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**ABSTRACT**

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**CURRENT ISSUES CONCERNING THE TRAINING OF MILITARY PERSONNEL,  
WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL  
CONFLICTS**

**(PhD dissertation)**

## I. SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF MY RESEARCH

The current organizational structure of HDF (Hungarian Defense Forces) is determined by a set of laws, regulations and various other means of government control, which also provide the framework for the training of military personnel. In everyday practice these laws and regulations must be strictly observed, even if a viable solution to a given problem would require a different approach.

A summary of the results of scientific research conducted in this field can aid decision makers in identifying and implementing the desired changes in the system by providing a sound basis which they can rely on in the course of their work

*The structural and organizational reform of HDF started over fifteen years ago. The most significant event in this process has been the conversion to a fully professional fighting force; with this step Hungary – similarly to other European countries – has created the foundations of a military force that is able to face the challenges of the 21st century. However, one of the negative side effects of such a long transition period is the frequent need for crisis management, which further extends the time required for the successful implementation of cultural changes within the organization.* An additional problem is that no appropriate course of action has been decided on to meet the demands of the new environment.

The military has been strongly affected by the political transformation of the country. However, the greatest challenge so far has been presented by the need to meet the requirements of NATO, whose role has also changed and is as a result currently undergoing structural transformation. The situation is only worsened by our continuously diminishing resources.

*The events of 11 September, 2001 have made us realize that global terrorism presents a new type of threat to the developed world, which cannot always be countered successfully by our security forces.* In addition, NATO has taken up the responsibility of participating in various operations to prevent the escalation of crisis and provide for the peace and stability of troubled regions in different parts of the world at the request of international organizations.

In order to carry out these qualitatively new tasks, the Hungarian Defence Forces have to develop new capabilities and provide a training system to ensure the effective training of its personnel. Not only are the new tasks different from conventional military tasks, further challenges are posed by the physical and cultural environment as well. Consequently, the training and other, training related systems should have a content and use such methods which can effectively facilitate the successful accomplishment of the present and future tasks of HDF.

Due to its heterogeneity, *the Hungarian military bears all the characteristics (positive and negative) of society itself. As a result of these „chaotic conditions”, its internal affairs are characterized by tensions and conflicts.* The military is an organization where, due to the tasks arising from its basic functions, the personnel must be able to tolerate stress for extensive time periods and resolve conflicts effectively.

The aforementioned sources of conflict are all interrelated and inseparable from questions related to the promotion system, structural problems, and the development of personnel, in other words to the training of soldiers and military units. After the political transformation of the country, changes had to be brought about in the legal environment as well to harmonize existing laws with the new environment. First this meant creating the necessary conditions for the development of the country's emerging market economy. Later adjustment to changes in the international environment, namely the facilitation of Hungary's NATO accession, became first priority. All this had to be accomplished with a constantly decreasing budget. However, priorities suddenly changed when the decision was made to

convert to a fully professional force at a faster rate and in a shorter time than previously planned.

The permanent changes ongoing since the beginning of the 90s have affected the training system as well, both in its principles and its structure. However, due to the fast pace of these changes, often unprepared and lacking sufficient capabilities, no new, viable system has emerged. Everything has been sacrificed on the altar of short term interests. The present system is inflexible, and without fundamental structural and cultural changes unable to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing environment. *The amount of uncertainty has increased within the system*, which has a negative influence not only on the quality of training, but also on interpersonal and inter-organizational relations .

The emergence of the above mentioned problems (changes in organizational structure, conversion to a fully professional force, new tasks related to NATO accession etc.) makes it necessary to identify and analyse those factors which are, either directly or indirectly, responsible for stress and interpersonal conflicts in the organization. The identification and psychological analysis of events that constitute a source of stress will form a sound basis for the selection, training and evaluation of military personnel.

## **II. HYPOTHESES AND MAIN OBJECTIVES OF MY RESEARCH**

### **Hypotheses of my research**

In my thesis I started out from the assumption that the training system of HDF needs to be reformed. The reforms should be based on a scientific analysis. The proposed changes should be harmonized with the local conditions, the Hungarian legal system, and the future tasks of HDF.

### **Accordingly, I have formulated the following hypotheses:**

1. The training system of the Hungarian Defence Forces – without questioning its positive aspects – is unable to provide properly trained personnel with readily employable capabilities for the units.

2. We should not bring about short term, insufficiently prepared changes in the training system; only comprehensive, long term reforms should be planned and implemented. The implementation of such changes should be started at the institutional (vocational training, higher education) level, focusing on the training and further education of officers and non-commissioned officers.

3. Progress can only be made through coordinated changes that have an impact on every segment of the organization. .

4. Due to the insufficiencies of the training system, conflicts do not strengthen but annihilate the individual, who as a result becomes incapable of finding and applying such solutions to existing problems which serve the interests of the organization, the group and the individual alike.

### **In my dissertation I have set it as a goal to:**

1. Explore those processes and anomalies that reduce the effectiveness of training, and therefore military service.

2. Prove that in order to carry out long term changes, we should primarily focus our attention on the training institutions and on cadets before or currently undergoing their training.

3. Shed light on the destructive nature of the lack of internal „harmony”, its role in the functionality and development of the organization, and highlight the fact that progress is only possible through coordinated changes which have an impact on every segment of the organization.

4. Prove that the insufficiencies of the training system are directly responsible for interpersonal and organizational conflicts, which can endanger the success of military activities and have a negative influence on decision making.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

During my research I systematically studied the rather extensive literature related to the field of *conflicts*, whose thought provoking theses are adapted and appear in the conclusion of each chapter.

I have also examined all related studies prepared for HDF along with the suggestions and proposals made for the MoD on the basis of these studies.

I have studied the relevant annual reports, rectorial and presidential reports concerning training in educational institutions, and the most important documents and reports prepared by the University Council.

I have analysed those factors which point to the harmful effects of the lack of internal „harmony” and their role in the work of the organization.

In my thesis, along with my research results I have also integrated all the experience I have gained as a career officer, commander and human resource manager

#### **My thesis is organized in the following way:**

In order to achieve my objectives, I have used methods generally applied in military science and focused on three interrelated areas:

In the first step, I analyse the current status of educational institutions responsible for the training of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and on a professional bases determine the direction of the desired changes. I identify those „professional” factors to which special attention should be paid during the development phase of the training program along with the anomalies that reduce the effectiveness of training and military service.

In the second step, after discussing the theoretical basis of conflicts in the life of the organization, I analyse the „*adaptation process*” and conditions of personnel serving abroad through a number of personal interviews and the secondary analysis of case studies carried out by ZMNE (Miklos Zrinyi National Defense University) research groups in 2003 and 2005.

In the third step, I analyse prejudice, discrimination and equal opportunity in the military based on related documents, plans, laws and case studies. I explore those processes which reveal the destructive effects of the lack of internal „harmony”, and its role in the life of the organization. Prejudice, discrimination and the lack of access to equal opportunity constitute a social problem in Hungary; unfortunately these problems are also present in the military.

In the fourth step, I demonstrate that the HDF, contrary to public opinion, possesses a number of values that can serve as an example to other social organizations.

The results of my analysis and the proposed solutions to existing problems are summerized in 4 chapters and 3 annexes.

#### IV. SUMMARY OF MY RESEARCH

The military's primary concern at the moment is not external threats: we are facing an „enemy” that cannot be identified with individuals, organizations or nations. The most dangerous threat to the integrity of the organization is presented primarily by attitudes and ways of thinking that drive a wedge between the top decision makers, who set the goals and objectives of the organization, and that part of the personnel which, although pessimistic and „narrow minded” as a result of the experience they have gained in the past fifteen years, possess the capabilities to implement their decisions.

A lot of seemingly just criticism is voiced by the personnel due to the lack of access to sufficient information. At first the leadership responds to such criticism, later however they simply acknowledge and take it as a fact that at lower levels people are unable to comprehend their ideas and stop providing further information. The executive levels of the organization try to decrease the existing degree of uncertainty and use their imagination to complete the missing details. The news circulating in the organization is distorted by people's emotions, functioning becomes uncertain as a result of contradictions, output and capability levels drop, and in the end the original plans have to be modified.

*It is hard to determine who is responsible for failure, for in a way everyone is responsible and everyone is a victim at the same time. However, the responsibility of the leaders is unquestionable, even if they feel that they have done everything they could. If they have really done everything they had in their power, the responsibility is theirs, for they have either failed to recognize their opportunities, or they have not really done everything they could have done.*

*There is no logical error in the above line of reasoning; the leaders of an organization must always communicate their goals clearly in order to make sure that their subordinates fully understand why things are happening the way they are. The leaders should also inspire trust through their attitude and behaviour to ensure that their subordinates will accept and support their decisions even if they fail to grasp their full significance.*

The individual's response to conflicts is strongly linked to individual, organizational and national culture. Unfortunately, we Hungarians do not tolerate conflicts well, do not try to resolve them in a peaceful manner. This is not something that is impossible to change, but it requires a considerable amount of time. The educational and training institutions, regardless of their level, type, and the make-up of their teachers and students, do not only train and educate those who get in contact with them, but they also have a strong impact on their personal development. Interaction can take place in the classroom as well as outside of it, during which the participants play a mutual role in the formation and development of each others' skills and personality. Of course these relationships cannot be always ideal, but they can favourably influence the individual's personal development, especially in military institutions, where it is particularly important to help the individual to adapt to the culture of the organization, since it will be part of his/her tasks later on in their career to help others do the same.

Solution to the complex problems discussed in my dissertation cannot be expected from the reform of the training system alone: we need to review the working processes of the entire organization. In my view, the military at its present state is unable to carry out fundamental reforms effectively, no matter how hard its leaders may try. To achieve the desirable result, we need to explore all possible ways of developing the capabilities of the organization and gain the full support of its entire personnel.

We also need to analyse the current state of our training institutions and set the directions they should follow on a strictly professional basis. We should also identify the factors which have a destructive effect on the atmosphere and capabilities of the organization.

Although the military is a special organization, it still possesses all those elements that have a strong influence on the daily life, culture and success of the organization.

## **V. SUMMARY OF MY CONCLUSIONS**

Based on my thesis and on the above, it is safe to say that my assumptions and hypotheses have proved to be correct and I have reached my research objectives. The following conclusions provide an ample proof of that:

1. The internal relations of the Hungarian Defence Forces are saturated by financial and professional uncertainty to such extent that it presents a danger to the functioning of the entire organization. The numerous reforms have not always facilitated the long term development of capacity building, they have often worked against processes desirable at a strategic level.

The peacetime tasks of the Hungarian Defence Forces are increasingly linked with international operations, which should have a number of positive side effects. The experience gained from participation in such operations should result in the improvement of individual and collective capabilities, which in return, integrated in the operation of organizations related to the defence of the country, will in a broader sense increase the defence capabilities of the entire country.

2. We should pay special attention to the transformation of the training system. The task of military schools is to train, educate and prepare soldiers for life in the military as well as creating an environment and introducing a value system that facilitates their emotional attachment to the organization. Therefore, we should strengthen the military characteristics of our institution by examining its entire physical and intellectual structure (personnel, infrastructure, target system, course structure) to create an environment which can serve as a benchmark for the military at home and abroad alike. The personnel graduating from this institution should be confident and professionally competent in their field, and should develop a personality and attitude which enable them to credibly communicate ethical values to their subordinates, society and to the Alliance.

3. In order to successfully participate in international missions, the training system of the Hungarian Defence Forces should provide officers who are highly competent in their field, meet the necessary psychological requirements, and have the experience and ability needed to evaluate a given situation and make independent decisions to ensure the success of the operation. For this reason, in the reform of the training system special attention should be paid to the short term, intensive consolidation of existing psychological and professional foundations and the practical application of the special skills based on these foundations.

The components and structure of the training should facilitate the fastest possible acquisition of new skills. During the training period, a practical approach should enjoy priority, where students or trainees have the opportunity to gain the required amount of practical experience relatively independently, under the supervision of a trainer or instructor. In simulation and field exercises we should have a many-sided approach in order to increase intensity and variety. We should coordinate the course material provided at different levels, thereby creating the conditions for joint exercises in a simulated environment.

4. In the case of new recruitments, we should pay more attention to psychological abilities and social skills, with special focus on the individual's ability to perform under short and long term stress. Experiences gained during the selection process can help to meet the human resource requirements of the military and they can also contribute to meeting the requirements of other organizations in the public and private sector, thereby increasing employees' opportunity to find the type of work they consider as suitable.

## **VI. SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

In my thesis I have achieved the following scientific results:

Through primary (documents) and secondary analysis and with the help of my personal experience *I have identified those anomalies which are responsible for the reduced effectiveness of military training, and therefore of military service.*

1. *Through an analysis of causal relations* I have proved that in order to achieve our long term objectives we should primarily focus on students before or undergoing training, and on the training system. We should also get rid of all those obstacles that hinder the reform of the organization.

2. I have shed light on the fact that a comprehensive reform of the training system can only be carried out successfully through a number of highly coordinated efforts.

3. I have proved that the insufficiencies of the training system have a direct impact on personal conflicts, which in return has a negative influence on decision making and the success of military activities.

## **VII. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF MY RESEARCH RESULTS**

- My findings concerning education and training should be taken into consideration during the revision of military training at ZMNE (Miklos Zrinyi National Defense University).

- They should be applied in accordance with the strategy concerning national training and education.

- The findings of the thesis should be incorporated into commissioned and non-commissioned officer training programs.

- The thesis should be processed and used by the department of the Ministry of Defence responsible for training and education.

- Findings regarding conflict management should be kept in mind during the training of personnel for service abroad, with special attention to command personnel.

- Findings regarding personal and group conflicts should be taken into consideration when setting the tasks, structure and course of action of the family support system that is currently being developed.

- Findings regarding equal opportunity should be taken into consideration in the daily work of team psychologists, with special focus on personnel prepared for service abroad.

- Findings of the research should be taken into consideration in the legislative work of the Ministry of Defence, with special attention to the rules of foreign service as well as to the field of training and preparation.

## **VIII. SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING THE CONTINUATION OF RESEARCH**

My research has shed light on the current problems of the training and education system and the direct effect of these problems on stress and conflict management, *therefore further research should be conducted in the following areas:*

- Connections between military training and education and their effect on near-combat situation foreign missions.

- Practical application of the results of conflict management programs in the evolutionary process of the training system.

- The role of conflict management skills in a competence based promotion system.

- Conditions before, during and after live fire and other types of military exercise.

## **IX. A LIST OF MY PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC**

1. Present, past and future of the non-commissioned officer staff (Co-author: Dr. János Tompa ddtbk.) SVKI, Defence studies, 29 issue, 1999.
2. Future requirements for non-commissioned officers (HVK Science Department, Military Science Guide: ALTISZT 2000 Scientific Conference, 1999/6. issue).
3. Changing requirements for non-commissioned officers (Human Review 2002/4. issue).
4. A few aspects of the retaining power of the volunteer force in the Hungarian military (Human Review 2005/2. issue).
5. New tasks of human resource strategy with regard to the conversion to a volunteer force (ZMNE, CONFERENCE on Human Resource Management, with special focus on NATO accession, p. 71-76)
6. New tasks of human strategy regarding the change to a volunteer fighting force (Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University CONFERENCE on the human strategy of the army being considerate towards connection to NATO, p. 65–70.)

## **ARTICLES SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION:**

1. Aspects of human resource management in some NATO countries (Sword and Pen)
2. Attainment and training of personnel for the military (Sword and Pen)
3. New tasks and human resources in HDF
4. Human resource management and organizational culture (New Defence Review)
5. Human strategy for establishing a professional force 2002-2013. (AARMS)



## **MY MOST IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS:**

**1.**Public relations strategy in the training system of national defence (Foreign Trade Collage Library, 1994.);

**2.**Reform of NCO training, image of the future NCO with regard to NATO accession (ZMNE Science library, 1998.);

**3.**Secondary school level military education and NCO training from 1945 to our days. (ZMNE Science library, 1998);

**4.**The place, role, tasks and career model of the NCO staff in some NATO countries and the Austrian military (ZMNE Science library, 1998.);

**5.**Problems of formulating security strategy, military strategy and military doctrine in Hungary (ZMNE Science library,1998)