

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
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**Application principles and practice of the Rapid
Forces in the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces**

PhD thesis summary

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1. DEFINITION THE ACADEMIC PROBLEM

During the course of my research, the question arose how the military strategists of the great powers of Europe between the two world wars (Fuller, Liddel Hart, Tuhachevsky, Iserson, Guderian, etc.) approached the question of the use of rapid units, how they envisioned future warfare. Although the mentioned persons in terms of economic and military potential belonged to different categories of states, but they had to have an obvious influence on the views of military experts from smaller countries, such as the contemporary Kingdom of Hungary. For this reason, an additional question that arose during my research was how the international environment affected the Hungarian military thinkers of the 1930s and 1940s, what the topic of mechanized warfare meant from a Hungarian point of view, the extent to which the Hungarian General Staff officers followed the trend at that time.

In addition to the theoretical approach to the war of the future, I also examined whether the technical and equipment level of the defense forces met the requirements of the age. Among these, I presented the contemporary Hungarian industrial background, arms acquisitions, as well as how flexible and successful the Hungarian defense forces were in introducing new troops (assault artillery) during the Second World War, and analyzed the deployment, tactical military experience and compared them with the characteristics of German and Russian tactics - military art.

By examining the literary sources, the copies of the contemporary professional journal and the documents of the General Staff, I am looking for an answer to the theoretical considerations, organizational structure, technical means and success of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces rapid army bodies on the eastern theater of Second World War.

2. HYPOTHESES

Before starting the research, I started from the following assumptions:

- 1. According to my first hypothesis, the officers of the rapid forces of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces gradually learned and adapted foreign ideas about armored warfare and the use of rapid troops, as well as their military order (with differences in country size and economic performance) before the Second World War and the leadership of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces monitored the appearance of the new types of troops (assault artillery) and regularized them in their own contingents.*
- 2. My second hypothesis is that due to the limited capacities of contemporary Hungarian industry and limited access to raw materials, army cavalry played a major role in the bond of rapid forces during the Second World War.*

3. According to my third assumption, the Hungarian defense forces had the appropriate resources to set up armored troops, the Hungarian military industry was able to produce tanks under license, and some domestically manufactured military equipment met the requirements of that age.

4. Fourth, I assumed that the Hungarian industry was unable to supply the Hungarian armored forces with a sufficient amount of technical equipment.

3. TARGETS OF THE RESEARCH

In the course of my research, by analyzing, studying and comparing the contemporary sources (staff reports, transcripts and suggestions, studies of military thinkers) dealing with the order, application principles and technical means of the armored troops of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces, as well as contemporary literature, international ideas about mechanized warfare I analyzed how these gained acknowledgement in the defense forces. To what extent could be considered successful the use of the rapid forces in the army, and to what extent was the Hungarian political and military leadership able to guarantee the successful struggle of the Hungarian armored and mechanized infantry units as the Second World War progressed?

In the course of my work, I explored the contemporary weapons acquisition possibilities, military order development ideas, and their implementation in practice.

In order to make the problem more transparent, I used the literature to shed light on the Hungarian military industry's efforts to produce Hungarian armored cars and tanks, further I presented the self-developed, technical devices of the Hungarian rapid units (39M Csaba armored car). Based on literary and archival materials, I explored the Hungarian tank production (38M Toldi and 40M Turán I) realized on the basis of license agreements, as well as its volume.

4. STRATEGY AND METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

In the course of my research, I explored the application principles of the ground forces (cavalry, armored and mechanized troops) in the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces, as well as their practical implementation, in a deductive way and by studying contemporary regulations and other archival and library materials regulating the theoretical and practical application of armored and rapid units.

I compared the facts available from different sources (archival materials, contemporary journal studies and contemporary bibliographic materials), examining the extent to which the Hungarian military leadership of the period followed the needs and principles of that age.

I also explored how the studies published in the Hungarian Military Review facilitated the general knowledge of contemporary, modern warfare principles, the acceptance of those by the staff, the cooperation of the individual professional fields, the sharing and further development of the experiences of good practices.

I examined the possible occurrences of the contradictions between the literary sources prepared for the public and the reports and submissions prepared for the General Staff, I reviewed in the Military History Archives of the Institute of Military History and Museum of the Ministry of Defense the collection of the 1st Division of the General Staff of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces related to the ground forces' rapid troops.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In the introduction of the first chapter, I defined the research problem, the reasons for my choice of topic, and described the scientific problem. This section also includes my research assumptions, research goals, methods, and strategies.

During the course of my research, I examined emphatically the studies on the future of mechanized warfare, covering international trends between the two world wars, paying special attention to the extent to which Hungarian military thinkers followed the position of foreign experts and were prepared to receive them and adapt to Hungarian conditions. In addition to the literary sources, I searched the archives of the Military History Archives and the analysis of the relevant articles of contemporary professional journals (Hungarian Military Review) for traces of the fact how did the General Staff view the rapid units, what organizational and application principles and requirements did it formulate in the decade before the Second World War. It became clear during my research, therefore the topicality and value of the topic is enhanced by the fact that the attitude of the General Staff between the two world wars to the issue of mechanized warfare has not been examined in detail in a scientific dissertation. In the first chapter of the dissertation, I also discuss the changes that have taken place in the General Staff and among the leading officers in charge in the field of mechanized warfare after the accession of the Hungarian Kingdom to the war.

In the second part of the dissertation, in addition to the description of the most important, domestically manufactured technical devices of Hungarian mechanized units, I examine the military industry developments realized in the frame of the so called Darányi

program, their financial sources, political and legal background, and I briefly present the results of Hungarian armored car and tank production and design.

In the third part of my work, I analyze the order of the rapid units of the ground forces in the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces and their application under combat conditions.

6. SUMMARIZED DEDUCTIONS

In the 1920s and 1930s, the military strategists of the European great powers gradually “dreamed up” the way of the future warfare for the ground forces, and as a result of their thoughts, self-employed, combined-arms higher units (armored divisions, armored corps and armies, mechanized infantry units) were set up they proved their strength and abilities in the battles of the Second World War. Experts of the Hungarian defense forces (Captain Károly Bernola, mechanical engineer Zoltán Somoskeőy, lieutenant general Károly Gerbert) showed a serious theoretical interest in the application and technique of small tanks already in the early 1930s. From 1935, after the regularization of the Fiat-Ansaldo small tank in Hungary, it was possible to turn thoughts into deeds. In 1936, the General Staff created the regulations for the use of small tanks, but already in the spring of 1935 they had informations about the directions of German motorization and the formation of the first armored battalion in Germany. The deployment and organization issues of the small tanks were tested by the General Staff during the summer military exercise of 1938, during which the technical errors and construction deficiencies of the vehicle became apparent to the experts. In the same year, Colonel-General Elemér Gorondy-Novák, after reviewing the exercises of the rapid units, made a number of critical remarks, including about the flaws in communication, the excessive formalization of the command technique, and the shortcomings of the training. In addition to the above, the last full year of peace was of paramount importance due to a number of other events. The Győr program was launched at that time, the Kingdom of Hungary achieved serious foreign policy successes (Bled Convention, First Vienna Decision), and a modern armored vehicle (38M Toldi) was put into operation at the Defense Forces. As a result of the First Vienna decision, the units of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces (I, II, VI and VII corps) took possession of the southern part of the Highlands, and then in the spring of 1939 Transcarpathia. By this time, it had also become apparent that the armored units of the defense forces would be in dire need of a medium tank. Lack of time and limited procurement opportunities prompted the military leadership to contact the Czech factory Skoda in October 1939 in order to obtain a manufacturing license for the desired medium truck (T-21). The following year, the contract was concluded between the parties and the type was regularized by the defense forces under the name 40M Turán.

In addition to the development of military technology, changes also took place in the organizational structure of Hungarian rapid units. A ministerial decree issued on October 12, 1940, ordered with immediate effect the organization of all cycling and motorized infantry formations, cavalry, and armored troops in one combat arm. Immediately before that, at the end of September 1940, Major General Sándor Horváth formulated the goals and assigned the path to be followed by the Hungarian armored weapon. Among the development of war theory, the names of lieutenant Jenő Rásky and captain István Belezsnay deserve attention, who, while studying the events of the armored war so far, drew attention in their writings to the importance of joint and all-arms cooperation .

In parallel with the organizational changes (withdrawal of cavalry units), on October 1, 1942, the 1st Armored Corps Command was formed from the Rapid Corps Command. However, the battles of the Hungarian 1st (field) armored division in Russia in 1942–43 highlighted the fact that, although Hungarian tankers - having the right technical equipment - are able to achieve tactical success, however, during the loss-making Don's bridgehead battles, it also became apparent that the training and disciplinary standards of the infantry cooperating with the armored units needed to be improved.

As a result of the industrial efforts, in addition to the Turán I, other technical equipment was added to the technical staff of the Defense Forces from 1940, the 40M Nimród self propelled tank hunter and anti-aircraft machine gun, the 43M Zrínyi assault gun, came into operation. The latter assets were to be organized as support assault artillery units in addition to the infantry divisions (as well as the cavalry divisions) as planned by the General Staff. In May 1943, under the command of captain József Barankay, the Hungarian Royal Defense Forces established the "Zrínyi" assault artillery training frame command from volunteers. In accordance with the decision of the General Staff, on October 1, 1943, the 1st Assault Artillery Battalion was formed under the command of captain Barankay, followed by the establishment of seven more assault artillery battalions according to the peace order on April 1, 1944.

The Hungarian armored forces and cavalry units proved their fighting skills and determination in the defensive battles of Galicia, Poland and Transylvania in 1944, but due to the insufficient amount and obsolescence of technical equipment and the oppressive technical and manpower superiority of the opponent - except for their individual tactical successes - they were unable to achieve significant results.

7. NEW ACADEMIC RESULTS

1. I proved that the military experts of the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces dealing with rapid units got to know the ideas of the strategists of the contemporary European military powers about mechanized warfare and followed the different theories relating to the armored warfare, which were adapted to the Hungarian possibilities. I also proved that the setting up of assault artillery in the General Staff became topical already in 1941.

2. I proved that the Hungarian military organization of the time could not disregard the independent use of cavalry units, the task of the cavalry as the second stage of the breakthrough was to exploit the results of the breakthrough forced by the tanks and to break down the smaller enemy residual forces.

3. I proved that the Royal Hungarian Defense Forces between the period of 1938–1944 had no shortage of material (financial) resources in relation to the needs, however, their efficient and complete use did not materialize, mainly due to a procurement problems. By reviewing the development stages and results of the Hungarian-made armored vehicles (39M Csaba), I proved that the contemporary Hungarian military and vehicle industry was able to produce self-developed armored (light) vehicles corresponding to the standards of the age. By examining the domestic production of the Toldi light tank and the Nimród armored machine gun, and by analyzing the domestic production of the later Turán family, I proved that the domestic production of foreign-developed combat vehicles was successful, which is clearly a success story of the Hungarian military industry.

4. I proved that the Hungarian military industry - in spite of the total of about 700 armored vehicles produced - was not able to serve the needs of the army for heavy equipment.

8. MEANS OF UTILIZATION OF MY RESEARCH, REFERENCES

The results of the research can also be a source of information for people without military training who are open to military science. The dissertation seeks to provide an interpretive framework for all interested parties to understand and analyze the military ideas of the contemporary European powers in connection with mechanized warfare, and to gain a better understanding of the relevant Hungarian military history between the two world wars.

The results of the research can also be used in education, such as in university social science studies (history studies) and also in the training material of the Faculty of Military Sciences and the Training of Military Officers at the National University of Public Service.

Due to the Hungarian aspects of the dissertation, the results of the research can be utilized in connection with the Zrínyi 2026 program at the organizations of the Ministry of Defense and at the High Command of the Hungarian Defense Forces, as well as at other government administrative bodies and state-owned companies involved in defense procurement planning and implementation. During the reconstruction of the Hungarian military industry in the 21st century, it is worth paying attention to the developments and mistakes made within the framework of the Győr program, drawing lessons from them. During the development of armaments and capabilities, the Hungarian military thinkers and military engineering innovations of the 1930s and 1940s can serve as guidelines, as well as the challenges and existing problems arising from the geographical location of the country.

In order to further analyze the topic covered in the dissertation and to present the challenges caused by the neighbour states for the Hungarian Kingdom, military and tactical ideas of them, and in order to accurately explore the balance of power, it may be worthwhile to review and process the relevant literature and military archives of neighboring countries. A realistic assessment of contemporary Hungarian industrial capabilities would also require an examination of the military industrial potential of the neighboring countries (mainly Czechoslovakia, which has the most significant industrial background in the region) and a comparison with Hungarian capabilities.

9. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

HARKA, Ödön: A gépesített hadviselés nézetrendszerének kialakulása Magyarországon az 1930-as években (Hadtudományi Szemle 2017. X. évfolyam 1. szám pp. 251-274.)

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ARTICLES UNDER PUBLICATION:

HARKA, Ödön: A gyorsfegyvernem hivatalos létrejötte Magyarországon (Hadtudományi Szemle 2021. XIV. évfolyam 3. szám)

10. PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC BIOGRAPHY

NAME: J.D. Zoltán Ödön Harka

STUDIES:

1992-1997:	József Attila University Faculty of Law, Szeged; „summa cum laude” diploma
1998-2000:	German business law course in German language, joint program of University of Potsdam and University of Szeged
2000	Bar exam (excellent rating)
2016-	National University of Public Sciences, Faculty of Military Sciences and Officer Training, Doctoral School of Military Sciences, PhD student (correspondence training)

EXPERIENCES:

2000-2002	Bar member (Jász-Nagykún-Szolnok County Bar Association)
2001-2021	Research fellow, University of Szeged, Faculty of Law, Department of International Private Law, lectures in the field of conflict of law and international economic relations law, continuous participation in state examination committees (as an interviewer)
2002-2003:	Attorney-at-Law, Martonyi and Kajtár Baker & McKenzie Law Office Budapest, continuing to practice law in the Corporate and Commercial Law Group, preparing and commenting on international commercial agreements, participating in company due diligence in the field of financial law and real estate law
2002-	Member of the Budapest Bar Association, specialties: providing legal advice and comprehensive legal activities in the field of international trade and insurance law, providing full legal activities related to bankruptcy and liquidation proceedings, providing litigation and out-of-court representation related to receivables management, risk management, primarily development of collateral schemes (liens, sureties, real

estate options); real estate law, corporate and commercial law

OTHER SKILLS:

Language skills: English (negotiable, professional, intermediate language exam), German (negotiable, intermediate language exam), user-level computer skills (MS Word, Excel), "B" category driver license