

Theses of doctor's (PhD) dissertation

Attila Réfi

**The staff corps of the imperial-royal hussars in the era
of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars (1792-1815)**

Director of studies: Dr. József Zachar

Eötvös Loránd University

Budapest, 2008.

I. The importance and the historiographic antecedents of the issue

From on the middle of the 18th century, during the whole existence of the Hapsburg Empire, and in the Hungarian society even after that, until the end of WW2, the staff corps of the army of the time had a special privileged status. Owing to that, it is not surprising that in the last two or three decades the research on this particular group has been a focal point the studies of several illustrious historians.

In connection with the staff corps of the Hapsburg army, the studies of István Deák on the period between 1848 and 1918, those of Tibor Hajdú on the period of the dualism and those of József Zachar on the period between 1683 and 1792 should be mentioned, where the authors, in harmony with the latest tendencies in historiography, do not seek to describe or explain battles or wars, rather they study warfare, armies and soldiers as they are embedded in society, using methods of historiological statistics and sociology.

About the staff corps of the Hungarian army in the Hungarian War of Independence, the studies of Gábor Bona are of fundamental importance; he published several books about the biographies of persons who served as officers in the Hungarian army and the National Guard, thus offering a comprehensive picture about the composition and basic characteristics of the staff corps under study.

Recently the military command of the War of Independence led by Rákóczi has been studied by Kálmán Mészáros in his work *Generals and brigadiers of Ferenc Rákóczi II: creation and hierarchy of the higher command of the Hungarian rebels' army, 1703 – 1711*.

In the studies about the staff corps in the period between the two world wars, the name of Sándor Szakály should be highlighted, who provided a detailed survey first on the Hungarian military elite between 1938 and 1945, then published the biographical data of the members of this elite, the contemporaneous high command, in the form of a lexicon.

Finally, the work of János Bene and Péter Szabó should certainly be mentioned, which also provide a lexicon-like survey about the hussar staff corps of the Royal Hungarian Army in the same period, between 1938 and 1945.

Notwithstanding these studies, serious hiatuses remained in this field. We still lack studies on the imperial-royal staff corps in the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, though this age is undoubtedly of major importance and receives extra attention in research, but in Hungarian historiography it is treated as a stepchild. Including, of course, the studies on the staff corps of the elements of the imperial-royal army recruited in Hungary, including the hussars.

The arm mentioned latter earned its significance and priority in the eyes of Hungarians compared to other arms because it is the only arms of Hungarian origin. A value, which we have not adopted from others rather given to Europe and the world. When it was in its glory, hussars were established all together in 34 countries in Europe, of course under the conduct of officers and instructors of Hungarian origin, who introduced their habits, the Hungarian-style uniforms, hair and moustache style. Its success is evidenced by the fact that even the French „*Grande nation*” (Grand nation) which is so proud of its national values and traditions considers the history of their hussars established by a couple of Hungarian exiles to be one of its really glorious traditions.

However, some of our hussars got as far as beyond the old continent, for example they accompanied emperor Maximilian to Mexico, moreover an officer travelled further on to Hawaii where he attempted to establish a hussar troop. Thus it is not surprising that some Hungarian hussars, who probably never knew any decent civilian way of life, were present in every conflict like the American War of Independence and the Civil War, or in the Boer War in Africa, further increasing the reputation of this arm. This is why it is not an exaggeration what József Zachar writes in the latest survey on the issue, namely that the hussars have become a world heritage.

However, naturally, the *par excellence* hussar has always been the Hungarian hussar. The soldier who outgrew himself and became the spectacular evidence, and even the symbol of the military valour of the Hungarian nation and as such, has become an essential part of Hungarian folklore and Hungarian culture. Consider the figure János Háy conceived by author Garay, the Hungarian personification of the *miles gloriosus*, who served as an infantryman, but in his stories he falsely portrays himself as a hussar, or consider Brave János, also known as Jancsi Kukorica (Johnny Corn), who chose to be a gallant hussar rather an infantryman creeping in the dirt; and we could also mention the gingerbread hussar figures that were on sale in any village fair in the old days. It is safe to say that cavalymen (hussars) have had and probably still have a privileged, distinguished role in the historical awareness of Hungarian people. Another evidence is that hussars are frequently presented together with the most important national symbols – the national coat-of-arms, the national flag or the national colours. It is no surprise that hussar parades and hussar shows are essential and inevitable parts of every national holiday program, even in our time.

In my opinion all this justifies the scientific study of the hussars, which is naturally not a totally new enterprise. From the beginning of the 19th century on, naturally, analyses of this arm appeared in several significant historiographic studies on organizational history about the

entire Hapsburg army. Among these, the studies of August Gräffer and Andreas Thürheim and first of all, the monumental work of Alphons von Wrede should be highlighted. From the second half of the 19th century the first studies appeared that only focused on the hussars. Besides, several studies that focused on a particular issue or era, many monographies were also published on the history of the hussars. Among these studies of mixed value the ones that should be mentioned here are *The Hungarian Hussar* edited by Endre Ajtay and Endre Péczely in the era between the world wars, the *Big Book of Hussars* edited by György Ságvári and Győző Somogyi at the turn of the millennia and *The Hungarian Hussar* edited by József Zachar published at about the same time.

However, the works published up to now on hussars have not dealt with the staff corps of the arm, with two exceptions. These two are the above-mentioned biographical lexicon on the staff corps of the hussars between 1938 and 1945, written by János Bene and Péter Szabó, and partly the work of József Zachar also mentioned above, published with the title *Hapsburg rule, permanent army and the Hungarians*. However, the studies contained in this latter work do not clearly focus on the staff corps of the hussars either, they rather concentrate – in addition to several studies on different matters – on the units recruited in Hungary in the period before the French, wars between 1683 and 1792, including the hussars of course, the staff officers of Hungarian origin, mainly colonels and regiment owners and generals who played a role in army command.

II. Subject and fundamental sources of this study

As the brief survey on historiography provided above makes clear, studies of the officers and staff corps of hussars in the French wars have not been conducted yet; my present work is intended to fill in this gap.

My research focused first of all – within the general topic of hussars – on the staff corps constituting the higher command of the regular imperial-royal hussar regiments existing for longer or shorter terms in that era, in the army of the Hapsburg Empire. While performing the research, I studied every person who had served in the rank of staff officer in any imperial-royal hussar regiment between 1792 and 1815, regardless of the term of service. However, I neglected staff officers serving in the different short-lived irregular hussar units, insurgent cavalry units and staff officers in the Royal Hungarian Nobiliary Life Guards which belonged to the hussars but was never deployed in combat. Still, because several of the staff officers of the regular regiments served in some of these units some time in their military

careers, they could not be fully disregarded in research. Finally, I excluded from the study those officers who never rose above the rank of captain in their active careers and were promoted to the rank of honorary (titular) major only when they retired or possibly were discharged from the army.

My goal was, in connection with the group specified above – due to its relatively minor size – to present a full picture, rather than using the method of sampling, often applied in similar research schemes.

Accordingly, as the first and fundamental step I compiled a list of the officers concerned, making an effort not to leave out anybody. This was based primarily on the nomenclatures and registers (Militärschematismus) published annually by the imperial-royal army from 1791 on, supplemented and amended from other sources, mainly from the so called regimental histories compiled at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, made under the commission of the regiments and based on their documentation.

As the next step, I began to compile the basic biographical data of the staff officers in the list. This phase required primarily the elaboration of the sources found in the archives, though in some cases the professional literature provided valuable information.

In this regard my primary sources were the so called muster lists (Musterlisten) in the stock named Musterlisten und Standestabellen of the Austrian Military Archives (Kriegsarchiv) and the pension protocols (Pensionprotokolle), and to a lesser extent the recruiting lists (Assentlisten) and the transfer lists (Transferierungslisten).

Unfortunately in this era no separate comprehensive lists were made about officers who died in active service, or retired from service voluntarily, or were removed by the army command for any reason. On the other hand, in many cases the investigation is facilitated by the short biographies of many officers contained in the professional literature, first of all, in German language works about the dualist monarchy (Hirtenfeld, Wurzbach, Svoboda), even though some of these contain serious inaccuracies. After I had completed the majority of the biographies, I could start the statistical analysis of the significant data from various aspects, followed by drawing conclusions about the primary characteristics and nature of the staff corps of the hussars.

Naturally, my research cannot help but go beyond both the time boundaries marked by the hussars and the hussars themselves. One reason is that many of the life careers began before that period, or continued beyond it, on the other hand, during their service the persons under study also spent time with other units, not only with the hussars. Moreover, data gained

in the research often enabled the exploration of the family background of certain staff officers, widening the scope of the studies.

III. Essential conclusions of the dissertation, new scientific findings

In my dissertation, after presentation of the subject of the study I provide a historiographic survey, in which I describe the evolvement and development of the literature of scientific standard on the issue and the era. At the same time, I attempt to outline the impact of the tendencies manifested in the different eras – i.e. the *Zeitgeist* – concerning the works in question, supported by detailed and critical analyses, trying to be as unbiased as I possibly could

Below is a brief historical survey on the hussars, then the imperial-royal hussar regiments in the era of the French wars will be introduced. Besides the introduction of the 13 hussar regiments that existed in that era, through the establishment and the organization of the Nádor hussar regiment, the one that was founded the last in that time, through the insurrection in 1800, I describe in detail how a regular hussar regiment was set up.

Then I present the organizational structure and staff of the hussar regiments, in which, besides the officers and the enlisted soldiers non-combattant office-bearers will be introduced, together with their scope of activity and competence and the development of the number of the staff officers in the hussar regiments in the period studied will be reviewed as well.

After that I turn to the historiographic-statistical and sociological analyses made on the basis of the elaborated biographical data containing new research findings about the staff corps of hussars.

In my studies I concluded that according to the established criteria 281 persons are proven to have served as hussar staff officers in the imperial-royal hussar regiments in that period. In the case of six more persons the services as hussar staff officers are questionable and at this point cannot be clarified due to the lack of reliable data. Therefore I disregarded them in the studies but it can be stated that even if they really were hussar staff officers, due their low number (2,09%) their data would not have any meaningful influence on the findings of the research, so the findings may be regarded as entirely appropriate and substantiated.

In my analyses, through mapping the most significant indices, I endeavoured to form an exact picture on the hussar staff corps, in which I attempted to correct the general

statements in the existing literature lacking detailed studies, at least where such literature was available at all.

First of all I studied the composition of the staff corps by ethnicity, about which the existing literature already concluded, although without in-depth studies, that the percentage of Hungarians in the hussar regiments began to decline gradually from the era of Charles III (VI as the Holy Roman Emperor) (1711-1740). According to the representative monography on hussars made in the Horthy era mentioned above, this tendency had intensified by the reign of Joseph II (1780-1790) so much that „the marked Hungarian spirit manifested in formalities and essential matters, which separated our hussar regiments conspicuously within the imperial army, largely vanished, and the Hungarian character of the regiments manifests only in the presence of Hungarian soldiers and in the Hungarian character of the uniforms.”

At the same time, in my research, studying all the 281 persons, I concluded that 184 persons came from the countries of the Hungarian Crown, who could be considered native Magyars, made up about two third (65.48%) of the staff corps. Breaking down the scope of the Hungarians - in the sense of “Hungarus” further, we can also see that the 144 officers of presumable Magyar ethnicity alone represented more than half (51,25%) of the staff corps of the hussars. This percentage is more favourable than formerly hypothesized. Thus we may state that despite the considerable inflow of foreigners, the majority of the staff corps of hussar regiments was composed of persons from the countries of the Hungarian Crown, among whom the vast majority (78,26%) were ethnic Magyars, in a ratio far exceeding their share within the population. For these persons the hussars were obviously the most attractive unit of the army. One of the reasons of their high ratio within “Hungari” was certainly the fact that the majority of the staff corps were Hungarian noblemen. At the same time, due their deficient estate structure, there were very few noblemen among other ethnic groups of the country, in contrast with the Magyars. Only two Hungarian nationalities contributed a significant number of servicemen to the army, Germans who mainly came from the urban bourgeoisie and southern Slavs, who typically served in the border guard regiments.

A total of 60 persons (21.35%) came from the Austrian part of the Hapsburg Empire, which is a little higher than one-fifth of all staff officers. The vast majority of them came in equal proportion from the hereditary provinces and the countries of the Wenceslas Crown; each delegating 24 persons, they composed almost one tenth of all hussar staff officers. Few officers came from other parts of the empire – 6 persons were born in the Italian provinces of the Hapsburgs or in other provinces of the empire, but are proven to be of Italian origin, 3 persons came from Eastern Galicia or were Poles living in the empire, finally, 2 persons came

from the Austrian Low Countries and 1 from Fiume. If we also include countries of the Hungarian Crown, altogether 245 persons (87.19%) came from the Hapsburg Empire, that means the vast majority of the staff corps of the hussars came from the Hapsburg Empire.

Only 33 persons (11.74) came from outside of the empire, most of them from the Holy Roman Empire, exactly 29 persons (10.32%). 4 persons came from France (1.42%) and I could not yet clarify the origins of 4 other persons (1.42%).

Closely related to the above matter, I studied the distribution of those recruited in Hungary by place of origin.

There were large regions in the Hungary of the day that did not delegate many officers to the army. At the same time, certain easily definable regions did more than their fair share. This has already been concluded by Tibor Hajdú, although he had found this by studying the distribution of places of origin of the cadets of the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. Our studies on the staff corps of hussars also clearly corroborate this fact. In connection with the places of birth of the 184 hussar staff officers, taking the administrative system of Hungary before 1785 as a basis, as these persons were born almost exclusively before that date, the following characteristics can be observed.

The regions providing the most hussar staff officers were clearly those in the environment of Vienna, which was also the most densely populated area of the country: Komárom, Nyitra, Pozsony, Sopron and Vas counties, together the West Hungarian region, altogether 37 persons, one fifth (20,1%) of the staff corps came from this area.

It is followed by the another densely populated region, situated roughly in the middle of Upper Hungary with Abaúj, Borsod, Gömör, Liptó, Nógrád, Sáros, Szepes, Turóc and Zemplén counties, delegating 35 persons (19.02%). Small Turóc county should be highlighted, it was the birthplace of 5 hussar staff officers.

A total of 25 persons (13.59%) were raised in the region of Esztergom, Fejér, Heves, Külső Szolnok, Jász, Pest-Pilis-Solt counties, which belonged to the area of the City of Pest-Buda, it is at that time that this area starting developing into the cultural and political center of Hungary.

Finally, with 24 persons (13.04%) Transylvania - without the Partium - gave more than one tenth of the staff officers. Although the counties there show an average distribution, delegating a small number of staff officers only, Szekely Land makes up for that, delegating about half of all staff officers coming from Transylvania, demonstrating the traditional inclination of the Szekelys to the military service.

If we consider the other extreme end, we can once again find similar regions. In the South-Eastern part of the Hungarian Plain the region of Arad, Békés and Csanád counties gave not a single hussar staff officer in the period under consideration, just like the region of Bereg, Máramaros, Ugocsa counties at the Carpathian Mountains, or the region of the Partium and Arad county which belonged to this region until 1733. In the case of the former reasons include, besides the low population density and the general poverty, the traditions of independence and the secluded way of life of noblemen living in the mountains.

However, none of these reasons is relevant for the semi-circle shaped region of Győr, Moson, Veszprém and Zala counties in Transdanubia, the place of origin of only 1 person, which is very surprising especially if compared to the neighbouring West Hungarian counties.

Compared with the observations of Tibor Hajdú on the era about 100 years later, I realized that the tendencies characterizing the proportions of the officers provided by the different regions survived into the era in question.

Then I studied the composition by religious affiliation, the results met the expectations. On the grounds of the studied data of 252 persons, the vast majority, 195 persons (77,38%) were Roman Catholics, including Hungarians, Croatians, Germans from the Hapsburg Empire, Bohemians, Italians, Poles, Germans from Germany and Frenchmen as well. Those belonging to the Evangelistic (Lutheran) Church represented a much smaller proportion with 32 persons (12.7%). They consisted mainly of Hungarians from Upper Hungary, Vas county and the town of Sopron, or Saxons from Szepes region and Transylvania, and of course Germans from Germany. There were 20 Protestants (Calvinists) (7.94%). Most of them were Hungarian noblemen, with three Hungarian magnates and a German from Germany. Unitarians were represented by two Szekely noblemen (0.79%). Finally, by virtue of three staff officers of Southern Slav origin from the border region, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Greek Church, the so called uniate churches were also represented, with two and one persons (0,79% and 0,39%) respectively.

As the next step, I studied the ways the aspiring hussar staff officers started their careers, illustrating the typical ways of becoming an officer.

On the basis of a sample of 251 persons, most of them, almost half (48,6%) of the persons who later became hussar staff officers started their military careers as cadets; more than one-third (33%) started out as an officer already, and more than one-tenth (14,74%) of them as privates. Compared to the first three types, the proportion of those who started as a non-commissioned officers (2,4%) and as bearer of non-combatant offices (1,2) is negligible.

Two persons of the latter started their careers as quartermasters, one as an army judge, an auditor.

In the study of the types of career starts, I demonstrate that more or less known, but as far as I know statistically never documented, scientifically never proven fact, that in the era in question the primary pool of officers was clearly the system of cadets, within that primarily the community of cadets paying for their expenses, at least among the hussars, but probably also in the entire imperial-royal officer corps; only the special corps were exceptions to that, units constituting a relatively lower ratio, with personnel requiring special skills and the engineering corps. The organized training of officers – even if we include the bodyguard regiment of noblemen, which partly served as a military training unit – was not of significant importance yet, and the proportion of those who came from officer training institutes was low, at least in the case of the hussars.

However, it is worth noting that near 15% of the staff officers came from the rank of privates, moreover, as we will see, they often became generals, and this be considered a great accomplishment, and demonstrates that in the eyes of the higher command skills and talents were considered significant merits, in addition to family and service record.

Through studying the length of time until earning the first rank title of staff corps, I tried to obtain information on the speed of the advancement in careers. On the basis of 240 careers at hand relevant for our topic, I concluded that it took on average about 20 and a half years of service to earn the first rank title of staff corps; in the cases of two persons it happened via skipping the rank of major, these soldiers became lieutenant-colonels directly. This may be considered fairly rapid, and knowing that soldiers usually started their career at the age of 17, we can see that most of them were relatively young, not yet 40, when assigned to the staff corps.

In this context, the study of the extreme values, i. e. those who earned the title of staff officer with the shortest and those with the longest service record, is very informative. In this I studied basically two groups; categorizing earning the title of staff officer within 10 years to be the most rapid careers and within 30 years or more to be the slowest careers.

The first group comprised 20 persons (8.33%), the second group comprised 21 persons (8.75%). It is probably not an exaggeration to conclude from this that the distribution in terms of speed of career was fairly even, with the peak somewhere around 20.5 years, as mentioned already. However, it also indicates that these extreme values were not exactly typical. What is typical is the group persons who completed these careers.

Not surprisingly, only one person, András Ujházy was not an aristocrat among those with the 20 most rapid careers; but he skipped grades twice by purchasing a rank. The others came from very illustrious and influential families, for example the son and the grandson of count András Hadik field-marshal, two Esterházy counts, a Batthyány count and two sons of count Károly Zichy minister of state and conference were among them, as well as the son of count György Bánffy, governor-general of Transylvania and count Eugen Wratislaw von Mitrovitz und Schönfeld, who originated from a Bohemian family of pedigree, and who was the only person in the this group to earn the title of marshal. The majority of them (16 persons) started their career as an officer, of course, only 2 of them as imperial-royal cadets and 2 as cadets financing their own studies. None of them started their career as a private; which does not characterize the group at the other extreme at all.

In our sample, it was János Szombathelyi who had to wait the longest to be promoted a staff officer, becoming a major at the age of 56, after 39 years of service, then continuing his service for another 13 years until finally being sent to retire in the rank of brigadier general. The second longest service, 38 years, was completed by Sándor Fóris, who was 58 when reaching the rank of major, however, he only served one more year after that. 3 persons had to wait for 37 years to be promoted to staff officer rank, 2 persons had to wait 36, 35, 34 and 33 years respectively, training had to wait for 32 years, 2 persons for 31 and finally, 3 individuals for 30 years.

It is interesting to note that hardly more than half of these 21 staff officers, 11 had started their career as a private. Six of them were cadets paying for their own expenses, one was an imperial-royal cadet, another a non-commissioned officer (corporal) and another a quartermaster, there was one who started his military career as a sub-lieutenant. At the same time it is no surprise that there wasn't anybody among them from the aristocracy, they came mostly from families belonging to the lower, poor layer of nobility and in some cases from families that most likely did not even hold any titles of nobility.

Therefore it can be stated that the two groups representing the two extreme values for the speed of progress during the military career, correspond largely to the extremes of the staff officers' social and family background, and they also reflect it in practice.

Apart from the speed of advance, another sure indicator for success in a military career is the highest title of rank reached during the service. My investigations concerning this, i.e. the climax of military careers, show the results detailed below.

Only nearly one quarter, 72 (25.62%) of the 281 hussar staff officers could not advance beyond the first rank title for staff officers, meaning that those who reached the rank of major

had a significantly higher probability for further promotion, as opposed to getting stuck on that rank level. 50 (17.79%) finished their career as titular or an actual lieutenant-colonels; there were slightly more of those, one-fifth of all the staff officers, 58 persons (20.64%), who reached the rank of titular or appointed colonel, the highest rank for staff officers. Meanwhile, more than one-third of the group, 101 persons (35.94%), managed to advance beyond the rank of staff officer and enter the corps of generals. If we disregard the 9 titular brigadier generals, 92 (32.74%) i.e. about one-third of them were assigned to positions of actual general. All this indicate a very significant military achievement, also confirmed by other indicators such as, most importantly, the high number of those who had received the Maria Theresa Military Order.

„A hussar who is not dead before the age of thirty, is coward!” – this saying is ascribed to count Antoine de Lasalle, the heroic general of Napoleon. However, in the studies of the end of the imperial-royal hussar staff officers I saw a totally different picture. According to the way of closing the military career, on the basis of a sample of 257 persons I could determine that much more than half of the staff officers studied, 154 persons (59.92) left active service by retiring, near one-tenth of them, 23 persons (8.94%) left the army, 55 persons (21.4%) died from natural causes during active service, 2 persons (0.78%) were summarily discharged from the army, and not more than 23 persons (8.94%) died in action. This is not surprising at all, because due to their mobility, versatile and unrestricted tactical role in combat, hussars essentially had better chances to survive than their comrades in the infantry, who fought mostly in close formations. However, one cannot talk about quiet retirement in connection with the hussar staff officers on pension, because the long decades spent with the army caused serious health deterioration even in the very strong, so it is not surprising that most of them retired as invalids.

In the chapters describing the essential characteristics of the staff corps of hussars, finally I studied the social composition and on the basis of that, the social mobility through the military careers. As I have pictured earlier, from the aspect of social origins the hussar staff corps with its significant prestige in the society and within the army itself, was not a homogenous unit. Still it is not surprising that they came almost without exceptions from the ranks of nobility; this was acknowledged as a fact in earlier literature as well. However, after more in-depth study we can see that the staff corps of the hussars were not composed only of members of aristocratic families or families with ancient nobility. We certainly get a more balanced concept if we also study the status at the time of birth and the family background,

through which we can gain insight into the processes of the social mobilisation which sometimes needs a time span of several generations.

On the ground of a sample of 256 persons, taking the status at the time of birth as a basis, we see that 20 persons (7.8%) who later became noblemen were commoners at birth 11 of them (4.3%) acquired their nobility themselves, 9 more persons with the help of a relative, mainly through their fathers, receiving nobility together with him. Typically, most of those in the latter category, 7 persons were sons of officers, their fathers acquired nobility for themselves and for their families by merits gained in the army, and there were only two whose fathers earned promotion to nobility in a clerical career.

In the study of the group of those having the title of baron, we can see much more mobilisation compared to those that were promoted to nobility. The probable reason is that the staff of corps consisted of persons of noble origin, for whom besides acquiring the rank of staff officer or general, becoming barons embodied one step forward in society.

It turned out from research that less than half of the 61 barons, only 27 persons (44.26%) acquired their title of baron through inheriting; the rest received it in their own lifetimes. 10 of these 34 persons were promoted to be barons due to the merits of a member of their families (typically their fathers, uncles or brothers), many of them in their childhood. However, 24 of them (39.3% of the barons) gained this relatively high title through their own merits, their own gallantry.

All this, i.e. the opportunity for the soldiers to rise relatively easily in the society depended on the gallantry and the good luck of the soldiers and to a large extent to Maria Theresa, who –partly relying on the experiences of the dynastic wars with heavy losses - was in favour of a military promotion system based not only on ancestry but also on accomplishment and talents to a large extent. At the same time, she created an opportunity for valiant officers born as commoners to occupy a position matching their officer status within the from of the traditional society based on estates, meaning they could become noblemen, barons and possibly counts. Among her measures implemented for that purpose, the founding of the military order bearing her name in 1757 was the most significant. Breaking with the traditions of the time, she allowed this order to be awarded to a relatively wide community of soldiers, because any worthy officer could earn it, regardless of religion, ancestry and rank. Moreover, if an officer who was not a nobleman was awarded any grade of the order, he was raised to nobility automatically, was adopted into the knights' order, and allowed to apply for the title of baron, which was then awarded without any fees. Thus deserving the order enabled

its holder to advance in society significantly, even without the necessary financial background.

In light of that, it is no surprise that the majority of those hussar staff officers who attained a title of baron on their own, 22 persons out of 24, attained this honour through the Maria Theresa Order, but out of the ten cases of becoming a baron through a family member, in four cases the military careers of the fathers was the key for the advancement, in two other cases the fathers attained the title of baron as a reward for clerical services. Attaining the title of count was substantially more difficult, therefore more uncommon, reflected also by the fact that of the 55 persons having the title of count, the vast majority, 46 persons were born into it, six of them became counts through a member of their family, and only three managed to reach such a high position in the society by their own efforts. However, two of them were members of lesser nobility; both of them were decorated with the knights cross of the Maria Theresa Military Order, in addition to the commander cross.

Summarizing the promotions in ranks on different levels, i. e. becoming nobleman, baron, count, in the group under consideration altogether 35 persons (14%) could manage to rise in the hierarchy of the society through their own efforts. If we disregard the 90 persons who held rank titles right from the beginning, or who attained the title through family members later, and they had no higher rank to advance to, 166 persons remain, compared to whom these 35 persons represent 21%; which means that of those who started out without titles and nobility, nearly every fifth person could advance, and that is really remarkable. Moreover, this proportion could have been higher, because 13 staff officers who had attained Maria Theresa Order but had no titles, did not assert their right to get the title of baron, though the opportunity to rise in the hierarchy of the society would have been available for them, just like for the 35 staff officers mentioned. So together with these soldiers, for a total of 48 persons, 28.92% almost one-third of the commoners and noblemen without titles received actual opportunities to advance rise in the hierarchy of the society through their career in the army.

Thus our studies clearly support the statement of József Zachar made on the grounds of the studies of large dimensions on the imperial (-royal) army between 1683 and 1792, in which he stated that the career in the army made possible a social mobility wider than ever supposed. However, it should be said that these opportunities were available only for a limited scope, basically for those of noble origin, or in the case of the commoners, for only a small number of soldiers, for those who came from the bourgeoisie of the market-towns or others coming from social groups with free legal status.

The description of the basic characteristics of the staff corps is followed by the longest chapter of the dissertation with the title *Biographical* data, in which the brief biographies are provided of the 281 persons who are documented to have served in the imperial-royal hussar regiments in the era in question, on the basis of their highest hussar ranks in the period of the French wars, grouped in sub-chapters of majors, titular lieutenant colonels, lieutenant colonels, titular colonels and colonels.

The biographies are structured as follows, when possible, with smaller variations due to lack of data:

- name;
- in brackets the highest rank attained in the person's career, if it is not the same as the highest rank attained as a hussar;
- date and place of birth – date and place of death;
- social, ethnic, religious affiliation;
- a mostly factual description of the career in the army, in which the date and place of the start of the military career, then the significant stages of the career, i. e. the date of attaining the ranks and the places of service are indicated;
- date and way of ending the career in the army;
- other remarks about possible regiment ownership, captivity, awards; in the sequence of the medals the Maria Theresa Military Order is mentioned in the first place with the date of attaining, possibly with the circumstances of earning the decoration;
- other awards of non-military nature, promotion in rank, nationalization;
- family status, and if known, names of wife (wives) and children and number of the latter.

During the elaboration of the dissertation several further interesting questions emerged, their discussion would not be possible here due to constraints of space, or the research would have been too time consuming. Here I intended to provide a comprehensive view of the staff corps of a specially Hungarian arm, the hussars, a staff corps that was far from being composed of Hungarians only, in an extremely eventful era; by the publication of the biographies I intended to contribute to further analyses from other aspects, in which it would be especially important and interesting to compare the staff corps of the hussars to the higher command of other arms in the same era.

IV. Publications on this subject:

Magyar huszárok az 1813. évi őszi hadjáratban. In: Sic Itur ad Astra, Fiatal Történészek Folyóirata. 2002/2-3. 151-206.

Az 1812-es hadjárat és a korán jött tél. Szilágyi Zsolt társszerzőségével. In: KÚT. Az ELTE BTK Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola kiadványa. 2004/1. 38-62.

A Nádor huszárok atyja: Hertelendy Gábor. In: KÚT. Az ELTE BTK Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola kiadványa. 2004/2. 41-51.

Egy legendás vasi huszár. Hertelendy Gábor, 1742-1820. In: Vasi Honismereti és Helytörténeti Közlemények, 2005/4. 36-52.

A császári-királyi huszárezredek törzstisztikara a francia háborúk időszakában (1792-1815). In: Századok. 142. (2008) 5. sz. 1266-1290.