27 AR; 1 MB – 1–4 MBn, 1 MABn;

9 BGB – 21, 24, 26 & 32 BGBn, 1/21, 2/21, 3/21, 4/21, 1/32, 2/32, 3/32 & 1/59 FIC

**AA Corps** (Budapest): 1 AAB – 104, 105 & 204 AABn; 2 AAB – 101, 102, 201, 202 & 206 AABn; 3 AAB – 103, 203 & 205 AABn

**Mobile Corps** (1.3.1940 > 30.9.1942): 1 MTB (> 6.1942) – 1–3 MTBn, 1 AMRBn, 9 TBn, 10 BiBn & 1 MTABn; 2 MTB (> 1.12.1941)

– 6 MTBn, 2 AMRBn, 11 TBn, 12 BiBn & 2 MTABn; 1 CB (> 30.9.1942) – 3 & 4 CR, 3 AMRBn, 13 & 14 BiBn, 3 MTABn, 1 HABn; 2 CB

(> 30.9.1942) – 1 & 2 CR, 4 AMRBn, 15 & 16 BiBn, 4 MTABn, 2 HABn

**Hungarian Occupation Group** (6.10.1941 > 9.2.1942): 102, 105, 108, 121 & 124 IB

(\* = corps allocations to armies varied over time, as specified in the narrative text)



FAR LEFT Two infantry privates wearing M1935 steel helmets and faded light green linen summer tunics and trousers with integral anklets over ankle-boots. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

LEFT A lance-corporal (who would probably be wearing volunteer cuff chevrons) in walking-out dress. He wears a field cap with cockade and topán side-patch; and a summer tunic with field collar patches and a marksman's lanyard with branch-colour pompons. His bayonet probably has a decorative nickel-plated hilt. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

## THE INVASION OF THE USSR

### The advance into Ukraine, 1941

On 22 June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The Hungarian chief of staff LtGen Werth supported Germany, and Horthy was an avowed anti-communist, but the Royal Hungarian Army was not prepared for hostilities. On 26 June three bombers with Soviet markings attacked Kassa (now Kosice, Slovakia) and Munkács (Mukacevo, Ukraine), causing 258 civilian casualties and giving Horthy an excuse to declare war on the Soviet Union; whether the aircraft were actually Soviet is still disputed.

On 22 June the 44,444-strong Carpathian Group comprised VIII Corps units (including 1 MB and 8 BRB) and the Mobile Corps (less 2 CB). The Group invaded Ukrainian Galicia on 29 June, and the Mobile Corps reached the River Dniester on 7 July. That day the Carpathian Group was disbanded, leaving VIII Corps in Ukraine on occupation duties. The Mobile Corps (MajGen Béla Miklós) advanced with German 17th Army, later 1st Panzer Group, against the Red Army's South-Western Front. The hussars and motorized battalions struggled along rough muddy roads, taking Kamenets-Podol'skiy on 10 July, Rogozna on the 21st, Bersad on the 28th, Golovaniv'sk (now Holovaniv'sk) on 6 Aug and Nikolayev on the 16th. Turning north-eastwards, the Corps then defended 120 miles of the Dnieper bridgehead from Nikopol to Dnepropetrovsk, 30 Aug–10 October. On 6 Sept, ColGen Szombathelyi replaced ColGen Werth as chief of staff, and immediately lobbied for the recall of the Mobile Corps. The exhausted 1 CB reached Hungary on 6 Oct; 1 MTB and 2 MTB advanced across the Dnieper on 12 Oct and destroyed Soviet units near Izium on the 21st, before crossing the River Donets. On 10 Nov 1941 the Mobile Corps returned to Hungary, having marched 1,100 miles, suffered 2,992 casualties and lost most of its armour.

### The German summer offensive, 1942

To Horthy's dismay, Britain declared war on Hungary on 7 Dec 1941; Hungary declared war on the USA on the 13th, an action reciprocated only on 2 June 1942. Horthy wanted the Army in Hungary to defend



BELOW A lieutenant wearing the black dress kepi and the service overcoat. He displays rank insignia as introduced June 1940, but has not changed his brown velvet collar facing to cloth as ordered in 1939. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



A lieutenant wearing the unofficial officers' brown leather overcoat without insignia. Note the double-clawed officers' belt, and M1935 holster for a M1929 or M1937 pistol. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

Northern Transylvania from Romania; but on 17 Jan 1942, Romania committed its 3rd and 4th Armies to the German summer offensive towards the Caucasus, forcing Horthy to agree five days later to send Hungarian troops to guard the German northern flank on the Middle Don river, north of the Italian 8th and Romanian 4th Armies.

The Hungarian 2nd Army (ColGen Gusztáv Jány) comprised 9 light divisions: III Corps (6, 7 & 9), IV Corps (10, 12, 13, later 20) and VII Corps (19, 20 & 23), plus 1 AMFD. Three light divisions were drawn from II, V & VIII Corps to share the burden, leaving I, VI & IX Corps to confront Romania; similarly, each light division drew three battalions from sister divisions in Hungary. A light division was approximately half the size of a German infantry division, with 55 per cent of its manpower, 56 per cent its machine guns, 33 per cent its artillery, no anti-tank guns, and the ranks filled with many raw recruits and over-age reservists.

The 209,000-strong 2nd Army deployed to German Army Group B at Kursk in southern Russia from 11

April 1942. III Corps fought in Operation 'Blue I' on 28 June, advancing 120 miles via Stary Oskol to reach the Don on 7 July, followed on 27 July by the rest of 2nd Army. The Hungarians manned a 130-mile sector south-west of Voronezh, north of Italian 8th Army's *Alpini* Mountain Corps and south of German 2nd Army. III Corps (HQ Semiyesdatskoye) was in the north, then IV Corps (HQ Subnoye) and VII Corps (HQ Karpenkovo); 2nd Army HQ was at Alexeyevka, 2 Air Bde HQ at nearby Ilovskoye. The Army Group B strategic reserve comprised Korps Cramer (MajGen Cramer) at Nikolayevka with 1 AMFD, German 26 ID and 168 ID and 700 Panzer Unit (4 companies).

Later in July 1942 Soviet forces counter-attacked across the Don, establishing dangerous bridgeheads at Uryv, Korotoyak and Stutye. III Corps and 1 AMFD made three unsuccessful attacks on the Uryv bridgehead: 27 July–7 Aug, 10 Aug, and 9–13 September. IV Corps and 1 AMFD failed to eliminate the Korotoyak bridgehead during 7–10 Aug but succeeded between 12 Aug and 3 Sept, while VII Corps contained the Stutye bridgehead. 2nd Army had suffered 30,100 casualties by September (including Horthy's eldest son István, a 37-year old reserve lieutenant in 1/1 Fighter Sqn, killed when his *Héja* fighter crashed at Ilovskoye).

### Battle of the Don, 1942–43

Military activity was confined to local raiding from 13 Sept 1942 to 12 Jan 1943, but on 19 Nov the Soviet forces commenced their strategic offensive. They surrounded German 6th Army at Stalingrad on 22 Nov, destroying Italian 8th Army (except the *Alpini*) by 21 Dec and Romanian 4th Army by 31 December.

On 12 Jan 1943 the Red Army's Voronezh Front attacked Hungarian 2nd Army. Soviet 40th Army broke out from Uryv towards Alexeyevka, smashing into IV Corps, which – with small arms and its few AT weapons jamming in temperatures of –45°C – slowly retreated through fog and snow to the Gyeveica river. Korps Cramer, with 1 AMFD, was belatedly committed on 16 Jan after 40th Army had breached the Hungarian line, forcing IV Corps back towards Ostrogorsk. 40th Army reached Ilovskoye, defended 15–20 Jan by 2 Air Bde ground crews reinforced by 1 AMFD. 1 AMFD defended Alexeyevka with just 12 tanks on 19–21 Jan, before retreating to defend Noviy Oskol with IV Corps from 25 to 29 January; the division then fell back to a Hungarian-German defensive line in the Oskol Valley, 100 miles from the Don.

On 14 Jan, Soviet 18 Rifle Corps from Stutye attacked VII Corps, which retreated on the 16th with the outflanked *Alpini* past Alexeyevka, reaching Budyenny on 19 Jan, Noviy Oskol on the 25th, and then the Oskol Valley. III Corps, cut off from 2nd Army, defended German 2nd Army's flank from 15 to 26 Jan until, short of ammunition, it retreated north-westwards

### Order of Battle (2) 17 February 1942–9 May 1945

**GHQ** (1.3.1940) (Budapest): AA Corps & 101 AB. 201 LD (5.11.1942 > 26.5.1944) – 54 & 251 IR; 1 CD (1.10.1942 > 9.1944; 1 HD > 4.1945) – 2, 3 & 4 CR, 1 CTBn & 1–3 CABn; *Szent László Div* (12.10.1944) – PR, GR, & AFRR (4.1945, FR); 1, 9 & 76 ABn

**1 Army** (Budapest): II, III, V–VII & IX Corps; German corps XXXIX Mtn, XI & XVII

**2 Army** (Budapest) (> 13.11.1944): II–IV, VII–IX Corps; HOG (East) & HOG (West); 101 & 102 TCo. 1 AMFD (> 1.4.1943) – 30 TR (30/I & 30/II TBn), 1 AMRBn; 1 MTR; 1 & 5 MTABn; German corps XXIV Panzer, VII & Cramer

**3 Army** (Budapest): II, IV, VII & VIII Corps; German corps III & LVII Panzer, LXXII

**I Corps:** 1 LD (> 10.5.1944) – 33 & 46 IR; 102 LD (disb 1.7.1943) – 40 & 53 IR

**II Corps:** 4 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 3 & 33 IR, 4 AR; 105 LD/ 5 LD (1.6.1943)/ 5 RD (1.10.1943) – 33, 46 & 52 IR; 34, 35 & 82 ABn

**III Corps:** 7 LD/ 7 ID (10.8.1943; disb 26.8.1944) – 4, 5 & 17 IR; 7–9 & 73 ABn; 108 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 5 & 34 IR, 7 AR; 9 LD/ 9 RD (10.8.1943; disb 15.4.1944) – 34, 35 & 47 IR; 37, 38 & 83 ABn

**IV Corps:** 10 LD/ 10 ID (10.8.1943; disb 12.2.1945) – 6, 8 & 18 IR; 10–12 & 74 ABn; 11 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 8 & 38 IR, 11 AR; 12 LD/ 12 RD (10.8.1943)/ 12 ID (23.10.1944; disb 12.2.1945) – 36, 38 & 48 IR; 40, 41 & 84 ABn

**V Corps:** 13 LD/ 13 ID (10.8.1943; disb 17.11.1944) – 7, 9 & 20 IR; 13–15 & 76 ABn; 14 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 9 & 39 IR, 14 AR; 15 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 20 & 50 IR, 15 AR

**VI Corps:** 16 LD/ 16 ID (10.8.1943; disb 5.1944) – 10, 11 & 19 IR; 16–18 & VI ABn; 17 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 11 & 41 IR, 17 AR; 18 LD/ 18 RD (10.8.1943; disb 1.8.1944) – 40, 41 & 49 IR; 46, 47 & 86 ABn

**VII Corps:** 19 LD/ 19 RD (10.8.1943; disb 8.1944) – 25, 35 & 53 IR; 49, 50 & 87 ABn; 20 LD/ 20 ID (10.8.1943) – 13, 14 & 23 IR; 19–21, 77 & V ABn; 21 LD (disb 15.5.1944) – 23 & 53 IR, 21 AR

**VIII Corps:** 22 LD (disb 10.8.1943) – 12 & 42 IR, 22 AR; 23 LD/ 23 RD (10.8.1943; disb 6.5.1945) – 42, 51 & 54 IR; 52, 53 & 88 ABn; 124 LD/ 24 ID (10.8.1943) – 12, 21 & 24 IR; 22–24 & VIII ABn; 2 MB (10.8.1943) – 1, 10, 11, 13 & 25 MBn; 3 & 4 MABn

**IX Corps:** 25 LD/ 25 ID (10.8.1943; disb 4.1945) – 1, 25 & 26 IR; 2, 25, 26 & IX ABn; 26 LD (disb 1.3.1944) – 26 & 56 IR, 26 AR; 27 LD/ 27 Székely Div (1.10.1944) – 27 & 57 IR, 27 AR; 1 MB – 2–4, 12 & 33 MBn; 1 & 2 MABn

**I Armoured Corps** (Szolnok, later Budapest): 1 AMD (disb 12.2.1945) – 1 TR (1/I–1/III TBn), 1 MTR, 1 AMRBn, 1 & 5 MTABn; 2 AMD (1.10.1941 > 4.1945) – 3 TR (3/I–3/III TBn), 1 AMRBn, 2 MTR, 2 & 6 MTABn

**HOG East** (9.2.1942–18.5.1943) – 102 & 105 LD

**HOG West** (9.2.1942–1.5.1943) – 108, 21 & 124 LD

**Székely Command** (Marosvásárhely/ Tirgu Mures, later Csikszerecla/ Mircurea Ciuc) (1.2.1943 > 10.1944) 68 BRG – 34 BRBn, 14, 15, 17 & 18 SBBn; 69 BRG – 22 & 23 BRBn, 19–22 & 27 SBBn, 2 SABn; 9 BRB/ 9 BRD (3.1945; disb 4.1945): 65 BRG – 21 MBRBn, 1–3 SBBn; 67 BRG – 24 & 26 MMBRBn, 10–13 SBBn; 70 BRG – 21 MBRBn, 1–3 SBBn (IX Corps)



This sergeant in walking-out dress wears a field overcoat with a re-enlisted NCO's sleeve triangle, and M1941 branch-colour cuff rank bars; again, the bayonet appears to be nickel-plated. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

through Soviet lines to the Olym river. On 9 Feb, 1 AMFD was withdrawn from the front, ending 2nd Army's front-line commitment.

In the Don battle the originally 211,000-strong 2nd Army had sustained 105,000 casualties – 8,718 dead, 16,497 wounded, 2,582 known captured and 77,288 missing (including perhaps 26,000 more POWs), bringing the total casualties to 135,000 – a fatal 64 per cent attrition rate. The high dead/wounded ratio and the low POW count attest to the ferocity of the Hungarian defence. Light divisions, effectively reinforced infantry brigades with minimal anti-tank capability, fought divisional-sized engagements in extreme winter weather against superior mechanized forces, conducting several break-outs and last-ditch actions before withdrawing, usually in good order. No Hungarian division disgraced itself, and 1 AMFD, 2 Air Bde and III Corps fought magnificently. Nevertheless, the loss of first-line troops, tanks, artillery and heavy weapons mark the Battle of the Don as Hungary's worst defeat, and a fatal blow to the Royal Hungarian Army.

## OCCUPATION FORCES

### Ukraine 1941–2

Hungary committed weak light divisions for occupation duties from 9 July 1941, under VIII Corps HQ in Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil Provinces, south-western Ukraine. The Polish-Ukrainian population was well disposed to the Hungarians, and in Sept 1941 VIII Corps relocated to Vinnytsia Province, central Ukraine (HQ Vinnytsia town).

On 6 Oct 1941 the 40,000-strong Hungarian Occupation Group replaced VIII Corps, with 2, 5, 8, 21 & 24 IB, reorganized for occupation duties and renumbered 102, 105, 108, 121 & 124 respectively, under German command. A 5,000–6,000-man infantry (security) brigade had a cavalry company, 2 infantry regiments (only 3 platoons per rifle company), reduced supply services and no artillery. Duties were securing rail supply routes and conducting sweeps against Soviet partisans. In Dec 1941, HOG HQ moved to Kiev, with brigades in Zhytomyr, Kmelmysky and the more dangerous Chernihiv Province.

On 9 Feb 1942 the brigades, redesignated light divisions from 17 Feb, were reorganized into HOG (West) in central Ukraine (121 & 124 LD), and HOG (East), HQ Kiev, in north-eastern Ukraine (102, 105 & 108 LD), also guarding 2nd Army rail supply links in the boggy Bryansk Forest in western Russia. From Feb to May 1942 the Germans unilaterally assigned 102 & 108 LD to defend Kharkov. From Oct 1942 the anti-communist Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) co-operated with Hungarian units.

### Ukraine and Belarus, 1943–44

In Jan 1943, HOG (East) was reinforced with 1 & 201 LD. 2nd Army took over the 121,000-strong occupation forces from 17 Feb 1943, allocating 19 LD to HOG (West) and 9, 12 & 23 LD to HOG (East), and on 4 March 1943 directing 18 LD from Hungary to HOG (West) and 25 LD to HOG (East). Firepower was augmented during 1943–44 by 101 & 102 Tank Cos and five artillery battalions. On 1 May 1943, 2nd Army was redesignated HOG (HQ Kiev), guarding rail supply routes, with HOG (West) as VII Corps (HQ



FAR LEFT A lieutenant, his age and lack of medals suggesting a Medical Corps reserve officer, wearing a field cap with gold rank chevrons from the cockade, gold buttons and officers' *topán* braids, and the M1940 service uniform showing details of the collar patches and shoulder cords. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

LEFT LtCol Emil Muhoray I (left) reports to LtGen László Stirling, IX Corps commander, in Kolozsvár, Northern Transylvania, in 1941. Both officers wear M1917 helmets, and service overcoats with shoulder strap rank insignia, dating the photograph between June 1940 and August 1941. Note the general officers' spearhead collar patches with gold braid oakleaves. (Cornel Muhoray)

Korosten) in central Ukraine, and HOG (East) from 18 May as VIII Corps (HQ Chernihiv) in south-eastern Belarus and the Bryansk Forest.

The Szabolcs Plan reorganized the 13 occupation divisions into 6 reserve divisions, and on 15 Aug 1943 HOG was redesignated 2nd Army once more (ColGen Géza Lakatos). By Sept 1943, VII Corps (HQ Zdolbunov) covered central and western Ukraine and south-eastern Belarus with 18 & 19 RD, 21 & 201 LD. Meanwhile VIII Corps (HQ Pinsk) transferred to the Pripyat Marshes in southern Belarus and north-western Ukraine, with 5, 9, 12 & 23 RD and 1 LD.

The Red Army's Bryansk Front forced the Hungarians towards German-occupied Poland from Nov 1943. Inevitably the lightly-equipped units sustained heavy losses, for example 18 & 19 RD near Lutsk, north-western Ukraine on 30–31 Jan 1944. On 1 April 1944, 2nd Army HQ and VII Corps returned to Hungary; the 36,000-strong VIII Corps was renamed firstly as HOG, and on 1 May again as II Reserve Corps. By 10 May the corps (HQ Kobrin) had retreated to south-western Belarus with 5 & 23 RD, leaving 12 RD in eastern Belarus under German 2nd Army.

### Belarus and Poland, 1944

Following German pressure the partly mechanized I Cavalry Div transferred to II Reserve Corps at Luninets, Pripyat Marshes, from 19 June 1944. On 23 June four Red Army fronts launched Operation 'Bagration' in Belarus, tearing through Army Group Centre. II Reserve Corps retreated before 2nd Byelorussian Front into eastern Poland on 1 July, with 1 CD conducting a 220-mile fighting retreat 4–12 July from Kleck, central Belarus to Mordy, eastern Poland; it rejoined II Reserve Corps near Warsaw on 3 August. On 18 Aug, 1 CD refused to participate in the crushing of the Warsaw Uprising against traditionally friendly Poles, but earned rare German praise for their achievements against the Red Army; in Sept 1944 the honour-title I Hussar Division was awarded, as it manned the Vistula Line during 22 Aug–3 Sept 1944.



LtCol Emil Muhoray I wearing the M1940 service tunic, corn-flower-blue Mobile Troops' collar patches, and medals including the Hungarian Order of Merit. He served on the Don from August 1942, commanding IX Bicycle Bn, temporarily 13 Inf Regt, and later 14 Bicycle Bn (in 1943 redesignated 25 Reconnaissance Battalion). Promoted colonel on 1 November 1944, Muhoray was wounded in February 1945 in Sopron, and was recuperating in hospital in Germany in May 1945. He emigrated to the USA in 1950, returning in 1963 to Lindau, Germany, where he died in November 1969. (Cornel Muhoray)

II Reserve Corps staff and 1 HD, 12 & 23 RD returned to Hungary between 28 Aug and 12 Oct 1944 and was redesignated VIII Corps; 5 RD remained on the Vistula.

## DEFENDING EASTERN HUNGARY

### German occupation

The German defeat at Stalingrad in Feb 1943 convinced Horthy that Hungary must withdraw from the conflict. The Western Allies refused an armistice, but on 9 Aug 1943 agreed not to bomb Hungary if Hungarian fighters ignored Allied bombers attacking Germany. German-Hungarian relations deteriorated, as Hungary refused to commit occupation divisions to the front line or to engage Yugoslav partisans in Serbia.

Aware of Hungary's war-weariness, Hitler launched Operation 'Margarethe I' on 19 March 1944. As Hitler entertained Horthy at Salzburg in Austria, eight division equivalents in four German corps (LVIII, LXIX & LXXXVIII Special, XXII Mtn) occupied Hungary. Hungarian forces were under orders not to resist, as the country was occupied by 389. Infantry, 8. SS-Cavalry and 18. SS-Panzer grenadier

Divs and five Police regiments. Horthy remained head of state, but the Gestapo arrested Prime Minister Miklós Kállay and other anti-German politicians. The new prime minister, Döme Sztójay, recommitted Hungary as Germany's ally, and from May 1944 allowed SS-Ostuf Adolf Eichmann to deport 440,000 Hungarian Jews to labour duties in Austria or death in Auschwitz. The German occupation cancelled Hungary's agreement with the Allies, and on 3 April 1944 USAAF and RAF bombers began attacking Hungarian strategic targets.

### The Carpathians

Ist Army mobilized on 2 Jan 1944 to defend Hungary's northern Carpathian frontier against the Red Army's 4th Ukrainian Front (Gen Fyodor Tolbukhin). Ist Army had ten front-line divisions in VI Corps (18 & 19 RD, 27 LD & 2 MB), VII Corps (16 & 21 LD), IX Corps (20 & 25 ID) and XI German Corps (24 ID & 1 MB), with 2 AMD and 201 LD in army reserve. It secured the Carpathian passes, and on 17 April forced Tolbukhin back 20 miles from Kolomyia and Olyn'a in Ivano-Frankivsk Province. The front stabilized on 28 April, allowing Ist Army to build the 'Prince Eugen Line' defensive system. Colonel-General János Vörös was appointed Army chief of staff on 19 April 1944.

Behind 'Prince Eugen' were three more defensive lines. 'Hunyadi', built 1943–44, had 100 miles of trenches and temporary obstacles, 15 miles from the Hungarian-Soviet border; 'Szent László', 80 miles long, defended the border passes. Built in 1940, 'Árpád', 15 miles behind the Hungarian-Romanian border, was 220 miles long; it was manned by 11 fortress battalions, their 30 companies each blocking a valley, with pillboxes and AT ditches. Székely Command – effectively X Corps – had a trench-system guarding the Székely Region in Northern Transylvania. On 23 July 1944, Gen Tolbukhin breached the Prince Eugen Line, forcing Ist Army back on 1 Aug to the Hunyadi Line, where it was reinforced by III Corps (6, 10 & 13 ID). On 1 Aug, ColGen Béla Miklós took over Ist Army, retreating to the Szent László Line on 4 Sept and the Árpád Line on 30 September.

### Northern Transylvania

On 20 Aug 1944, 2nd Ukrainian Front (Marshal Rodion Malinovsky) reached Romania. King Mihail II concluded an armistice on 23 Aug, declaring war on Germany three days later. German Army Group South defended Northern Transylvania and southern Hungary. On 23 Aug, Hungarian 2nd Army (ColGen Lajos Veress) was reactivated to defend Northern Transylvania with German 6th and 8th Armies; it comprised II Corps (2 AMD, 25 ID & 9 FRD), IX Corps (27 LD, 2 FRD & 9 BRB) and Finta Group (7 FRD, 1 MRB & 2 MRB), with 2 AD in reserve.

II Corps advanced 20 miles into southern Transylvania on 5 Sept, but retreated on 12 Sept before Soviet-Romanian forces. 25 ID and 2 AMD defended Turda over the border in Romania 15 Sept–8 Oct, then withdrew to avoid being outflanked. Further eastwards, Soviet-Romanian forces occupied Marosvásárhely (Tirgu Mures) on 28 Sept, Kolozsvár (Cluj) on 7 Oct and the entire Székely Region by 10 Oct 1944.

### Southern Hungary

3rd Army (LtGen József Heszlényi), formed 10 Sept 1944, guarded the 200-mile southern border, with IV Corps (1 AMD & 6 FRD), VII Corps (12 RD & 4 FRD) and from 22 Sept VIII Corps (20 ID, 23 RD, 5, 6 & 8



LEFT After being wounded on the Don front, LtCol Emil Muhoray I greets his son, Officer Cadet Emil Muhoray II, who was given special leave from Ludovika Military Academy to visit his father. (Cornel Muhoray)

RIGHT Emil Muhoray II, photographed as a Ludovika Academy officer cadet (Akadémikus), wearing the service tunic with distinctive scarlet collar patches. He was killed in action in March 1945, shortly after being commissioned a second-lieutenant of Anti-Aircraft Artillery. (Cornel Muhoray)



LtCol Artúr Jikéli, a relative of Emil Muhoray; commanding 52 Border Rifles Bn, he wears the M1940 service tunic with a gold wire 'Turul' Border Rifles breast badge, and medals commencing with the Hungarian Order of Merit. Jikéli served on the Don from 15 June 1942, and in 1943 commanded 60 Border Rifles Battalion. Promoted colonel on 1 November 1944, he fought in western Hungary and Germany, returning after the war to Hungary. In 1950 Jikéli and his relatives were exiled from Budapest to Tiszaföldvár; he died in Szolnok in 1952. (Cornel Muhoray)

FRD), with 1 HD, Szent László Div and 1 CRB in corps reserve, alongside German LVII Panzer Corps. IV Corps plus 1 AMD and 1 CRB occupied Arad, western Romania, on 13 Sept; 7 Assault Gun Bn destroyed 67 Soviet T-34 tanks before withdrawing on 20 September.

On 6 Oct, 2nd Ukrainian Front attacked 3rd Army with two columns; after two hours they outflanked the Carpathian defences and stormed into the Great Hungarian Plain, forcing Heszlényi 60 miles back to the Tisza river. The Soviet northern column smashed through VII Corps towards Debrecen, and the western column advanced westwards through VIII Corps, crossing the Tisza at Szeged on 11 Oct, but was halted by 1 HD at Kecskemét.

#### The Arrow Cross

On 28 Sept 1944, Horthy secretly sent LtGen Faragho to Moscow to seek an armistice. On 11 Oct, Stalin demanded that the Hungarians withdraw to the pre-1938 Trianon borders, and declare war on Germany. However, the German *Sicherheitsdienst* learnt of Faragho's mission; at 10am on 15 Oct, in Operation 'Mouse', a paratroop force led by SS-Stubaf Otto Skorzeny kidnapped Horthy's son Miklós in Budapest, then engaged Hungarian

troops guarding the Royal Palace. At 1pm Horthy ordered the Hungarian Army to stop fighting, and 22. SS-Cavalry Div and 109. & 110. Panzer Bdes occupied Budapest. At 5pm ColGen Vörös, under pressure from German units, countermanded Horthy's ceasefire; an hour later Waffen-SS troops surrounded Horthy's palace, and at 8.15am the next day the Regent abdicated. He was imprisoned in Hirschberg Castle, southern Bavaria, and Ferenc Szálasi took over the government.

Szálasi's extreme right wing anti-semitic Arrow-Cross (*Nyilaskeresztes*) Party advocated a new state comprising pre-1918 Hungary, Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He appointed himself 'Leader of the Nation' (*Nemzetvezető*), replacing the monarchy with a populist Nazi-style regime, designated on 21 Dec 1944 as the 'Hungarist State'; the regime's decrees were enforced by the brutal black-uniformed Arrow Cross Militia. Military personnel belonging to the Arrow Cross wore on the left upper sleeve an armband of red and white stripes with a white lozenge bearing a green arrow-cross.

#### The collapse of eastern Hungary

Defence Minister ColGen Károly Beregfy became chief of the general staff and on 20 Dec 1944 commander-in-chief, with SS-Gruf Feketealmay-



An infantry section on a route march await an officer's inspection. They are wearing M1938 khaki summer shirts and tapered-calf trousers, with rolled overcoats over their right shoulders. Just visible being carried by the second man from the right in the front rank is the MG ammunition case - see Plate B3. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

Czeydner (who had fled prosecution for the Ujvidék Massacre the previous January) reinstated as a Hungarian colonel-general and appointed deputy defence minister.

On 1 Oct 1944, 1st Army (LtGen Dezső László) comprised III Corps (6 ID & 2 MB), V Corps (13 & 16 ID, 1 MB), VI Corps (10 & 24 ID) and IX Corps (27 ID & 2 FRD). 2nd Army (LtGen Jenő Major) had II Corps (2 AMD, 25 ID & 4 FRD), VII Corps (12 RD), Finta Group (7 FRD, 1 & 2 MRB), and also 9 FRD and 9 BRB. 3rd Army (LtGen Heszlényi) had IV Corps (6 FRD), VIII Corps (1 AMD, 20 ID, 23 RD, 5 & 8 FRD), and also 1 HD, 25 ID, Szent László Div (formed 18 Oct 1944), 3 FRD and 1 CRB. 5 RD was still serving with German 9th Army on the Vistula.

From 10 to 14 Oct the 2nd Ukrainian Front's Pliyev Cavalry-Mechanized Group, advancing towards Debrecen, was cut off by elements of Fretter-Pico Army Group (German 6th & Hungarian 3rd armies), including 1 HD, 1 AMD and 20 ID. Fretter-Pico lost Nyiregyháza on 22 Oct but retook it on the 26th, allowing the 150,000-strong Wöhler Army Group (German 8th & Hungarian 2nd armies) to break through the 20-mile Debrecen-Nyiregyháza gap 26-28 Oct, from Northern Transylvania to the Tisza Line. Fretter-Pico then withdrew across northern Hungary.

Hungarian 1st Army abandoned the Árpád Line on 18 Oct, and on the 23rd joined German 8th Army in Wöhler Army Group. 4th Ukrainian Front captured Máramarossziget (Sighetul Marmatiei) on 18 Oct, Munkács (Mukacevo) on the 26th and Ungvár (Uzhgorod) on the 27th, but was halted by Wöhler before the Tisza Line. In mid-Dec 1944 Wöhler Army Group, now redesignated Heinrici, withdrew to the Beskid Mountains in north-western Slovakia.

On 29 Oct, 2nd Ukrainian Front attacked VIII Corps on the Danube-Tisza Line between Baja and Szolnok, taking Kecskemét on 31 Oct but stopping south of Budapest on 8 November. 3rd Ukrainian Front (Marshal Tolbukhin) attacked 3rd Army, crossed the Danube into Transdanubia (Western Hungary) on 26 Nov, took Pécs on the 29th, and by 9 Dec had occupied strategically vital oilfields and reached Nagyatád. Tolbukhin also advanced northwards to Lake Balaton; on 20 Dec he breached the 60-mile Margit Line, and occupied Székesfehérvár on the 23rd. Other Soviet units breached the Karola Line north of Budapest, and on 8 Dec reached the Attila Line guarding eastern Budapest.



**ADVANCE INTO UKRAINE, 1941**

- 1: Főtörzsőrmester, 9 Tank Bn; Golovanevsk, 6 Aug 1941
- 2: Százados, 4 'Hadik András' Cav Regt; Nikolayev, 12-16 Aug 1941
- 3: Karpaszományos őrvezető, 2 Mountain Rifle Bn; Tartar Pass, July 1941



**DON CAMPAIGN, 1942-43**

- 1: Hadapród őrmester, 35 Inf Regt; Gyevica river, Jan 1943
- 2: Őrvezető, VII Engineer Bn; Noviy Oskol, Jan 1943
- 3: Vezérezreides Gusztáv Jány, 2nd Army; Alekseyevka, Sept 1942

OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE, 1943–44

1: *Honvéd*, 101 Tank Co, Aug 1943

2: *Karpaszományos tizedes*, VII Bicycle Bn; Korosten, June 1943

3: *Zászlóshelyettes*, 1 Assault Artillery Bn; Otynia, July 1944



NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA, 1944

1: *Szakaszvezető*, 17 Székely Border Guard Bn, Oct 1944

2: *Főhadnagy*, 1 Armd Recce Bn; Arad, 13 Sept 1944

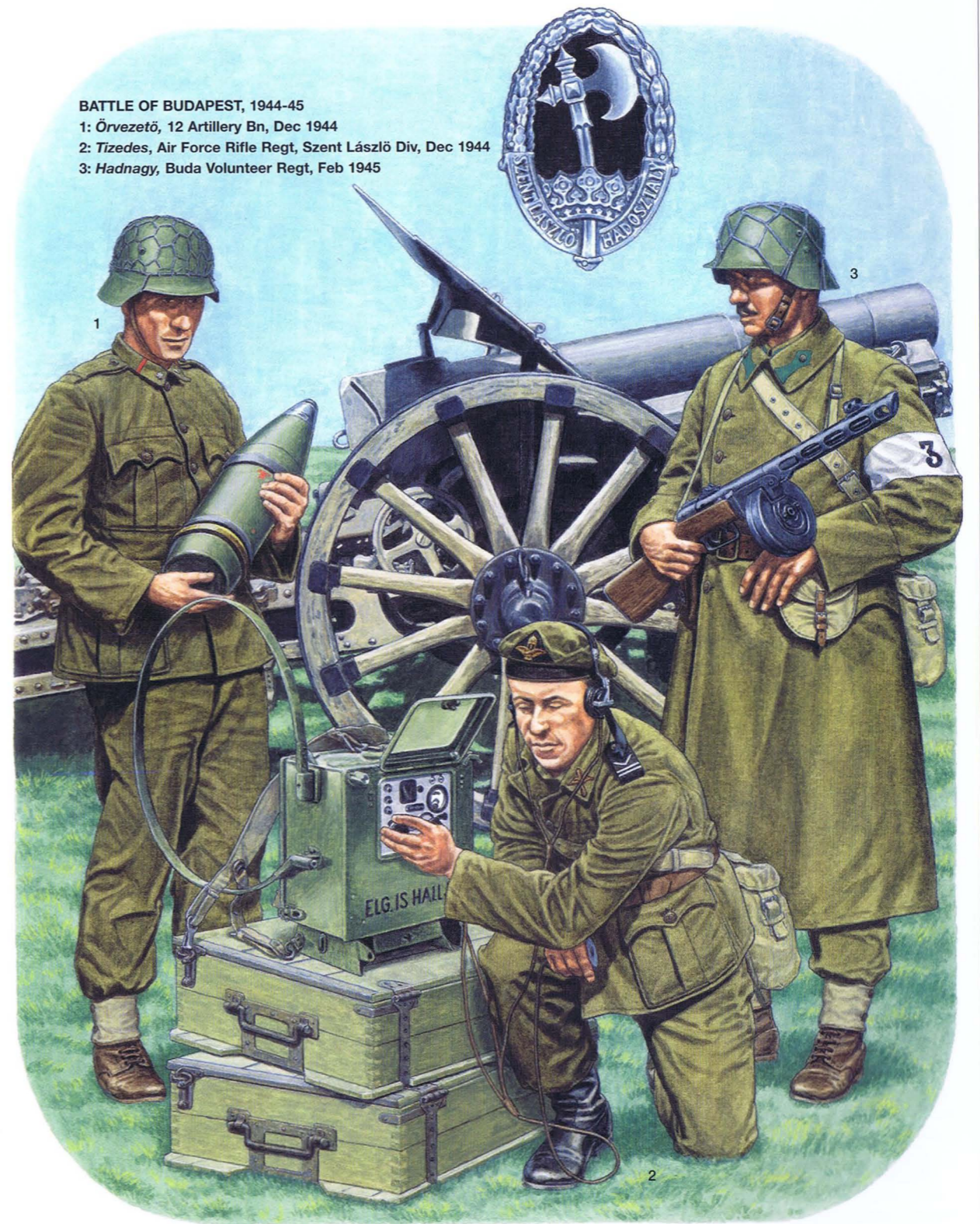
3: *Törzsörmester*, 21 Border Rifle Bn, Oct 1944



BATTLE OF BUDAPEST, 1944-45  
1: Százados, Parachute Assault Regt,  
Szent László Div, Feb 1945  
2: Szakaszevezető, 10 Recce Bn, Dec 1944  
3: Alhadnagy, MP Co, 10 Inf Div, Jan 1945



BATTLE OF BUDAPEST, 1944-45  
1: Őrvezető, 12 Artillery Bn, Dec 1944  
2: Tizedes, Air Force Rifle Regt, Szent László Div, Dec 1944  
3: Hadnagy, Buda Volunteer Regt, Feb 1945





**THE LAST DITCH**

- 1: *Karpaszományos tizedes*, I River Forces Battle Group, March 1945  
 2: *Tartalékos orvos zászlós*, Medical Co, 24 Inf Div; Bohemia, May 1945  
 3: *Csendőr*, Szombathelyi Gendarmerie Bn

on the 27th in the north, completing Budapest's encirclement. Soviet artillery began shelling, while Arrow Cross Militia terrorized civilians and murdered Jews. Soviet-Romanian forces penetrated the Pest suburbs on 25 Dec, occupied most of the Attila I and II lines, and by 5 Jan 1945 were fighting house-to-house inside Attila III. They occupied Pest on 18 Jan, most of its defenders having evacuated to Buda.

Soviet forces advanced towards Buda centre in ferocious street fighting between 24 Dec and 3 January. In January, IV SS-Pz Corps west of Buda made three attempts to break through Soviet lines to Budapest: Operation 'Konrad I', 1-12 Jan; 'Konrad II', 7-12 Jan; and 'Konrad III' (with III SS-Pz Corps), 18-27 January. 'Konrad' was unsuccessful; but Balck Army Group retook Székesfehérvár on 20 Jan, reached the Danube, and advanced to within 20 miles of Budapest. Soviet forces resumed the attack on Buda on 16 Jan and occupied Margit Island between 19 and 30 January. The final assault on Buda began on 30 Jan; the garrison surrendered on 11 Feb, and on the 13th all resistance ceased.



ABOVE A lance-corporal of Border Rifles, wearing a mountain cap with a Border Rifles buglehorn side-badge and (almost hidden here) plume. The linen summer tunic bears field collar patches, a brown thread 'Turul' badge on grass-green cloth backing, and the 1940 Transylvania campaign medal. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



LEFT Hungarian motorized troops relax with a female friend. They wear field tunics, overcoats, or leather jerkins. Note the gasmask bags, and the absence of tunic or overcoat collar patches or field cap rank chevrons. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

A section machine gunner shouldering the standard Swiss M1931 8mm Solothurn LMG infantry weapon. Note the camouflage leaves tied to the chicken-wire helmet net. (Vitéz Gábor)



### THE BATTLE OF BUDAPEST

Budapest, with a population of about 1 million, is divided by the Danube into Buda (west) and Pest (east). Hitler designated it on 6 Dec 1944 as a 'fortress', requiring defence to the last man; the siege lasted 102 days, 3 Nov 1944–13 Feb 1945. On 9 Dec 'Leader of the Nation', Szálasi fled to Szombathely, in March 1945 to Vienna, and later to Munich.

The Budapest garrison, under SS-Ogruf Karl Pfeffer-Wildenbruch (a militarily incompetent senior policeman), comprised 79,000 personnel. The principal Hungarian units were Budapest I Corps, with 1 AMD, 10 & 12 ID, part of 1 HD; 1, 7 & 10 Assault Artillery Bns; Parachute, Budapest Guard, five AA and five Gendarmerie battalions; 16 KISKA home guard battalions (25 Sept 1944–6 Jan 1945); also seven Hungarist Combat Groups of Szálasi Militia, Arrow Cross Youth and Budapest Police units. German forces included IX SS-Mountain Corps (13. Pz, Feldherrnhalle PzGren, 8. & 22. SS-Cav Divs), 153. Field Training and 271. VolksGren Divs, plus SS-Police units. Other units from Fretter-Pico (23 Dec 1944, Balck) west of Budapest fought in the city until 27 Dec, besieged by the 177,000-strong 2nd Ukrainian Front and Romanian 4th Army.

Three concentric earthwork rings of the Attila Line I (outer), II and III protected Pest. 12 ID, 8. SS-Cav Div and Hungarian paratroopers repelled 2nd Ukrainian Front on the south-eastern Attila I Line on 5 Nov, and 13. Pz, 18. SS-PzGren and 46. Inf Divs halted a north-eastern probe on 22 November. Soviet forces took Csepel Island in the south on 21 Nov against 1 HD, and broke through northern Attila I at Fót on 10 Dec against Feldherrnhalle and Hungarian 10 ID, paratroopers and KISKA. Meanwhile Soviet-Romanian units pushed back 10 ID and 12 RD, penetrating Attila II at Isaszeg on 12 December. Discounting a western attack, Army Group South had built no defences around Buda, but 3rd Ukrainian Front reached the western Buda suburbs on 24 Dec, taking Budaörs the following day, capturing Üröm on the 26th and Szentendre

### RECOVERING THE LOST TERRITORIES, 1938–41

- 1: Tábornok; Budapest, April 1941
- 2: Vezérkari ezredes, VIII Corps; Jablonica, March 1939
- 3: Gyalogos, 8 'Béla király' Inf Regt; Kolozsvár, June 1940



RIGHT A determined-looking ensign poses in a cloth-sleeved jerkin, with rank on field collar patches; he has been unable to procure the 3mm wavy rank braid for his field cap. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



FAR RIGHT A cadet warrant officer wearing a field cap with silver cockade edging, crowned buttons, rank chevron and silver wire WO's *topán* braids. His service tunic has silver crowned buttons, collar patches with silver piping, branch-colour shoulder straps, and gold cuff chevrons with a narrow red centre-stripe. The redesignation of senior NCOs as warrant officers in July 1941 recognized their technical expertise at regimental, battalion and company level. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



On 11 Feb 1945, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch and 28,000 troops – two-thirds of the surviving garrison – attempted a break-out from Buda, suffering horrendous losses; only some 700 men reached Balck Army Group. The battle of Budapest invites comparison with the sieges of Stalingrad and Warsaw in terms of duration, destruction of property, and civilian and military casualties.

## THE FINAL MONTHS

### Transdanubia, Bohemia and Austria

On 2 Feb 1945 the Hungarian Army comprised: *1st Army*, with V Corps (16 & 24 ID), 2 MB; *3rd Army*, with II Corps (20 & 25 ID, Szent László Div & 8 FRD), VIII Corps (2 AMD, 1 HD & 23 RD, 1 MB), 27 ID, 3 & 7 FRD and 9 BRB; and 5 RD with German 8th Army.

In mid-February, 1st Army retreated to the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia (now the Czech Republic), and on 8 May 4th Ukrainian Front took the surrender of V Corps and 3 FRD in the Jihlava-Benesov-Olomouc area, while 2 MB surrendered to 3rd US Army in Styria, south-eastern Austria. Army Group South, holding position since Dec 1944, comprised: German 8th Army in northern Transdanubia; Balck Army Group (6th Army and Hungarian VIII Corps) north of Lake Balaton; 2nd Panzer Army with II Corps in southern Transdanubia, reinforced Feb 1945 by 6th SS-Panzer Army (SS-Obstgruf 'Sepp' Dietrich) with three Panzer divisions. Operation 'Spring Awakening', to retake the southern Transdanubian oilfields, commenced on 6 March, but it stalled against Soviet resistance and quagmire roads, and was cancelled on 14 March. 8th Army advanced 20 miles in northern Transdanubia, 6th SS-Panzer Army 15 miles southwards from Székesfehérvár, Balck Army Group 5 miles towards the Danube, and 2nd Panzer Army 7 miles towards Kaposvár, missing Army Group E forces from Croatia. General Balck blamed the Hungarians, temporarily

disarming the Szent László Div and redeploying 6th Army Hungarian units as labour troops.

On 16 March, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts counterattacked, routing 6th SS-Panzer Army and Balck Army Group, taking Szombathely on 29 March and Sopron on 1 April. Balck reached Austria on 12 April, most of VIII Corps and 5 RD surrendering to US 3rd Army near Linz early in May 1945. 2nd Panzer Army and II Corps abandoned Nagykanizsa and southern Transdanubia on 2 April, surrendering to British 8th Army in the Spittal-Völkermarkt-Hüttenberg-Judenberg area of south-eastern Austria early in May. The British kept the Szent László Div under arms until June 1945, ready to fight Yugoslav Partisans if that became necessary.

### The Debrecen government

On 21 Dec 1944 a pro-communist Hungarian Provisional National Assembly was formed in Debrecen, with ColGen Miklós as prime minister and ColGen Vörös as defence minister. On 30 Dec, Miklós declared war on Germany, and on 20 Jan 1945 he signed an armistice, allowing Hungarian units to fight for the Allies. Miklós promised eight infantry divisions, but only 1 & 2 ID were formed before May 1945.

The Soviet government abandoned plans to form Hungarian POWs into a Hungarian Legion, drafting them into Red Army units from December 1943. Troops defected from Aug 1944 as the Red Army invaded Hungary, and from Jan 1945 whole Hungarian units – e.g. 204 and II/206 AA, IV Motorized and I Horse Artillery Bns – defected in Budapest. Some 2,500 Hungarian troops joined 2nd Ukrainian Front besieging Budapest, forming rifle companies in 108 Guards and 180, 297 & 320 Rifle Divs and 83 Marine Brigade. On 15 Feb 1945 they, and a battalion formed on 11 Feb from 300 members of 6 IR (10 ID), became 1 Hungarian (later Buda) Volunteer Regt, with five battalions, artillery, tanks and supply services. These troops vainly hoped to avoid an uncertain future in a Siberian POW camp by fighting their compatriots. They fought German troops in the 11 Feb breakout, stormed the Royal Palace the next day, and on 15 Feb joined 1 ID at Jászberény, east of Budapest.

### HUNGARIAN FORCES IN GERMANY

Two ethnic German 'SS-Volunteer' divisions were raised. 22. SS-Volunteer Cav Div 'Maria Theresia', formed 29 April 1944, fought at Debrecen in Oct 1944, but disintegrated in Feb 1945 in Budapest; personnel wore a



Mihály Szelenczy, a Ludovika Academy officer cadet, wearing the black dress kepi and M1940 officers' service tunic with gold crowned buttons, and the cadets' scarlet collar patches with gold piping, narrow gold braid and a crowned button. He was commissioned on 20 August 1944. (Mrs M. Szelenczy)

RIGHT 2nd Lt Szelency's paybook. Born in 1923 in Pécs, he served as a platoon commander in 2 Replacement Cav Regt in western Hungary and Germany. Demoted to private in 1958, he was reinstated and promoted lieutenant in 1990, dying in 1992. Szelency's bearing always marked him out as a member of the prestigious Hungarian cavalry. (Mrs M. Szelency)



BELOW A sergeant photographed late in the war, wearing his newly issued M1944 peaked (visored) field cap, not yet with rank chevrons. His M1939 field tunic has field collar patches and brown crowned buttons. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)



cornflower on the right collar patch. 31. SS-Volunteer Inf Div, formed 1 Oct 1944 at Zombor, fought at Pécs in Nov 1944 and in German Silesia (now Poland) in Feb 1945, surrendering to Soviet forces at Hradec Králové, northern Bohemia, on 8 May.

2nd Army Staff became the Inspectorate-General of the Hungarian Army in Germany (HQ Bayreuth) on 13 Nov 1944. More than 50,000 Hungarian nationalists volunteered for, or were drafted into, the Waffen-SS. The 25. Waffen (i.e. non-Germanic) Inf Div 'Hunyadi' (1st Hungarian) was formed from 2 Nov 1944 at Zalaszentgrót, under SS-Brigaf József Grassy, and 26. Waffen Inf Div 'Hungaria' (2nd Hungarian) from 30 Nov at Rajka. Both divisions trained in Neuhammer (Swietoszów), Silesia, in Feb 1945, before retreating; the rearguard, the Hammerstein Alarm Group, suffered 2,200 casualties 9–13 Feb 1945. 'Hungaria' fought at Lodz, Poland, in Jan 1945, before both divisions were transferred to Grafenwöhr, Bavaria, the following month; the remnants surrendered

to US forces on 5 May at Attersee, northern Austria. Some personnel wore an 'H' right collar patch, 6-pointed Hungarian rank stars on the left collar patch, and a red-white-green shield on the left upper arm with a black raven ('Hunyadi') or a black H ('Hungaria').

SS-Standartenführer László Deák formed the 1,000-strong SS-Battlegroup Deák on 15 Aug 1944 in Szeged, fighting in the Bácska during Sept–Oct 1944 before joining 'Hunyadi' on 10 Nov 1944. SS-Regiment Ney, formed 20 Oct 1944 at Súr, fought at Budapest in Jan–Feb 1945, later surrendering as a 4,000-strong brigade at Attersee. 1 Hungarian Ski Bde, established 17 Oct 1944, fought in Silesia in Feb and in Austria in April 1945; with 1,800 men in four battalions, they surrendered at Attersee. 1 Hungarian SS-Assault Rifle Regt, formed 8 Jan 1945, fought in western Hungary in Jan–April, surrendering to British forces at Klagenfurt on 18 April; personnel wore an 'H' collar patch. Three battalion-sized Hungarian Army anti-tank units (1–3), formed at Horn, northern Austria, on 6 Feb 1945, probably saw action; but 1 Army Div 'Kossuth', formed March 1945, was still training in Germany in May 1945.

### The aftermath

Hungary's plight in May 1945 surpassed that of November 1918; she suffered Soviet occupation, devastated towns and countryside, and the worst hyperinflation in history. Some 325,000 troops languished in Soviet POW camps, and only 251,000 had been repatriated by December 1948.

Mátyás Rákosi's communists increased their influence after elections in November 1945. The monarchy was abolished on 2 February 1946, and on 20 August 1949 Hungary became a 'People's Republic' subservient to Moscow. The Paris Peace Treaty of 10 February 1947 limited Hungary's armed forces and reaffirmed Hungary's Trianon borders. Territorial revisionism was abandoned as official government policy.

Admiral Horthy was released in May 1945 and died in exile in Estoril, Portugal, on 9 February 1957; in February 1993 his remains were reburied in Hungary. Ferenc Szálasi was executed on 12 March 1946. Most senior generals suffered prosecution or persecution: Szombathelyi, Feketealmay-Czeydner and Grassy were executed in Yugoslavia in November 1946 for the Újvidék Massacre. Beregfy was executed by a Hungarian communist-dominated 'People's Court' in March 1946, and Jány in November 1947. Vörös was imprisoned in 1950 as an American spy, but released during the Hungarian Revolution of November 1956. Miklós was harassed by the Hungarian secret police and died in November 1948; Lakatos emigrated to Australia in the 1960s. Other generals lived on in Hungary or as émigrés in Europe or North America.



A captain of paratroopers, wearing the dress kepi and M1940 officers' tunic. On his right breast is the parachute qualification badge – a gold skull on crossed scimitars, set on spread wings, below a silver parachute; in this case it is worked in bullion wire on grass-green cloth. Below it on his pocket is the Combatant Officer breast badge. (Friedrich Herrmann Memorial Collection)

## PLATE COMMENTARIES

### UNIFORMS & INSIGNIA

During the Austro-Hungarian Empire the Royal Hungarian Army and Hungarian Common Army units wore dark blue dress uniforms, and from 1908 blueish-grey (1915, greenish-grey) service and field uniforms, with enlisted infantry tapered trousers with Hungarian knots, officers' kepis, peaked field caps and German M1917 steel helmets.

The A-26 uniform regulations of 1920 applied with amendments until Sept 1945. The expensive officers' hussar-style Attila dress tunics were simplified in 1931. Service and field uniforms were khaki ('field-brown'), with peakless 'Bocskai' field caps with a 'topán' – a cloth triangle with three braids ending in rosettes; tunics with M1919 collar patches; and baggy infantry trousers with tapered calves. Officers' dress uniforms had black (career NCOs, brown) kepis and long trousers. The rank system, officers' shoulder cords, branch colours (except infantry and mobile troops), semi-official unit cap insignia, and triangular medal-ribbons all reflected pre-1918 traditions.

German influence increased in wartime, with snow-camouflage clothing, short double-breasted tank-crew jackets, loose infantry trousers, black leather marching-boots and paratroopers' camouflage smocks, but the distinctive Hungarian profile was maintained.

In 1921 under the A-26 regulations the **River Guard** adopted dark blue officers' ceremonial uniforms, and Army khaki service uniforms with open-necked tunics and cuff rank insignia. Officers wore peaked caps and gold braid rank rings with an 'Elliott's Eye' curl on the top ring; WOs, blue Army-style collar patches on the cuffs, from 1940 silver braid rank bars; and junior NCOs and men, peakless seamen's caps, large white collars and blue cuff-patches, from 1940 blue bars.

The Air Office initially introduced a service uniform similar to that of the River Forces in light khaki, with gold or silver rank bars and chevrons on black (general officers, crimson) shoulder straps, the ranks having civilian cover titles. This elegant uniform was adopted by the **Air Force** in Aug 1938 with Army rank titles; officers and WOs wore peaked caps and open-neck tunics, NCOs and men peakless seamen's caps and closed-neck tunics.

### A: RECOVERING THE LOST TERRITORIES, 1938-41

#### A1: *Tábornok*; Budapest, April 1941

This general officer wears the officers' 'social dress' uniform, with a M1871 black kepi with gold wire and cherry-red threads and Hungarian tricolour. The officers' overcoat has gold crown buttons, a very dark coffee-brown velvet collar, general officers' scarlet spearhead collar patches with gold wire oakleaves, scarlet lapel lining and front piping and shoulder straps. His black ceremonial-dress trousers have general officers' scarlet piping and stripes.

#### A2: *Vezérkari ezredes*, VIII Corps; Jablonica, Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, March 1939

This General Staff colonel wears the officers' service uniform with gold crowned buttons. As a former mounted officer (cavalry, artillery or supply) he wears two gold wire shoulder cords with cherry-red threads on his M1926 service tunic;



**A Supply Services major, wearing the M1931 black dress uniform for social occasions, with crimson velvet collar patches, Hungarian-knot cuff braid, and hussar chest braids. Note the M1911 rank insignia, and triangular medal ribbons. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)**

other branches had a right shoulder cord only. He has scarlet cloth and black velvet collar patches and gold wire officers' *topán* patch, and displays the Order of Heroes (*Vitézi Rend*) breast badge for bravery. He has officers' breeches, M1941 'Bilgeri' laced high boots, an officers' belt and crossbelt, a M1919 7.65mm 'Frommer Stop' pistol in an M1935 holster, mapcase and binoculars.

#### A3: *Gyalogos*, 8 'Béla király' Infantry Regiment; Kolozsvár, Northern Transylvania, June 1940

This infantryman wears the enlisted M1926 field tunic with brown crowned buttons. The grass-green branch colour is shown on cap rank chevrons, brown enlisted *topán*, tunic shoulder straps and collar patches. He has the tapered trousers, tight in the calf; brown leather anklets, ankle-boots and infantry equipment, with belt and supporting straps, backpack with overcoat, ammunition pouches, bayonet and frog, spade, bread-bag, canvas gasmask bag, messtin, and aluminium waterbottle. Troops occupying Southern Slovakia, Southern Ruthenia and Northern Transylvania wore national tricolour cap ribbons and white flowers.

### B: ADVANCE INTO UKRAINE, 1941

#### B1: *Főtörzsőrmester*, 9 Tank Battalion; battle of Golovanevsk, southern Ukraine, 6 August 1941

This WO of 9 Tank (ex-Bicycle) Bn, 1 Motorized Brigade wears

**Table 1: Chronology – main developments of uniforms and insignia**

Order or Gazette	Item introduced	Order or Gazette	Item introduced
9 Aug 1919	National Army established	2 Sept 1939	Triangle tunic sleeve badge with 1cm silver braid for career SNCOs and JNCOs, thin silver cord for re-enlisted JNCOs.
3 Sept 1919	New type of collar patch rank insignia introduced	15 Jun 1940	Officers' tunic (turnover collar and two shoulder cords); officers' and SNCOs' overcoat shoulder strap rank insignia.
1920 (M1920 – in some sources, M1921).	Officers' & SNCOs' kepi, field cap (with officers' rank chevrons), officers' tunic (stand and fall collar), enlisted tunic (turnover collar), officers' summer tunic, overcoat, officers' cloak, officers' breeches, enlisted trousers and cloth puttees, cavalry hussar tunic, cavalry riding breeches, enlisted linen tunic with exposed buttons and trousers, officers' black high-boots, enlisted ankle-boots, cavalry riding boots, officers' leather belt & crossbelt, enlisted belt & supporting straps, Combat Officer badge, sword-knots, Volunteer cuff-chevrons.	1941	'Bilgeri' laced high boots (motorized troops; 1943, general issue), ski trousers, Border Rifle 'Turul' breast and sleeve badge.
1 Jan 1922	National Army redesignated Royal Hungarian Army	24 Mar 1941	Mountain cap with plume, edelweiss and bugle badge.
21 Aug 1921	First award of Order of Heroes ( <i>Vitézi Rend</i> ) badge	29 July 1941	General officers, WO and private ranks modified; SNCO ( <i>Altiszt</i> ) renamed WO ( <i>Tiszthelyettes</i> ).
1 June 1925	SNCO field cap rank chevrons changed; enlisted cloth and linen tapered-calf trousers and ankle-boots with integral leather anklets.	12 Aug 1941	Officers' & WOs' overcoat shoulder strap rank insignia and Army officers' crossbelt abolished.
1926	Officers' tunic (standing collar and right shoulder-cord), enlisted tunic (standing collar and branch-colour shoulder straps); linen tunic with fly-front.	1942	Brown leather tank protective helmet, winter tunic & trousers, snow coat, snow jacket & trousers, winter mittens, felt winter boots & gasmask canister; field-cap branch triangle, rosettes & braids finally abolished.
1928	Officers' undyed summer tunic with detachable collar patches, cavalry riding-boots (with rosettes).	1 Jan 1942	Officers' & WOs' overcoat cuff rank insignia; new chaplains' cuff rank insignia.
1929	'Engineers' half-boots with ankle-straps	1943	Field trousers, canvas anklets, brown laced ankle-boots, black leather half-boots, grey-blue tank jacket & trousers.
1931	Officers' undress tunic	28 July 1943	Officers' khaki shirt (without shoulder straps) & sleeve rank insignia
9 March 1931	Zászlós: silver star, gold horizontal braid, gold collar patch piping	28 Aug. 1943	Commissioned WOs ( <i>Főtiszthelyettes</i> : <i>Főhadnagyhelyettes-Zászlóshelyettes</i> ; later even <i>Örmagy-Százados</i> ).
1934	Gas mask with brown canvas case, messtin, 1-litre medical waterbottle; field-cap braids and branch triangle ordered to be abolished.	6 Sept 1943	1.5cm yellow tunic cuff chevron with thin red centre-stripe ( <i>Akadémikus</i> and <i>Hadapród-örmester</i> ). Small button on service overcoat collar patch: gold ( <i>Zászlós</i> ), silver ( <i>Hadapród-örmester</i> ), brown (Reserve Officer Candidate JNCO); brown (all ranks) on field overcoat.
1935	Brown leather tank crewman's tunic and trousers, calfskin cartridge knapsack, bread-bag, pistol holster, waterbottle; bayonet & bayonet-frog, saddle.	1944	Peaked field-cap, unofficial Assault Artillery badge, paratrooper camouflage jacket; M1871 dress kepi abolished.
1937	Black leather protective helmet (Italian M1935), black leather footwear becomes brown.	Early 1944	Buglehorn (left side) & edelweiss (right) for mountain-equipped Border Rifle unit caps
7 Jan 1937	Zászlós: silver star, gold horizontal braid on collar patch; ½ gold wire & ½ yellow silk pattern on collar patch, field-cap chevron and service tunic shoulder-cords.	9 Feb 1944	Commissioned WOs' rank insignia
1938	M1935 steel helmet, camouflage shelter-half	30 Oct 1944	Commissioned WOs abolished
30 Apr 1938	Enlisted khaki shirt & sleeve rank insignia	Sept 1945	M1920 uniforms and insignia abolished
1939	Light green linen summer tunic, long trousers and tapered-calf trousers; enlisted tunic (turnover collar & plain shoulder straps), light green enlisted shirt; officers' dark brown velvet overcoat collar replaced with brown cloth.		

(continued on page 41)

### Chart 1: Collar patch rank insignia, Sept 1939–Sept 1945

Officers and enlisted men wore 5.5cm-high branch-colour patches with bright gold/silver braids on the M1920 and M1926 service tunics. Narrower patches were worn on the M1940 officers' and M1939 enlisted service tunics. These patches were worn on field tunics with piping removed and dull gold/ silver braids. The ranks are **numbered** according to the official Hungarian system, but the authors have added 'a' to certain ranks for convenience.

**8:** *Rendfokozat nélküli egyének* (privates): 12cm-long patches with dark coffee-brown wire piping.

**7–5.a:** *Tisztesek* (junior non-commissioned officers): 12cm patches with dark coffee-brown wire piping (**6:** field patch without piping) and 1–3 white celluloid stars (**5.a:** yellow silk chevron).

**4–1:** *Altisztek* (senior non-commissioned officers): 29.7.1941, *Tiszthelyettesek* (warrant officers): 12cm patches with silver wire piping (**2:** field patch without piping), silver braid chevrons (**1:** silver star and vertical gold braid bar) and 1–3 silver wire stars. (**3:** scarlet cloth collar patches with dark green cloth inlay – Gendarmerie). Silver insignia was actually aluminium.

**XI.a–IX.a:** *Főtiszthelyettesek* (commissioned warrant officers) 28.8.1943–30.10.1944: 13.5cm patches with thin silver zig-zag pattern braid, gold wire piping (**XI.a:** ½ gold wire & ¼ yellow silk) and 1–2 silver (**XI.a:** gold) wire stars.

**XI:** *Tisztjelöltek* (officer candidates): 13.5cm patches with ½ gold wire & ¼ yellow silk piping, thin gold horizontal zig-zag pattern braid pointed to rear, and silver wire star.

**X–VIII:** *Főtisztek* (subaltern officers): 13.5cm patches with gold wire piping (**IX:** field patch without piping) and 1–3 gold wire stars.

**VII–V:** *Törzstisztek* (field officers): 13.5cm patches with thick gold zig-zag pattern braid (**VII.a:** variant zig-zag pattern), gold wire piping (**VII:** field patch without piping) and 1–3 silver wire stars (**VII.a:** rosette). (**VI:** scarlet cloth collar patches with black velvet inlay – General Staff).

**IV–I:** *Tábornokok* (general officers): scarlet (combatants; non-combatants, branch colour) 15cm patches with thick gold zig-zag pattern braid (**I:** wavy pattern with stylized leaves), gold crossed oakleaf & laurel branches, gold wire piping (**III:** field patch without piping) and 1–3 silver wire stars.

#### Key to ranks (with approximate British equivalents):

**8** *Gyalogos* (infantry), *Határőrség* (Border Rifles), *Huszár* (cavalry), *Tüzér* (artillery), *Utász* (engineers), *Hídász* (bridging engineers), *Híradókatona* (signals), *Autóskatona* (motor transport), *Vonatkatona* (horsedrawn transport), *Élelmezésügyi katona* (catering), *Egészségügyi katona* (medical corps), *Méneskatona* (remount) – Private. Effective 29.7.1941, all privates were designated *Honvédek*

**7** *Őrvezető* (artillery > 29.7.1941, *Főtűzér*) – Lance-Corporal

**6** *Tizedes* (Gendarmerie > 2.5.1944, *Próbacsendőr*) – Corporal

**5** *Szakasvezető* (Gendarmerie > 2.5.1944, *Próbacsendőr*) – Sergeant

**5.a** *Csendőr*, Royal Gendarmerie (> 2.5.1944) – Colour-Sergeant

**4** *Őrmester* (artillery > 29.7.1941, *Tüzemester*) –

Warrant Officer Class II

**3** *Törzsőrmester* (artillery > 29.7.1941, *Főtüzemester*) – Warrant Officer Class II (RQMS)

**2** *Tiszthelyettes* (29.7.1941, *Főtörzsőrmester*) – Warrant Officer Class I

**1** *Alhadnagy* – Senior Warrant Officer Class I

**XI.a** *Zászlóshelyettes* – Ensign (CWO)

**XI** *Zászlós* – Ensign

**X.a** *Hadnagyhelyettes* – 2nd Lieutenant (CWO); rank created but never held

**X** *Hadnagy* – 2nd Lieutenant.

**IX.a** *Főhadnagyhelyettes* – Lieutenant (CWO); rank created but never held.

**IX** *Főhadnagy* – Lieutenant

**VIII** *Százados* – Captain

**VII.a** *Számvevőszéki aligazgató* – Accountant military official, equivalent to Major

**VII** *Őrnagy* – Major

**VI** *Alezredes* – Lieutenant-Colonel

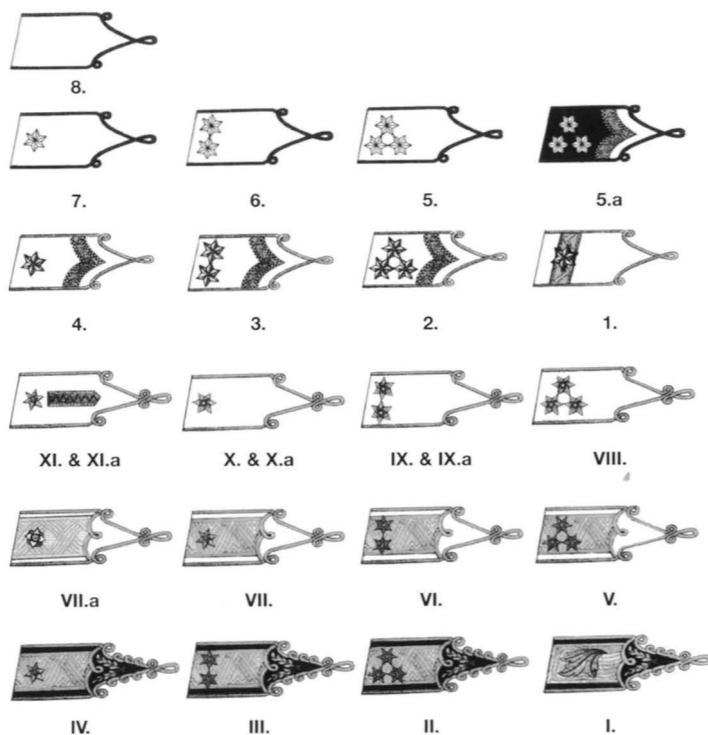
**V** *Ezredes* – Colonel

**IV** *Tábornok* (29.7.1941, *Vezérőrnagy*) – Major-General

**III** *Altábornagy* – Lieutenant-General

**II** *Gyalogsági tábornok, Lovassági tábornok, Tüzérségi tábornok & Tábornoszernagy* – respectively, General of Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery & Engineers (29.7.1941, *Vezérezredes* – Colonel-General)

**I** *Tábornagy* – Field-Marshal



(László Pál Szabó)

### Chart 2: Field cap rank insignia, Sept 1939–Sept 1945

The national cockade with red, white and green horizontal stripes and rank chevrons was worn on the M1920 peakless, M1941 mountain and M944 peaked field caps. The chevrons were bright gold/silver on service uniforms and dull gold/silver on field uniforms.

Rank numbering is as Chart 1 opposite:

**8** Cockade edged in dark coffee-brown wire.  
**7–5** Cockade edged in dark coffee-brown wire; 1–3 x 4.5mm branch-colour cloth chevrons, sometimes with white centre threads.  
**4–1** Cockade edged in silver wire; 1–3 x 3mm (**1:** 6mm) silver braid chevrons.

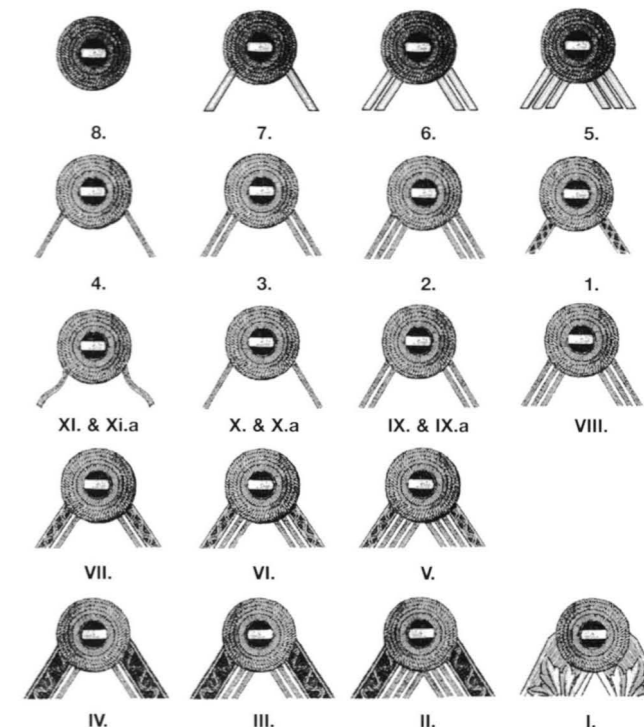
**XI.a–IX.a** Cap insignia as for XI–IX.

**XI** Cockade edged in gold wire; 1 x 3mm ½ gold wire & ¼ yellow silk braid wavy chevron (usually 3mm gold chevron, or none worn).

**X–VIII** Cockade edged in gold wire; 1–3 x 3mm gold braid chevrons.

**VII–V** Cockade edged in gold wire; 1–3 x 3mm and 1 x 8mm gold braid chevrons.

**IV–I** Cockade edged in gold wire; 1–3 x 3mm and 1 x 14mm gold braid chevrons (**I:** 30mm chevron with stylized oakleaves).



(László Pál Szabó)



the M1937 Italian leather tank crew and motorcyclists' helmet, and mechanic's overalls (several variants were worn). With cornflower-blue Mobile Troops' collar patches; his sidearm is a 9mm pistol.

The brigade began the campaign with a total of 81 Toldi (licence-built Swedish Landsverk L60B) light tanks, 60 Italian CV35 tankettes, and 48 Alvis-Straussler Csaba armoured cars; the long distances and hard going caused many breakdowns during the drive to the Donets. For the formation of 1 Armd Div in 1942, Hungary bought AFVs from Germany: 102 PzKw 38(t) tanks, 22 PzKw IV Ausf D and 8 PzKw I Ausf B. Only six tanks returned to Hungary in March 1943.

**B2:** *Százados*, 4 'Hadik András' Cavalry Regiment; battle of Nikolayev, southern Ukraine, 12–16 August 1941

This captain (traditionally called *Kapitány*) commanding a 1 Cav Bde mounted squadron wears the M1919 hussar jacket with dark brown fur and braid trim and without insignia, over his field tunic, leather-reinforced riding breeches, and black cavalry riding boots with decorative rosettes. He carries a pistol, binoculars, mapcase and canvas gasmask bag, and has a M1935 saddle with saddlebags; the M1904 cavalry sword has the officers' gold-threaded red sword knot.

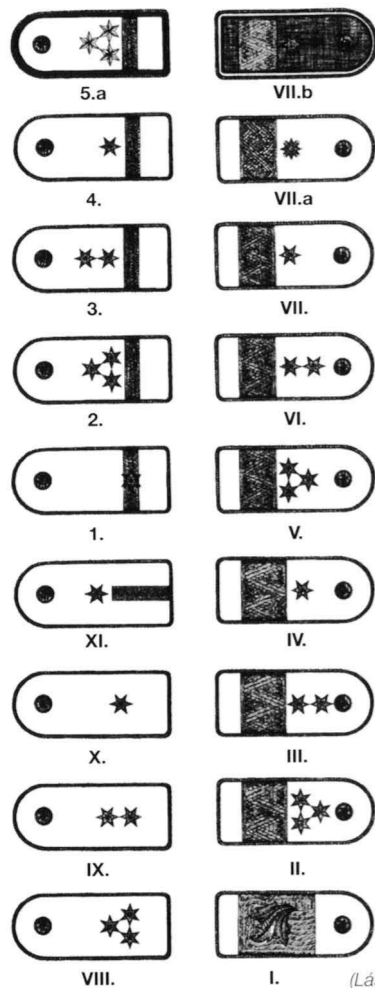
A military official with the equivalent rank of lieutenant in the M1920 service tunic, with rank rosettes on branch-colour collar patches, and an Order of Heroes breast badge for bravery. The distinctive shape of the pocket flaps was called 'cow's-udder'. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

**Chart 3: Overcoat rank insignia, 15 June 1940–12 Aug 1941**

On 14cm x 6cm branch-colour shoulder straps, officers and warrant officers wore 2cm-diameter stars and braids, bright gold/bright silver on service uniforms, and dull gold/bright silver on field uniforms.

Rank numbering is as Chart 1, page 40:

- 5.a Madder-red shoulder straps edged steel-green; 1.3cm-wide yellow braid, silver wire piping, 3 white celluloid stars, and silver crowned buttons.
- 4-1 1.3cm silver (1: gold) braid, silver wire piping, 1-3 silver wire stars, silver crowned buttons.
- XI ½ gold wire & ½ yellow silk piping; 1 silver wire star, 5cm x 1.3cm gold braid, gold crowned buttons.
- X-VIII Gold wire piping; 1-3 gold wire stars, gold crowned buttons.
- VII.b-V 3.3cm-wide gold braid, gold wire piping; 1-3 gold wire stars (VII.a: rosette), gold crowned buttons. (VII.b – General Staff: black velvet shoulder straps edged scarlet).
- IV-I 4cm-wide gold (I: 6.85cm oakleaf pattern) braid, gold wire piping; 1-3 gold wire stars, gold crowned buttons.



(László Pál Szabó)



**A River Guard junior NCO in walking-out dress, wearing the seaman's cap with 1921-38 'River Guard' tally ribbon – this indicates that he is not assigned to a ship. The khaki tunic lacks breast pockets and is worn with a distinctive white seaman's collar. He carries a section commander's whistle on a khaki plaited lanyard. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)**

**B3: Karpaszományos őrzetű, 2 Mountain Rifle Battalion; Tartar Pass, north-east Hungary, July 1941**

This section machine gunner wears the M1941 mountain cap with brown leather peak, infantry triangle, a white metal edelweiss with yellow stamens, and a plume of greenish-black cockerel feathers. As a mountain rifleman he wears the enlisted M1939 field tunic with ski trousers and Bilgeri boots. He carries a Swiss M1931 8mm Solothurn LMG, and a 7.65mm pistol for self-defence; note the brown leather LMG spares bag and canvas LMG magazine pouch. Ammunition and spare barrel cases are at his feet.

**C: DON CAMPAIGN, 1942-43**

**C1: Hadapród őrmester, 35 Infantry Regiment; River Gyeveica, January 1943**

All ranks were prescribed enlisted clothing in the field. This cadet WO, a platoon commander, wears a whitewashed M1935 steel helmet with metal carrying bracket, and a hooded snow coat over his enlisted overcoat, with brown crowned buttons and plain branch-colour spearhead collar patches. He also wears an enlisted belt, sheepskin winter mittens with

(continued on page 45)

**Table 2: Branch distinctions, 1 Oct 1938-9 May 1945**

Branch	Branch colour cloth	Comments
<b>Combatant branches</b>		
General officers	Bright red ('scarlet')	Gold leaves on greatcoat collar and gold branches on field-cap; scarlet trouser piping & stripes
General Staff (1930)	Scarlet with black velvet inlay	Colonel – Captain only
Technical Artillery Staff (1931); Military Technical Staff (3.2.1941)	Brown with scarlet velvet inlay; 3.2.1941 scarlet with brown velvet inlay	Colonel – Captain only
Officers of the Head of State's Office	White	–
Crown Guard	Brownish ('madder') red	Madder-red ceremonial uniform & service tunic shoulder-knot
Regent's Bodyguard, Parliamentary Guard	Scarlet	Scarlet ceremonial uniform & service tunic shoulder-knot
Line Infantry; Ludovika Academy enlisted men; Székely Border Guards & Fortress MG Troops (1939)	Medium ('grass') green	–
Mountain Infantry (1939)	Grass-green	mountain cap with plume & edelweiss; mountain trousers
Parachute Infantry (1940)	Grass-green	Tunic breast badge
Border Guards; Border Rifles (1940)	Madder-red with grass-green inlay; grass-green	Plume & buglehorn cap-badge; edelweiss for 1940 mountain-equipped; 'Turul' breast and arm badge
Cyclist Infantry, Motorized Infantry (1938) (1938 in Mobile Troops)	Grass-green; 3.2.1941 light ('cornflower') blue	–
Cavalry (1938 in Mobile Troops)	Cornflower-blue	Riding breeches and boots
War Academy enlisted men	Cornflower-blue	–
Armoured Troops (1938 in Mobile Troops)	Dark blue; 3.2.1941 cornflower-blue	Leather uniform & helmet; M1942 grey-blue cloth uniform
(Motorized) Field Artillery, (Motorized) Heavy Artillery, Horse Artillery, (Motorized) AA Artillery, Military Technical Institute enlisted men	Scarlet	Horse Artillery – riding breeches and boots
Assault Artillery & Rocket Launcher units (1943)	Scarlet	Assault Artillery – field cap badge & tunic breast-badge
Engineers, Bolyai Technical Academy & Technical Arsenal enlisted men	Dark ('steel') green	–
Communication Troops; Signals (1943)	Steel-green; 1943 dark blue	–
Transport, Armoured Trains & Transport Park enlisted men	Light ('coffee') brown	–
Royal Gendarmerie (1.11.1944 in Field Security Service)	Steel-green with madder-red inlay	Hat/cap plume, 1.11.1944 Tábori biztonság gorget
Provost Marshal (1938) & Military Police (6.1942); (1.11.1944 in Field Security Service)	Steel-green with madder-red inlay	Tábori csendőrség (MP) & Csendőr (PM) gorget; 1.11.1944 Tábori biztonság gorget
Labour Corps – privates only (1.1.1939)	–	Grass green cloth 'M' on collar
<b>Non-combatant branches</b>		
Judge Advocate General, Technical Staff, Supply, Medical, Veterinary, Remount, Chaplain & Special Service major generals	Branch-colour cloth or velvet	Gold leaves on greatcoat collar and gold branches on field-cap; scarlet trouser piping & stripes. Rank-title prefixed with branch
Judge Advocate General officers	Madder-red	Rank-title prefix 'Hadbíró'
Technical Staff officers,	Dark ('cherry') red	Rank-title prefix 'Mémnök'
Ordnance officers (1942)	Cherry-red	Rank-title prefix 'Szerfári'
Map Institute & Uniform Store enlisted men	Cherry-red	–
Supply officers	Pinkish red ('crimson') velvet	Rank-title prefix 'Hadbiztos'
Catering & Bed Store (1942)	Light ('rust') brown	–
Medical Corps officers / enlisted men	Black velvet / black	Officer rank-title prefix 'Orvos'. Enlisted men – Red Cross armband
Veterinary Corps officers / enlisted men	Dark blue velvet / dark blue	Officer rank-title prefix 'Állatorvos'
Remount	Madder-red	Rank-title prefix 'Méneskari'
Pharmacist officers (1942?)	Black	Rank-title prefix 'Gyógyszerügyi'
Chaplains (ranked as officers)	Black velvet	Silver cross on collar patch & non-military ranks cuff rank insignia
Paymaster officers	Crimson	Rank-title prefix 'Gazdászati'
Military Secondary School enlisted staff	Light mauve ('lilac')	–

Continued on next page

**Table 2: Branch distinctions, 1 Oct 1938–9 May 1945 continued**

Branch	Branch colour cloth	Comments
Special Service officers (1942)	Dark ('slate') grey	Former combat officers in administration, intelligence, counter-intelligence, Levente, propaganda etc. Rank-title prefix 'Szakszolgálatos'.
Extra-regimental officers	Orange	Assigned to an institute or higher military establishment
<b>Military officials with equivalent rank as officers</b>		
Justice	Madder-red	—
Technical, mapmaking, military factory	Cherry velvet	—
Pharmacists (until 1942?)	Black	—
Accountants	Crimson	—
Administration	Light ('parrot') green	—
Military Factory Supervisors	Dark blue	—
Forestry, agricultural	Medium ('leaf') green	—
Bandmasters, Fencing Masters, Military Secondary School senior teachers	Lilac velvet	—
Military Secondary School junior teachers	Lilac	—
Special Service	Slate-grey	Legal, archives, military factory, bodyguard & Royal Gendarmerie.

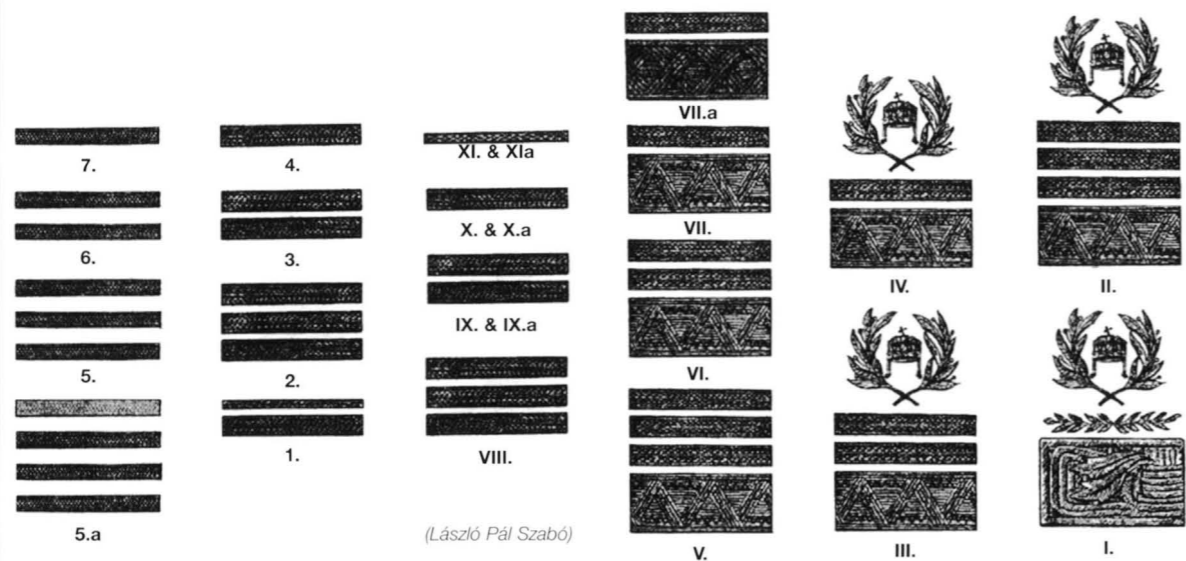
**Chart 4: Overcoat rank insignia, 1 Jan 1942–Sept 1945**

All ranks wore 8cm-long bars on greatcoat cuffs: for officers and warrant officers, in bright gold/ bright silver wire or braid on service uniforms, and dull gold/ bright silver on field uniforms; for junior NCOs, in branch-colour braid.

Rank numbering is as Chart 1, page 40:

- 7-5 1-3 x 1cm branch-colour braid bars.
- 5.a 1 x 1cm yellow braid bar over 1 x 3cm madder-red braid bars
- 4-1 1-3 x 1cm silver braid bars (1: 1 x 0.5cm gold and 1 x 1cm silver braid bar).

- XI.a-IX.a As for IX-XI.
- XI 1 x 0.5cm gold braid bar.
- X-VIII 1-3 x 1cm gold braid bars.
- VII.a-V: 1-3 x 1cm and 1 x 3cm gold braid bars.
- IV-I Gold wire St Stephen's crown in wreath, above 1-3 x 1cm and 1 x 3cm gold braid bars (I: 1cm gold wire wreath and 5cm gold braid oakleaf-pattern bar).



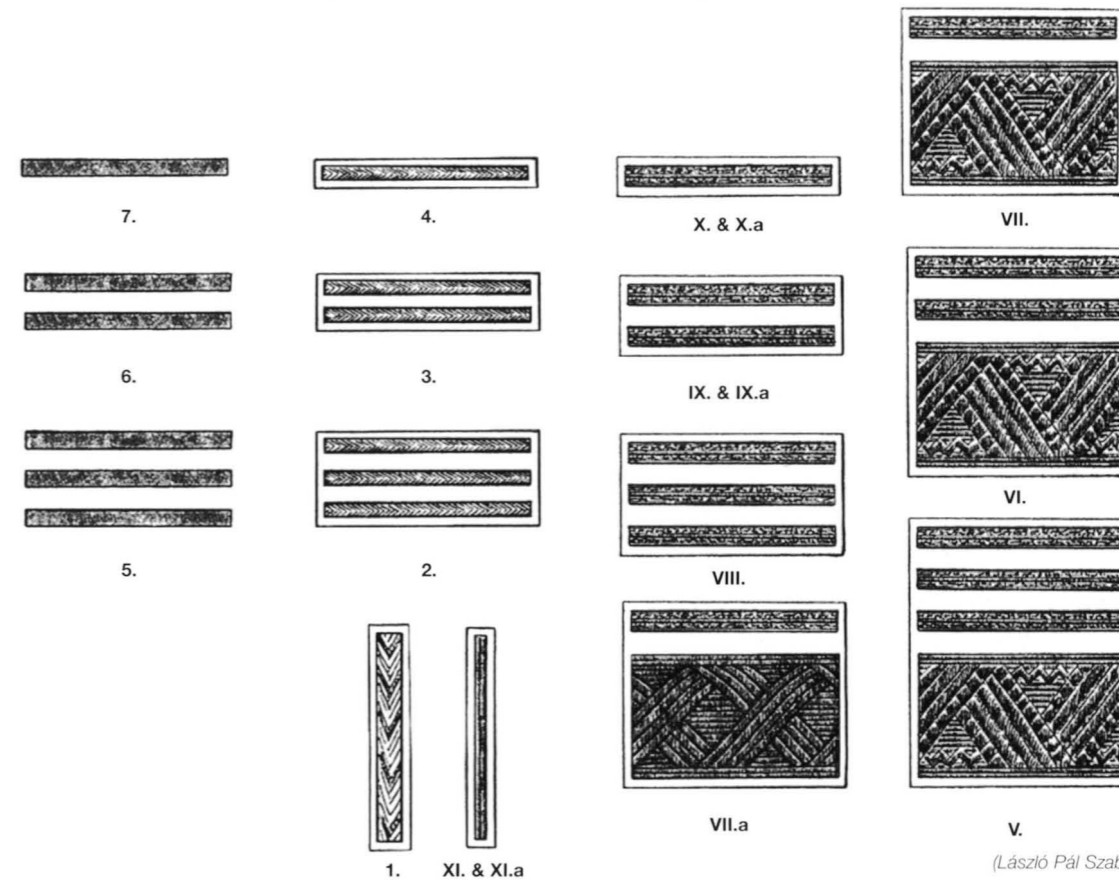
(László Pál Szabó)

**Chart 5: Summer shirt rank insignia, 30 April 1938–Sept 1945**

Enlisted men wore 5cm-long bars on the upper left sleeve of the M1938 and M1939 summer shirts, followed from 28 July 1943 by field officers, subaltern officers and officer candidates. Rank numbering is as collar patch chart, page 40:

- 8 No insignia.
- 7-5 1-3 x 1cm branch-colour braid bars.
- 4-1 1-3 x 0.3cm (1: 1 x 0.6cm vertical) dull silver braid bars on branch-colour cloth backing.

- XI.a-IX.a As for XI-IX.
- X-VIII 1-3 x 0.5cm dull gold braid bars on branch-colour cloth backing.
- VII.a-V 1-3 x 0.5cm and 1 x 3cm dull gold braid bars on branch-colour cloth backing.



(László Pál Szabó)

a separate trigger finger, officers' breeches and Bilgeri boots. He carries a M1939 Király sub-machine gun, canvas magazine pouches and M1936 grenades.

**C2: Őrvezető, VII Engineer Battalion; Noviy Oskol, January 1943**

This combat engineer defending the Noviy Oskol line wears his field cap with the *topán* removed since 1942, and an enlisted overcoat with buttonless enlisted steel-green branch-colour spearhead collar patches and single cuff rank bars. He has engineers' field equipment, including a long-shaft spade, and wears long trousers and black leather 'engineers' half-boots with ankle support straps; these were also worn unofficially by other branches.

**C3: Vezérezredes Gusztáv Jány, 2nd Army; Alekseyevka, September 1942**

General Jány wears the field cap with detachable general officers' gold wire oak leaf and laurel branches (field-marschals added crossed batons) below the gold officers' *topán*. His summer tunic is dyed light green (they were seen in shades between very light grey and dark blueish-green), with field collar patches, dark coffee-brown thread field shoulder straps with brown crowned field buttons, but no medal ribbons or badges.

**D: OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE, 1943-44**  
**D1: Honvéd, 101 Tank Company, August 1943**

This tank crewman wears the brown leather tank crew and motorcyclists' uniform, with the M1939 protective helmet, leather tunic with strapped cuffs and brown crowned buttons, and trousers with strapped ankles. Equipment is limited to a 9mm pistol and a canvas bread-bag.



**D2: Karpaszományos tizedes, VII Bicycle Battalion; Korosten, June 1943**

This reserve officer candidate wears a M1938 enlisted khaki summer shirt, with cornflower-blue Mobile Troops' sleeve rank bars and volunteer's 7.5cm-long cuff bar. As a section commander he has a whistle and lanyard, and would carry a notebook and pliers; his rifleman's equipment holds less than the usual enlisted man's ammunition load. Strapped to his regulation bicycle are a M1935 8mm rifle and a rolled khaki blanket.

**D3: Zászlóhelyettes, 1 Assault Artillery Battalion; Otyń'a, July 1944**

This commissioned WO, a platoon commander in this élite branch, wears the M1944 peaked field cap and a cloth-sleeved leather jerkin (introduced in the 1930s); the Assault Artillery badge on the left side of the cap and right breast comprises a gilt crowned skull in a winged wreath above a crossed cannon, ramrod and three cannon balls, on an

An Air Force private (*Repülő*) in khaki field uniform; the soft beret-style headgear (actually originating from the seaman's cap) bears a brown crowned 'Turul' badge on a black triangle, and a plain black band (this had neck ribbons, hidden at this angle). His tunic has black cloth shoulder straps with a white cord chevron symbolizing eagle's wings, and brown metal winged propeller badges are displayed on his collar. See Plate G2. (Tibor Horváth, RegMilHun Collection)

artillery-scarlet backing. He has a German MP38 SMG and one set of canvas magazine pouches.

The Assault Artillery branch was equipped with a mixture of Hungarian Turan medium tanks, Hungarian Zrínyi and German StuG III assault guns.

**E: NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA, 1944**

**E1: Szakaszevető, 17 Székely Border Guard Battalion, October 1944**

This deputy platoon commander wears camouflage leaves in the chicken-wire netting of his M1935 helmet, a shelter-half, and an overcoat with plain grass-green spearhead collar patches and cuff rank bars. Székely Border units did not wear the 'Turul' badge. He also has tight-calved trousers, and infantry equipment with the obsolete Austro-Hungarian M1895 8mm Mannlicher rifle.

**E2: Főhadnagy, 1 Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion; battle of Arad, 13 September 1944**

This Csaba armoured car company commander wears the tank and assault artillery crewman's greyish-blue uniform, derived from the German M1935 black uniform, with M1939 protective helmet. The

double-breasted jacket, with silver crowned buttons, should only show cornflower-blue field collar patches, but this officer has added dark coffee-brown shouldercords, though correctly omitting his ribbons and Combatant Officer breast badge. He wears his trousers tightened with ankle-strings over Bilgeri boots, and carries a 9mm pistol.

**E3: Törzsörmester, 21 Border Rifle Battalion, October 1944**

This mountain-equipped border rifleman wears the mountain field cap with the gilt buglehorn badge (with aluminium battalion number) on the left side (and also on his steel helmet), an edelweiss on the right, but no cockerel plume. His field tunic has the Border Rifles breast badge in brown thread (for service uniform; officers, gold wire; WOs, silver wire). This 'Turul' mythical hawk, with a sword and oakleaves on grass green backing, was also worn on the overcoat's right upper sleeve and, on light blue cloth, by Mobile Troops serving with Border units. On the left upper tunic sleeve he wears a career

WOs' and NCOs' silver braid triangle on branch-colour backing; note also the ribbons of the Small Silver Bravery Medal and German Iron Cross 2nd Class. He carries a M1938 Beretta SMG, ammunition pouches, pistol, bread-bag, gasmask in a M1942 container, and wears M1943 trousers and engineers' boots.

**F: BATTLE OF BUDAPEST, 1944-45**

**F1: Százados, Parachute Assault Regiment, Szent László Division, February 1945**

This company commander is wearing the paratrooper brown-sand-white camouflage jacket over his field tunic with the parachute qualification badge above the right breast pocket on grass-green cloth backing; several variants existed, including wire-embroidered. He also displays the Combatant Officer badge on the right breast pocket, and the aluminium Szent László badge on the left – an axe with a crooked shaft on a crown in a wreath. He carries a 'Frommer Stop' pistol. German M1937 paratrooper helmets were also worn in this unit.

**F2: Szakaszevető, 10 Reconnaissance Battalion, December 1944**

This deputy platoon commander wears the rare white/light greenish brown reversible padded winter jacket, and trousers tightened with ankle strings over black half-boots. He has a M1939 Király SMG, magazine pouch, and necklace of M1936 grenades.

**F3: Alhadnagy, Military Police Company, 10 Infantry Division, January 1945**

This warrant officer wears the Gendarmerie field uniform: peaked field cap with green plumes; khaki overcoat with madder-red and steel-green spearhead collar patches with a silver Gendarmerie platoon- or post-commander's crowned button, and a M1944 Field Security duty gorget; breeches and black leather riding boots. His weapon is the M1943 version of the Király SMG.

**G: BATTLE OF BUDAPEST, 1944-45**

**G1: Örvezető, 12 Artillery Battalion, December 1944**

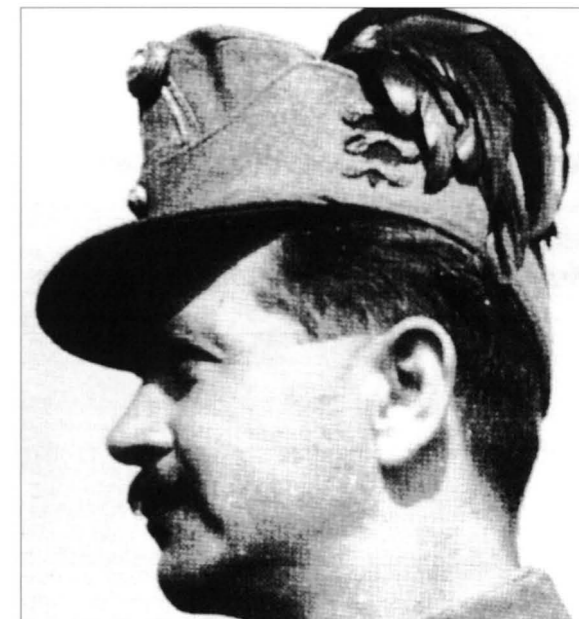
This gunner wears his field tunic with scarlet collar patches replaced by cloth strips due to material shortages. He wears M1943 trousers with canvas anklets and ankle-boots, and has discarded his field equipment while serving a field gun.

**G2: Tizedes, Air Force Rifle Regiment, Szent László Division, December 1944**

This radio-operator wears the khaki Air Force enlisted field uniform, with brown crowned 'Turul' hawk cap badge on a black triangle on the beret with black cap band and neck ribbons. The tunic has a white braid chevron and two rank bars on black shoulder straps, brown winged-propeller collar badges, and brown crowned hawk buttons; on the left breast pocket is the aluminium Szent László badge on black branch-colour cloth. He wears long trousers and black half-boots, and operates an R-3 radio.

**G3: Hadnagy, Buda Volunteer Regiment, February 1945**

This platoon commander wears Hungarian Army uniform with a white armband showing the company number. He has picked up from the battlefield a Soviet PPSH 41 7.62mm SMG and a khaki canvas pouch for its distinctive drum magazine. His overcoat has infantry officers' gold-buttoned spearhead collar patches and cuff rank insignia.



A Royal Gendarmerie Lieutenant, wearing a mountain cap with a plume of feathers. His *topán* triangle is madder-red edged with steel-green. (Vitéz Gábor)

**H: THE LAST DITCH**

**H1: Karpaszományos tizedes, I River Forces Battle Group, March 1945**

This reserve officer candidate wears the M1925 seaman's khaki field uniform. The peakless cap bears a brown metal crowned fouled anchor in a wreath, above a black cap tally with the River Forces title in gold thread, and falling ribbon ends. His tunic, without breast pockets, has brown crowned fouled anchor buttons, M1940 blue cuff rank bars and volunteer chevron, and campaign ribbons for Transylvania 1940 and South Hungary (Bácska) 1941. He wears infantry equipment, and is armed with an 8mm rifle and two M1942 stick-grenades.

**H2: Tartalékos orvos zászlós, 24 Infantry Division Medical Company; Bohemia, May 1945**

This reserve medical officer, tending to troops in transit to a Soviet POW camp, wears an enlisted summer tunic with dark coffee-brown thread officers' shoulder cords with brown crowned field buttons, Medical Corps black field collar patches, and – unusually – tight-calved linen trousers. His medical waterbottle, medical supplies pouches and Red Cross armband were normally issued to medical orderlies.

**H3: Csendőr, Szombathelyi Gendarmerie Battalion**

The pro-Nazi dictator Szálasi was based at the town of Szombathely from December 1944 until he fled to Vienna in March 1945. This career JNCO, based on a photo of April 1943, wears the traditional black leather hat with M1881 brown metal badge, greenish-black cockerel's feathers and a green cap cord (WOs, silver; subaltern officers, single gold; field officers, double gold). His service uniform has a tunic with silver crowned buttons, breeches and black riding boots. Note also the whistle, green marksman's lanyard, two ammunition pouches, a patrol-bag, and the 8mm rifle and bayonet.

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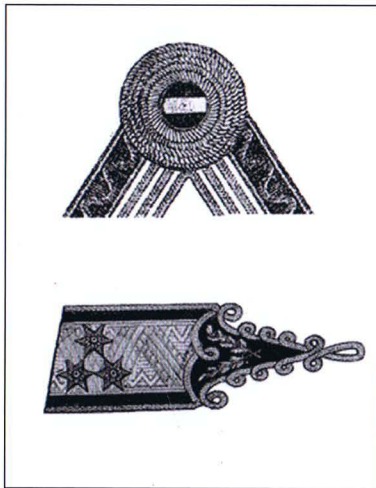
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