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The Croatian-Slavonic Grenz (Border) Hussars' Role in the Campaigns 1793–94 against the Revolutionary France or the history of the cavalry for the Wurmser Freikorps*

Abstract

The paper elaborates the creation and hitherto practically undiscovered history of the cavalry for the Austrian-Styrian or also known as Wurmser Free Corps based on research in archives. The short-lived body of troops has an importance due to the fact that we can consider it the predecessor of the latter Croatian-Slavonic Grenz Hussar Regiment or the only Imperial–Royal Hussar Regiment with mainly Southern Slav soldiers during the French Wars. The study keeps track the history of the cavalry for the Free Corps from its creation in early 1793 until the official separation from the infantry in the end of 1794. The paper presents the reasons and the process of the road to the independency as a body of troops and the relevant commanders and the officer corps of the formation in addition to the unit's participation in the military operations.

Keywords: Hussar, War of the First Coalition, Imperial-Royal Army, *Freikorps* (Free Corps), Military Frontier, Croatia and Slavonia, Southern Slav

It is known the Hussars, which are considered a traditionally Hungarian unit type, have been brought into service of many other armies – especially by Hungarian emigrants – during their days of glory due their versatile tactical adaptability and their success in many battlefields. At the same time it is not widely known that other Hussar units consisting significantly non-Hungarian, other nationalities have been setting up on several occasions, usually for short periods amidst the Hungarian Hussars: these Hussar units was supplemented exclusively from the Croatian-Slavonic Military Frontier¹ and the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia,² so their rank and file was almost entirely Southern Slavs and this

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¹The Military Frontier (*Grenze*) was a specific territorial and administrative unit directed by military authorities. An entirely militarized zone was created during the wars against the Ottoman Empire within the Croatian frontier, its population was exempt from taxation, but they have to do military service. The population consisted mostly Croats and other Southern Slavs, who was fleeing from the Turks in the Balkans and they excellently guarded the borders against the frequent Turkish intrusions. The system stood the test, so it extended to Transylvania along the border from the end of the 17th century. See NAGY-L. István: *A császári-királyi hadsereg, 1765-1815. Szervezettörténet és létszámviszonyok* (The Imperial-Royal Army, 1765-1815. The History of Organisation and Strength, Budapest, 2010. PhD thesis, manuscript 79.

²The Hungarian and the Croatian Kingdoms made up a personal union from 1091. The latter one

fact is not so surprising regarding the Southern Slav relationships of the Hussars originated during the 14th and 15th centuries, when the first Hussars units had been established.

However the origin of the branch of service has not been clarified up to the present. It is an established fact the Hungarian light cavalry with its ancient tradition and significant loss of importance due the Western effects had to adapt to the changing conditions because of a new, fearless enemy during its establishing in the period of the Ottoman Empire's aggressive advancement. It was a hugely successful adaptation and undoubtedly the Southern Slavs were playing an important role in this success, since they knew well the Turkish tactics at the time and a lot of them were pushed into the Hungarian border. Among other things it is demonstrated by the fact that the Hungarian light cavalry was called also *Rac* (an old Hungarian name for Serbs) by the native sources in the 15th century and it is an explicit reference to the heavy presence of the Serbs and other Southern Slav elements among the Hussars who were having several kind of names at that time – their presence had been generated by the Turkish expansion in the Balkans, which resulted in a human migration – and sharing the same fates, when Hungarians, Southern Slavs and to a lesser degree also Romanians were fighting shoulder to shoulder against the Turks. In the first half of the 16th century, when the Southern Slav influx was decreased, the Hungarian ethnic group was become almost exclusively in the rank of the Hussars.³ In spite of this fact, the official Austrian and then the Western European sources was calling summarily the light cavalry primarily recruited from the countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown as 'Croatian' (Kroaten), in all probability because the first light cavalry units from the Hungarian Kingdoms who made an appearance in the Habsburg armed forces during the reign of Ferdinand the First were riders from Croatia in Count Ferenc Batthyányi, *Ban*⁴ of Croatia's service.⁵ Henceforward also the ill-informed foreigners used uniformly the 'Croatian' denotation for the real Hungarian Hussars, who had the same bearing as the former ones, in fact very often for the Hungarian light infantry too completely apart from their nationality.⁶ The Hussar

was divided into several parts: the area between the Drava River and the Croatian seacoast was called Croatia after the Turks had been expelled, while in the eastern part the area between the Drave and the Sava rivers was named Slavonia. Dalmatia hold possessed by the Venetian Republic from the 17th century, but its name has been occurred on the official designation.

³ ZACHAR József (ed.): *A magyar huszár* (The Hungarian Hussar), Corvina, Budapest, 2000. 14-15. Since the Turks had annexed all the former Southern Slavic territories, the opportunities for mass migration to the Hungarian Kingdom have virtually ceased to exist. However in parallel with this phenomenon, the number of the Southern Slavic light cavalry was growing steady in the Ottoman Turkish army.

⁴ It is the denomination of the governor for Croatia province.

⁵ ZACHAR (2000): 28. WREDE, Alphons Freiherr von: *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht. Die Regimenter, Corps, Branchen und Anstalten von 1618 bis Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, I–V. Band, Seidel & Sohn, Wien, 1898-1905. III/1. 8. BERKÓ István: *A magyarság a régi hadseregben* (Hungarians in the Old Army), Melléklet a Magyar Katonai Közlöny 1926. évi 11-12. füzetéhez, M. Kir. Hadtörténelmi Levéltár, 7.

⁶ Also the *Rac* and the Wallachian names were occurred regard to the Hungarian troops. See BERKÓ: 20.

name became an exclusively used term only during the first half of the 18th century in Hungary and all over Europe in parallel with the rising and international spreading of its classical form.

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Regular light cavalry units were setting up and deploying among the infantry on the Croatian-Slavonic Border after the organization of the first military frontier district during the middle of the 16th century and inter alia these units earned their fame in the Thirty Years' War. Light cavalry units from the Military Frontier was fighting for the Austrian Imperial army under the names Slavonic National Hussar Regiment and *Rac* National Hussar Regiment respectively against the Hungarian and Transylvanian freedom-fighters led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi the Second.⁷ Later eleven *Grenz* (Border) regiments were created between 1746 and 1750, when the regular Croatian-Slavonic *Grenz* (Border) units had been organized and in addition four *Grenz* Hussar regiments were established: the Károlyváros, the Warasdín, the Slavonic and the Sylvania Regiments. The latter one was merged with the Slavonic Hussar Regiment in 1750, but at the same time a fourth Croatian-Slavonic Hussar regiment was set up and called the Ban Hussar Regiment.⁸ These Hussar units were disembodied as independent regiments between 1779 and 1780, the numbers of their squadrons had been decreased all but the Slavonic Hussars, the regimental staffs had been disbanded and the officer corps and the troops had been divided as follows: a half Hussar squadron went to regiments of Károlyváros, one squadron to the Ban and the Warasdín Regiments and two squadrons to the Slavonic regiments.⁹ Also these Hussar squadrons were disbanded on 1 March, 1786 and every regiment just had 40 dispatch-riders.

Previously a light armed unit was created with two infantry battalions and a Hussar division (two squadrons) in 1784, centred in Warasdín and it was called Croatian-Slavonic *Grenz Freikorps* (Free Corps) during the so-called Kettle War, when it seemed a war were about to break out against the Republic of the Seven Netherlands. Also the unit was named Brentano *Freikorps* after its commander. However, when the threat of war ceased to exist, the *Freikorps* was disbanded in 1785.¹⁰

The Imperial-Royal High Command planned to set up a Slavonic-Banatian Hussar regiment again at the same year and the unit would have operated at peaceful times too. It would have been sent three squadrons by the Pétervárad *Grenz* Infantry Regiment, two squadrons by the Brod *Grenz* and one squadron by

⁷ See WREDE: III/2. 799-800. – The struggle between the Habsburg Empire and the rebels led by Ferenc Rákóczi called Rákóczi's War for Independence started in 1703 and ended in 1711, when the rebels on the verge of defeat made a compromised peace treaty.

⁸ See WREDE: V. 335–338.

⁹ WREDE: V. 230. The author improperly mentions companies instead of squadrons, when he describes the events. The company term was not used no more in regard to the cavalry, it meant alone an infantry company and its equivalent was the squadron (*escadron*) in the cavalry.

¹⁰ See WREDE: II. 484 and III/2. 915.

the Gradiska, the German-Banatian and the Wallachian-Illyrian *Grenz* Regiment, respectively. The Banatian regiments were previously ordered to create a squadron for each regiment in 1782, although only the German–Banatian Regiment fulfilled this command. The plan for creating a would-be Hussar squadron to the Wallachian-Illyrian Regiments and itself the plan for creating the regiment was cancelled in 1786 due to the previously mentioned disbanding in regard to the Hussars of the Croatian-Slavonic Military Frontier.¹¹

However several Military Frontier *Freikorps* had been created for shorter periods during the Habsburg Empire's last war against the Turks between 1787 and 1791¹² and these units had Hussar squadrons, sometimes even divisions in addition their infantry. We can mention a Serbian *Freikorps*, the Branovacký *Freikorps* and another one, the Vukassovich *Freikorps* – the latter's Hussar squadron became independent and assumed the name Knesevech *Freikorps* in January 1790.¹³ These units were disbanded after the end of the military operations in the autumn of 1790 as usual.

Thus at the dawn of a series of bitter struggle starting 1792 and raging on a quarter century between the revolutionary France and Europe of the '*ancien régime*', the Croatian-Slavonic-Banatian Military Frontier had not any Hussar units despite its previously mentioned traditions.

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On April 1792, at the time of the French proclamation of war the whole Imperial-Royal Army had 77 line infantry regiments, 17 *Grenz* infantry regiments, 34 cavalry regiments, including 9 Cuirassier, 2 Carabinier, 7 Chevauxleger, 1 *Uhlan* (Lancer) regiments, 20 grenadier battalions, 1 *Tschaikisten* battalion (the special riverboat unit of the *Grenz* troops),¹⁴ 3 artillery regiments, engineer troops, wagon train and health units.¹⁵ The army on peace footing numbered 310,615 soldiers according to the plans, but only 210,914 soldiers were fit for service.¹⁶ In the beginning the Imperial-Royal High Command put into action only 30 percents of its mobilizable army¹⁷ due to partly financial difficulties, partly they underestimated

¹¹ WREDE: V. 231.

¹² The war started without official proclamation of war at the end of 1787 and the Habsburg Empire just sent its proclamation of war in February 1788. The Gyurgyevo Truce put an end to the military operations on 23 September, 1790, although the Peace Treaty was signed only on 4 August, 1791 in Sistovo. See NAGY-L.: 270, 273, 277.

¹³ See in detail WREDE: II. 495 and III/2. 917-918.

¹⁴ *Grenzer* (Frontiersmen), who did their military services on the boards of small-boats (so-called *Tschaika*) equipped with sails and oars, howitzers and guns, which were guarding the rivers of the borders.

¹⁵ *Geschichte der Kämpfe Österreichs. Kriege unter der Regierung des Kaisers Franz. Krieg gegen die Französische Revolution 1792-1797*, I. Wien, Seidel & Sohn, 1905. 229., 237.; ZACHAR, József: *Hungarians in the Habsburg army during the first coalition's war against the french 1792-1797*. In: *L'Europa scopre Napoleone 1793-1804*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria, 1999. 975.

¹⁶ NAGY-L.: 281.

¹⁷ See *ibid.* 282.

the strength and organization of the French Republic in dire straits. Soon the allied Habsburg Empire and Prussia had to face this groundless opinion because of their painful failures. The belittled France had a plenty of drive thanks to its favourable demographic index and economical power and besides the revolutionary ideas to no small degree. Thus the war had been protracted and it was shaping significantly badly for the enemies of the revolution as they planned. Not merely the offensive against France was a failure, but the successful French counter-offensive seized Austrian Netherlands, Mainz, Savoy and Nice too.¹⁸

In 1793 following the execution of Louis XVI in January, first Great Britain, then the Republic of the Seven Netherlands, Sardinia, Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, Spain, Portugal and Tuscany joined the anti-revolutionary cooperation of the Habsburg Empire and Prussia creating the so-called First Coalition, but henceforward the Habsburg Empire had to shoulder the main burden of the war, so it could not avoid increasing its war efforts. Accordingly the Imperial-Royal High Command was forced to send significant forces to the Holy Roman Empire and The Netherlands again by deploying the not mobilized units of its army and partly throwing in the newly created units for the time of war, especially the above mentioned so-called *Freikorps*. These mobile light troops without the closed battle formation constraints of the line regiments were setting up by volunteering or recruiting usually for the given war time and the Treasury contributed to their organization and maintenance only to a lesser extent, since the expenditures were funded by the commander who had volunteered creating the unit or defrayed by other voluntarily offers.¹⁹ Primarily the *Freikorps* had infantry units and the cavalry troops just played a role to a small degree. However the existence of mixed *Freikorps* with infantry and cavalry was a common thing, but usually the infantry was the predominant force. The cause of it was the fact the cavalry was more costly and the creating and maintaining needed more organization, however it became very important to use Imperial-Royal light troops due to the new French tactics. This kind of units had not been brought into service in regard to the Imperial-Royal infantry, so the *Freikorps* should have fulfilled this task.²⁰ The Imperial-Royal Army had the best light cavalry of the era due to the Hungarian Hussars, but it worth mentioning the seven Chevauxleger regiments and the *Uhlán* regiment – the latter also was excellent for the light cavalry tactics and it was brought into service in 1791. Thus there was not so urgent need for the *Freikorps* cavalry, but was for the light infantry.

In the first period of the French Wars a lot of similar units were organized on the Military Frontier, where the *Freikorps* had strong traditions. Due to the above mentioned reasons however we find only one Hussar unit among those, except

¹⁸ BÁNLAKY József: *A magyar nemzet hadtörténelme. 20. rész. A francia háborúk időszaka 1792-1815* (Military History of the Hungarian Nation. Volume 20. Period of the French Wars 1792-1815), Grill, Budapest, 1941. 24.

¹⁹ WREDE: II. 401.

²⁰ Regarding this topic see NAGY-L.: 122, 130, 191.

the Regiment of Szeckler (Transylvanian) *Grenz*-Hussars, but this unit had stood out among the simple bunch of *Freikorps* within a short time following its excellent performance.

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In early 1793, officially on 1 May it was created a *Freikorps* called formally Imperial-Royal Austrian-Styrian Count Wurmser *Freikorps*²¹ for the areas belonging to the Croatian and Slavonic Military Frontier and the areas administered by civilian authorities, furthermore for the Turkish borders: the unit would have numbered 5000 men, which was stronger than a typical *Freikorps* and it was made up of two battalions with six infantry companies and four Hussar divisions or eight squadrons per battalions, so it was a mixed unit regarding the branch of military services.²² Later usually the technical literature has mentioned the unit just Austrian-Styrian or Wurmser *Freikorps* in an abbreviated form.²³ Given the military personnel and the location of the unit the naming is somewhat surprising and its reason the fact the troops' payment party was funded by a committee of Lower Austria, which made up of patriots in Vienna. Following their example the salary for the other half of the troops was financed by a Styrian group made up of similar patriots. After the latter noble act the originally intended name, the Vienna Wurmser *Freikorps* was replaced by the Austrian-Styrian Count Wurmser *Freikorps* (*Oesterreich-Steirischen – Graf Wurmserischen Housarn Frey Corps*).²⁴

Although the similar *Freikorps* were mentioned after the name of their commanders, there is some difference regard to the name Wurmser: Count Dagobert Sigmund Wurmser as a General of the Cavalry then a Field Marshal not commanded directly the *Freikorps*, since he was the head of an Imperial-Royal military group with strength 40,000 along the Upper Rhine and the *Freikorps* would have been intended to send here. So the reason of the naming was a respect for the future commandeering general. The infantry and the cavalry of the *Freikorps* represented two, essentially separated organizational units, so given the above mentioned fact they were called Austrian-Styrian Count Wurmser Infantry *Freikorps* and Austrian-Styrian Count Wurmser Hussar *Freikorps*, respectively.²⁵

Primarily its military personnel were recruited. A recruit when entered the army got the so-called *Handgeld* (bounty) – the *Handgeld* was 10 Gulden and a single allocation – and his period of service was keeping with the wartime.²⁶ The

²¹ See Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, hereafter ÖStA) Kriegsarchiv (KA) MLST Karton-Nr. 10.996 Monath Tabellen and Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabellen.

²² See ÖStA KA Zentralstellen (ZSt) Wiener Hofkriegsrat (HKR) Akten 1797-62-1933 and ÖStA KA Musterlisten und Standestabellen (MLST) Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabellen. Wrede claims inaccurately the *Freikorps* was made up of only two Hussar divisions. Cp. WREDE: II. 501. and III/2. 923.

²³ Cp. BERKÓ: 39. NAGY-L.: 131, 195. WREDE: V. 340.

²⁴ WREDE: II. 501.

²⁵ See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 10.996 and Karton-Nr. 11.759.

²⁶ ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Akten 1797-62-1933.

bigger part of the infantry was made up of Southern Slavic refugees driven by the last Turkish war to the borders, especially from Bosnia, while the smaller part was made up of *Grenzer* from the Croatian-Slavonic Military Frontier, of course and also we could find soldiers from the Croatian and Slavonic counties, even from Dalmatia belonging to the Venetian Republic, furthermore from Lower Austria, Moravia and Prussian Silesia and this mixed population was a rarity.²⁷

However they had a significant number of former *Grenz* Hussars, since as we have seen earlier, some Military Frontier Hussar units had been dismissed just some years ago and many of them was still on active duty and a lot of them was able-bodied, who was not on active duty. Accordingly the *Freikorps* cavalry was made up mostly former *Grenz* Hussars, furthermore a lot of above-mentioned dispatch-riders had been transferred to these units from the *Grenz* infantry regiments, but we could find here formerly, exclusively infantry troops, even recruits without military experiences.²⁸ Decisively the officers and the non-commissioned officers had been transferred from the standing army in both branch of service.

Originated from a Croatian and Hungarian family of Herzegovina,²⁹ János Knesevich, Baron of Szentilona, the earlier lieutenant-colonel of the Brod *Grenz* Infantry Regiment was commissioned as the commander of the *Freikorps* according to the notification of the *Hofkriegsrat* (Imperial War Council) on 22 February, 1793 and the command was taken into effect on 1 May.³⁰ The experienced and valiant would be Major-General,³¹ who was about 50 years old commanded personally only the infantry in addition leading the whole unit. Since strictly speaking it is out of our topic, we are omitting the detailed and further presentation of the history and organization of the *Freikorps* which was disbanded in 1801.³²

The direct leadership of the Hussars was the duty of Major Petrus von Gvozdanovich, who had been deployed also from the Brod *Grenz* Infantry Regiment and also on 1 May.³³ The 40 years old major from Žumberak

²⁷ Unfortunately we can get an imperfect picture of this topic, because we have documents only for the half of the military personnel. See ST ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 10.996, Assent Listen, Grundbücher, Transferirungs (!) Listen.

²⁸ See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr.11.758 Grundbücher, Revisions Listen; Karton-Nr. 11.759 Assent Listen, Transferirungs Listen.

²⁹ Herzegovina was a small province under Ottoman Turkish rule in the northwest part of the Balkans at that time.

³⁰ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 10.996 Monath Tabella pro Mense Majo; RÉFI Attila: *A császári-királyi huszárság törzstisztikara a francia forradalmi és a napóleoni háborúk korában (1792-1815)* (The Staff of Field Officers of the Imperial-Royal Hussar Regiments in the Age of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792–1815), Budapest, 2008. PhD dissertation (manuscript), 231.

³¹ For biographical data see SCHMIDT-BRENTANO, Antonio: *Kaiserliche und k.k. Generale (1618-1815)*. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, 2006. (<http://www.austria.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=18890> Downloaded: 3 February, 2007.) 50.

³² However it is worth mentioning regard to this topic that the warriors of the unit were called Redcoats because of their Turkish garment and equipment and their name was feared by the enemy. See VANIČEK, Fr.: *Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze*, IV. Band, Wien, Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1875. 4 and WREDE: II. 501.

³³ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabella pro Mense Majo, Vaniček states incorrectly the

(Sichelburg), Croatia started his military career in the Károlyváros *Grenz* Hussar Regiment, then promoted to captain for one of the Hussar squadrons belonging to the Slavonic *Grenz* infantry regiments until their above-mentioned disbanding.³⁴

In May 1793, at the time of establishment the other members of the officer corps for the Hussar *Freikorps* were the following ones:³⁵

First captains: Georg von Ringelsheim, Ignatz Csivich von Rohr, Adam Ekart, Vincencz Kovachevich, Johann von Morberth, Jakab Varga, Paul von Oreskovich, Simeon Chudich.

Second captains: Count Johann Klebelsberg, Stephan Kobasicza, György Bakoss, Baron Anton Gvozdanovich, Daniel Gvozdanovich, Johann Vuchetich, Marcus Rajakovich, Johann Kerpovich.

First lieutenants: Carl von Gottschlig, Paul Vidak, Jakab Kovács, Baron Carl Guretzky, Vasil Petrovich, Anton Koperczanovich, Joseph Pospischel, Marcus Bosanecz, Joseph Rebracha, Joseph Vlatkovich, Paul Mallinar, Count György Draskovich, Baron Johann Kulnek, Carl Mudrovchich, Johann Kerpan.

Second lieutenants: Demetry von Radubitzky, Michael Vuchetich, Wolfgang Bako, József Szentes, Franz Csavich, Ignatz Lakner, Joseph Rademacher, Marcus Csavich, Johann Loncsar, Michael Nikolich, Michael Stimacz, Ludwig Ettl, Joseph Benne, Thomas Gollner, Petar Nikich, Carl Neugebauer.

However the commission for the first lieutenant of second squadron in the 2nd division was taken just in July by István Bogyó.³⁶

The composition of the officer corps shows the intention of the high command, namely the officers also will be Southern Slavs like the troops, since they are proficient with the light unit tactics and speak excellently the language of the common soldiers. To fill the officer vacancies the men for the infantry were deployed mostly from the *Grenz* infantry regiments, while the officers for the cavalry were transferred also from the *Grenz* infantry regiments primarily, but the Hussar, Chevauxleger and Cuirassier regiments and even the one and only Uhlan regiment sent officers too. We could find some commissioned officers, who were newly graduated students from the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt and from the Military Engineering Academy in Vienna.³⁷

The cavalry of the *Freikorps* was made up of eight squadrons or four divisions – the strength of a squadron was between 221 and 250 soldiers – and the staff with nine men. The staff consisted of the above-mentioned Major Petrus von Gvozdanovich, as the commander of the cavalry and he was the one and only field officer, Adjutant Simon Stephanacz, two surgeons, a staff trumpeter, a head

major was transferred from the Otocac Regiment. Cp. VANIČEK 4.

³⁴ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 10.996 Transferirungs Listen; ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Transferirungs Lista über den Obristwachtmeister Petrus von Gvozdanovich.

³⁵ For the officer corps' register see ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabella pro Mense Majo.

³⁶ See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabella pro Mense Junio.

³⁷ Regard to this topic see ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr.11.758 Grundbücher, Revisions Listen; Karton-Nr. 11.759 Assent Listen, Transferirungs Listen.

blacksmith and an assistant blacksmith, a harness-maker and a tailor.³⁸

The intended strength of the *Freikorps* was 1,865 men and 1,865 horses in May, but the number was increased up to 1,945 men and 1,945 horses in July. However in the beginning the effective force consisted of 1,848 men and 1,848 horses in end of May and the numbers were raised to 1,865 men in August, but the unit had only 1,842 horses. Of course, subsequently after the first skirmishes the strength of the unit was decreased, thus the effective force consisted of no more, than 1,790 men and 1,645 horses in December.³⁹ Certainly the able-bodied force was even lower than this, since always there were wounded, ill and detached troops or absentees for other purposes in the unit.

The 3rd and the 4th divisions had been brought up to full strength during May, but it seems it was a longer process for the 1st and the 2nd divisions and it was just finished in July according to the monthly total strength tables. Typically 17 officers of the officer corps numbered 49 men⁴⁰ had not arrived yet to their new unit in May and besides, as we mentioned earlier, an officer commission was vacant.

The 3rd and the 4th division already began marching to the theatre of war in May due to the different speed of the organizing. The former unit arrived in the Austrian Hereditary Lands in the end of the month and continued its advancing toward Tyrol, then marched through it and reached the Holy Roman Empire on 28 July, then took its designated position in the General Wurmser Group along the Upper Rhine on the 1st of August.⁴¹ The 4th division left the southern regions of the Hungarian Kingdom on 3 July and also marched over Tyrol then it arrived in the Holy Roman Empire on 15 July and reached the Upper Rhine on 1st August or together with the 3rd division. The 1st division left Hungary just on the same day or 1st of August and it was marching over Lower, then Upper Austria to reach the Holy Roman Empire on 29 August, then to the theatre of operations on 23 September. The squadrons of the 2nd division began their march to the seat of operations even later, moreover they did it separately. The first squadron of the division departed Hungary on 6 August and was marching over Lower and Upper Austria, took a day of rest on the 31st of August and reach the Holy Roman Empire on the 1st day of September then the Wurmser Group on 24 September. Two days before the first squadron's leaving the second squadron departed Hungary on 6 August and crossed the border of Lower Austria then it was keeping its march to Upper Austria until 28 August, where the division took two days of rest. It renewed its advancing on the 1st of September on the soil of the Holy Roman Empire by this time and arrived at its designated position on 23 September.⁴²

³⁸ See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr.11.759 Monath Tabellen.

³⁹ See *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Note the adjutant or aide was not member of the officer corps, but virtually it was a transition between the officers and the non-commissioned officers.

⁴¹ Unfortunately the monthly tables do not provide more detailed data for the precise route of the march. See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabellen.

⁴² See *ibid.*

However the commander of the Hussar *Freikorps* was not Major Gvozdanovich at the time of the military operations, since he was deployed back to the Brod *Grenz* Infantry Regiment with effect on 15 July and a new commander was sent from the Otocac *Grenz* Infantry Regiment on 1 August: he was Major Paul von Bogovich, 43 years old from Szluin, who, like his predecessor, already served in the army as a member of the Károlyváros *Grenz* Hussars, thus he had earned experiences as a Hussar officer.⁴³

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Thus the preliminary plan of the high command placed the *Hussar Freikorps* along the Upper Rhine, where the military operations were started again in the beginning of the spring. Charles William, Duke of Brunswick, the supreme commander of the allied armies crossed the Rhine with most of his army on 16 March and pushed back General Custine's Rhine Army, who was retreating back to Lauterburg and Weissenburg, behind the so-called Weissenburg Lines, when Wurmser crossed the Rhine on 31 March too. Then the military operations of the allied forces were restricted only to the siege of Mainz and the city was surrendered on 22 July.⁴⁴ Subsequently the major operations had been stopped, since the Prussians hesitated to keep the advancing toward Alsace.

According to the available documents the first clashes of the war involved the Hussar *Freikorps* was on 22 August, when the 3rd Slavonic Battalion together with a *Grenz* Hussar squadron led by Colonel Kovachevich successfully recaptured the heights beyond Bergzabern (today: Bad Bergzabern) settlement closing the gap between the first and the second columns of the Imperial-Royal army.⁴⁵ It was a typically manoeuvre for the *Freikorps*, when it was deployed jointly with other *Grenz* or Hussar units under the command of the former ones and this characteristic feature was survived until the end of the campaign. Of course, also the unit stood the ground independently, for example, on 12 September, 1793. On this day 12,000 French left Lauterburg and attacked Wurmser's two generals, Johann von Jellačić's and Friedrich von Hotze's positions near Hagenbach settlement. Jellačić succeed in retaining his positions and tried lending a hand to Hotze who was pressed hard by the enemy and also the Hussars of the *Freikorps* played an important role during this military enterprise. Jellačić sent a squadron under Major Bogovich against the enemy's cavalry wing and a successful attack was executed near Berg village, while the general made a charge from the neighbouring heights driving the enemy into the forest.⁴⁶

⁴³ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Transferirungs Lista über den Obristwachtmeister Paul von Bogovich.

⁴⁴ HORSETZKY, Adolf von: *Kriegsgeschichtliche Übersicht der wichtigsten Feldzüge in Europa seit 1792*. Sechste, neubearbeitete Auflage. Seidel & Sohn, Wien, 1905. 68.

⁴⁵ VANIČEK: 7. Vaniček mentions incorrectly the said settlement as Berggabern.

⁴⁶ GRÄFFER, August: *Kurze Geschichte der k. k. Regimenter, Corps, Batallions und andere Militär-Branchen; seit ihrer Errichtung bis zu Endes des Feldzuges 1799*, Militärische Buchhandlung, Wien, 1804.

Meanwhile Wurmser was fed up with the hesitating Prussians and made an attack without them against the French of the Weissenburg Lines in the middle of October pushing them to Strasbourg and began to surround Landau.⁴⁷ The four squadrons of the *Freikorps* attacked in the formation of the second column in the charge against Weissenburg on 13 October.⁴⁸

They participated in capturing Wanzenau on 26 October, when the *Freikorps'* two divisions was sent to the left and a division of Szekler Hussars deployed to right to outflank the settlement, while the Archduke Ferdinand Infantry Regiment attacked the main frontline, thus the settlement had been fallen after a half an hour. Later two divisions of the unit played a role in the siege of Fort Louis and it was a success again, since the fort was surrendered on 14 November.⁴⁹

The weather took a turn for a worse, so the major operations was finished, but it was just the beginning of the so-called outpost duty for the Hussars of the Imperial-Royal army, including the Hussars of the Wurmser *Freikorps* and they had to provide an appropriate defence for the camped and quartered troops. The outposts created a loose defensive line around the winter quarters keeping a close watch on the enemy, gathering information and holding up the would-be enemy until the main force was prepared.⁵⁰ An almost continual battle readiness was a requirement, because the enemy cavalry watched the movements of the troops ceaselessly and even could initiate skirmishes.⁵¹ For example the Hussars of the *Freikorps* had to make heroic efforts against the French in the outposts Killstädt and Herrlisheim on 22 November.⁵²

The Hussars of the Wurmser *Freikorps* had a bad start to the year 1794, because their commander, Major Bogonovich suddenly died on the 1st of January.⁵³ His vacant commission had not been filled in for month, since the high command reckoned the commander of the infantry, Knesevich, who had been newly promoted to colonel, was able to perform the duty of the direct commandership of the cavalry too.⁵⁴

Besides the military situation it seemed more favourable for the French despite

Neue unveränderte Ausgabe, II. Band, 235.; VANIČEK 8.

⁴⁷ CSASZKÓCZY Emil: *Magyar katonák a francia hadszíntéren 1792-1794. évben* (Hungarian Soldiers in the French Theatre of War during the years 1792-1794), Manuscript. Hadtörténelmi Levéltár, Budapest (The Archives of War History, Budapest). Kéziratok, tanulmányok gyűjteménye (Collection of Manuscripts and Papers) No. 1898, 19.; HORSETZKY: 68.

⁴⁸ VANIČEK: 9.

⁴⁹ VANIČEK: 10.; BODART, Gaston: *Militär-historisches Kriegs-Lexikon (1618-1905)*, C. W. Stern, Wien und Leipzig, 1908, 283.

⁵⁰ *Studien über die Vorposten*. In: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift 1862. 393.

⁵¹ BENCZE László: *Mecséry Dániel altábornagy, a Katonai Mária Terézia Rend lovagjának és parancsnoki keresztje tulajdonosának élete*, (Lieutenant General Dániel Mecséry, Life for the Owner of the Commander's Cross of and the Knight of the Military Order of Maria Theresa) Magyar Honvédség Oktatás és Kulturális Anyagellátó Központ, Budapest, 1992. 20.

⁵² VANIČEK: 11.

⁵³ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.760 Monath Tabella pro Januario.

⁵⁴ See ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Protocolla (Prot.)1794 Dep. Lit. B 1033.

their failures of the previous year, because they increased their army's strength over 700,000 men due to the introduction of the obligatory military service in 1793.⁵⁵ Also the new French strategic and tactical innovations began to spread and yield fruit and they increasingly provided an advantage against the impotent and inflexible high command of the allied forces. The unified leadership spoke in the French Republic's favour compared to the mixed composed and considerably independently allied forces.⁵⁶ It was hardly surprising that the French got an upper hand in the military operations of 1794 after the initial allied success and this kind of situation became very clear after the Imperial-Royal defeat at Fleurus on 26 June and subsequently. The allied lost their hold over all of The Netherlands after the defeat step by step by the end of the year.⁵⁷

Similar events took place in the German theatre of operations, which was a more important area from our point of view. In the beginning the allied forces made some attacks here too and tried separating the Rhine and the Mosel Armies of the enemy. In the end of May the Prussian General Möllendorf, commander of the right wing captured Kaiserslautern, while on the left wing the Imperial-Royal Army Corps led by *Feldzugmeister* Friedrich William, Prince of Hohenlohe-Kirchberg, including the Wurmser Group and of course the Hussar *Freikorps* pushed back the French to the Weissenburg Lines.⁵⁸ However the French forces launched a large-scale counter-offensive in August capturing Trier defended by the Habsburg troops then forced Hohenlohe-Kirchberg to retreat from the ramparts of Weissenburg. Also Möllendorf was made to leave his positions handing over the left bank of the Rhine and withdrew his forces to the right riverbank. Thus the French could reach Mainz without resistance and surrounded Luxembourg too.⁵⁹

Early in the year the Hussar *Freikorps* was garrisoned in the concentrated military camps around Steinmauern, Lanterbourg and Mannheim and they got some supplies. Due to this supply the strength of the unit was increased from 1,790 men to 1,868 and from 1,645 horses to 1,868 until December and besides the able-bodied force was managed to rise from 1,566 men to 1,792.⁶⁰

The renewed skirmishes around the outposts were a clear sign for the Hussars to expect some military operations. Especially the French raids became more and more violent and frequent, although the Free Corps' Hussars usually repelled all of them.⁶¹

The first major conflict of the war theatre took place in Schifferstadt on 23 May, when the French Rhine Army commanded by this time Divisional General Michaud gained a minor victory over the Imperial-Royal and Prussian forces led by

⁵⁵ HAHNER Péter: *A Bastille-tól Waterlooig* (From Bastille to Waterloo), Zrínyi, Budapest, 1989, 30.

⁵⁶ CSASZKÓCZY: 22.

⁵⁷ NAGY-L.: 289-290.

⁵⁸ CSASZKÓCZY: 25.

⁵⁹ HORSETZKY: 74-75.

⁶⁰ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.759 Monath Tabella pro Mense Decembri, valamint Karton-Nr. 11.760 Monath Tabella pro Januario.

⁶¹ VANIČEK: 20-21.

Prince Hohenlohe-Kirchberg. A squadron of the *Freikorps* was participated in the battle.⁶²

Later the Hussar *Freikorps* as part of the advance vanguard for the main forces of Hohenlohe-Kirchberg had fought several successful skirmishes. For example, when a vanguard of General Michaud launched an attack against the Plateau Gernersheim during the French Offensive, the 2nd Slavonic Battalion and the *Freikorps'* Hussars of the advance guard offered a spirited resistance near the forest of Schwegenheim and Gommersheim and fought back the French to their entrenched positions.⁶³

Also we could find Hussars of the *Freikorps* in a combined detachment of *Grenzer*, who made a bold reconnaissance toward settlements Schwaig and Asseln in August forcing the enemy to detour for Ellwangen.⁶⁴ The Hussars fought a minor skirmish all by themselves near Mannheim in 19 September and they battled with exceptional bravery. In the Battle of Kaiserslautern Prince Hohenlohe-Kirchberg defeated Divisional General Schaal on 20 September and the *Freikorps'* Hussars led by Major-General Baron Siegfried von Kospoth made a distraction at Weissenheim.⁶⁵ On 9 October the French launched an attack with 8,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry against the positions of Major-General Count András Karaicsay near Frankenthal and Oggenheim creating a dangerous situation and some units came to help of the General including a *Freikorps* squadron, which distinguished itself by its courageous actions in repelling the attackers.⁶⁶

The 1st Squadron of the 1st Division and the 2nd Squadron of the 2nd Division were garrisoned in winter quarters by the beginnings of the winter, while the other six squadrons were ordered to march to Breisgau in early November, where they joined the cordon along the border from Mannheim to Basel established by the Upper Rhine Army Corps.⁶⁷

Summarily we can conclude regarding the activities of the Hussar *Freikorps* in the above mentioned campaigns, that it had been used primarily for the so-called small or petty warfare, which was a characteristic feature of the light troops. Practically the petty warfare was composed the military actions executed by smaller detachments between the so-called large-scaled warfare, where major battles fought by big armies. So it was unnecessary to deploy the Hussars of the *Freikorps* strong in numbers and because of this they were thrown into fight as a divided unit: divisions or even smaller military subunits, squadrons or platoons were sent to the areas of military operations. The comprehensive presentation of these military operations is virtually an unfeasible act, because of the large-scale

⁶² Ibid, 21. BODART: 290.

⁶³ VANIČEK: 21-22. Vaniček mentions incorrectly the Forest of Schwegersheim regarding this event. Cp. VANIČEK: 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 22.

⁶⁵ BODART: 297.; VANIČEK: 23. The latter author reports the date of the battle wrongly.

⁶⁶ VANIČEK: 23.

⁶⁷ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.760 Monath Tabella pro Novembri.

range of the topic, which it demands an expansive research for sources. So we only could highlight the most important moments as you could see above.

Other important events happened in the life of the *Freikorps* in addition to the countless lesser and greater skirmishes during the year 1794. Changes had been started regard to the structure and the status of the unit and they had a decisive effect on the future of the *Freikorps*. We mentioned the cavalry commander post had been vacant for a long time after death of Major Bogunovich early in the year. It remained so until 24 June when the *Hofkriegsrat* appointed a lieutenant-colonel as the leader of the *Freikorps* cavalry backdated to 23 June, furthermore it created three field officers posts at the unit in the ranks of first, second and third major.⁶⁸

The new commander was a former major of the Blankenstein Hussars, Christian von Uz from Moravia. The newly promoted lieutenant-colonel was about 42 years old with 20 years military experience: he started as a Dragoon then he had served for a short time in a general staff and finally he had become a Hussar for fifteen years, first in a Hussar Regiment – the owner of the regiment was General Wurmser –, which later had been renumbered as the 8th Hussars, then in the previously mentioned Hussar Regiment of General Blankenstein, which was later renamed the 6th Hussars.⁶⁹ So von Uz was not Southern Slav unlike his predecessors and had not any relevant experience as a *Grenzer*, but he possessed a significant experience as a cavalry, even a Hussar officer and also it seems this kind of experience became more important for the high command than before. It clearly proves by the fact that Antal Lovász from Csongrád County, Hungary was promoted to first major from third major rank in the Erdődý, later 9th Hussar Regiment.

The latter field officer was about 36 years old with 18 years military experience and he only served as Hussar in the Hussar regiments of Graeven, Barcó and Erdődý.⁷⁰ The high command surely assumed the two officers redeploying would be a sufficient step to colour somewhat the life of the unit by increasing the Hussar spirit, thus the second and the third major ranks had not been filled in by redeploying, but the officers were promoted from the unit's own officer corps. The promotions was justified by the fact that the rank and file and the officer corps surely would have displeased and rightly, if too many new and unknown officers had been set over them. On the other hand a better fluent operation was assured by promoting such officers to the officer corps, who had an intimate knowledge of the unit. Certainly we could find officers in the officer corps of the *Freikorps* who earned their promotions due to their military services and courageous behaviours against the enemy.

Accordingly First Captain Simeon von Chudich was promoted to second major and First Captain Johann von Morberth was promoted to third major.⁷¹ The 45 years old Chudich, who was born in the district of the Otocac Regiment⁷² and

⁶⁸ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.760 Monath Tabella pro Mense Junio.

⁶⁹ RÉFI: 177-178.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.760 Monath Tabella pro Mense Junio.

⁷² The *Grenz* infantry regiments were not only military organizational units, but also territorial and

certainly was a Southern Slav had a considerably military experience due to his 28 years of active services. However he has gained no experience as a Hussar before was sent to the *Freikorps*, because he did military service for 23 years in the Szluin, then for two and half years in the Otocac *Grenz* Infantry Regiments.⁷³

The 38 years old Morberth from Glina probably was Croatian by birth and he also was a *Grenzer* for 21 years in the 1st Ban *Grenz* Infantry Regiment. He also gave a clear proof his gallantry as a Hussar and undoubtedly it was certified by the fact that Morberth was awarded later by the highest Austrian military medal, the Knight's Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa.⁷⁴

In the light of the later developments it seems the appointments of the four field officers with considerably military experiences, including the appointment of Christian von Uz, who was promoted to the rank equivalent to the commander of the whole *Freikorps*, was the high command's purposeful decision and part of a long-time plan for making the cavalry of the *Freikorps* as an independent unit.

When we are talking about previously events it is absolutely worth mentioning the fact that all men of the unit petitioned through the Upper Rhine Army Corps on 4 March, 1794 *'to being not treated as the rank and file of a Freikorps, but as true Grenz Hussars, and as such they will be maintained together with their officers for both wartime and peacetime, furthermore able-bodied horses and green pelisses will be given as it was used to the former Grenz Hussar regiments...'*⁷⁵ Since their petition was ignored, they drafted it again and filed the petition in the Military Camp of Heiligenstein on 13 June.⁷⁶ Their request was refused again, because the army as a strictly hierarchical institution not really supported any initiative coming from below. Finally the intents of the high command and of the rank and file for the Hussar *Freikorps* were met primarily due to the clear-cut realization, that the deployed Imperial-Royal armies needed some reorganization, because of the increasing superiority of the French and among others this reorganization required to reform the existing military units and to create new ones.

The battle-hardened Hussar units of the Imperial-Royal army proved their worth again and again through their excellent courage and comprehensive usefulness in the previous combats, so it seemed a reasonable decision to increase their ranks.⁷⁷ It seemed the most practical and the quickest way for creating a new Hussar unit to make the properly experienced and their worthiness already proved Hussars of the Wurmser *Freikorps* independent and at the same time to raise the unit's strength to a regimental level. Even the intention for resurrection the Hussar traditions of the Croatian-Slavonic Military Frontier might has played a role in the process.

However the reorganizations including the Wurmser *Freikorps'* rearrangements

administrative ones.

⁷³ ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 5646 Transferirungs Lista über den Hauptmann Simeon von Chudich.

⁷⁴ For his career see RÉFI: 170–171.

⁷⁵ ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Prot. 1794 B 1035.

⁷⁶ ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Prot. 1794 B 3127.

⁷⁷ Cp. ZACHAR (2000): 52.

could be executed only after the end of the military operations of the year, if they did not want to plunge the fighting ability of the army in danger.⁷⁸

Thus finally a proposition was made on 22 November and it proposed the creation of a new *Grenz* Hussar regiment called Croatian-Slavonic by detaching the four Hussar divisions of the Wurmser *Freikorps* from the infantry and besides it determined the equipments and the uniforms of the unit.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, on 5 December a new proposal suggested only the Hussar Corps name for the new unit to be created on 1st of the January instead of the Hussar Regiment, because it was not possible to set up a fifth division for the moment. It made a proposition for the necessary enlargement of the general staff, including filling in the office of the judge advocate to be established by transferring Franz Adolf Prohaska from the Otocac District with effect from 1 January.⁸⁰ Finally it proposed that the Imperial Horse-Breeding Ranch of Mezőhegyes will pass down 280 new horses to its ancillary stud-farm in Bábolna.⁸¹

All of the propositions were adopted on 10 December.⁸² The cavalry of the *Freikorps* was separated completely from the infantry with effect from 1 January, 1795, although the latter one retained the name Austrian-Styrian Count Wurmser *Freikorps*. However the former one with its earlier officer corps and its somewhat increased rank and file began operating as an independent unit under the name of Imperial-Royal Croatian-Slavonic *Grenz* Hussar Corps.⁸³ The further history and the heroic struggles of the Southern Slavic *Grenz* Hussars are belonging to another study.

⁷⁸ That time just smaller changes could be executed. However the really comprehensive, large-scale reforms for the whole army became possible only during the short peacetime after the end of the First Coalition Wars.

⁷⁹ ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Prot. 1794 Lit B 5323.

⁸⁰ HKR Akten 1794-9-2050 – It is justified to mention Prohaska by name since he made a very successful military career for himself when he became a combatant officer in 1799 (previously he was a non-combatant officer of the army). He was awarded by the Military Order of Maria Theresa, promoted to a general, then he became the second vice-president of the *Hofkriegsrat* and finally he was the head of the military department for the State Council. He was promoted to brevet general of the cavalry, when he was retired in 1848. For his life see RÉFI: 247-248.

⁸¹ ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Akten 1794-9-2050; ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Prot. 1794 Lit. B 5509.

⁸² See ÖStA KA ZSt HKR Prot. 1794 Lit B 5509.

⁸³ Although the official denomination of the unit is Slavonic-Croatian *Grenz* Hussar Corps ('Slavonisch Croatisches Gränz Houssarn Corps') (cp. e.g. ÖStA KA MLST Kroat.-Slav. Gr. Hus. Rgt. ST 1795 Karton-Nr. 11.715), we considered more suitable to use the Croatian-Slavonic name as it is accepted by the English, German and Hungarian technical literature. In the first months of 1795 – January and February – we could find also the name Slavonic-Banatian *Grenz* Hussar Corps ('Slavonisch Bannatisches Gränz Houssarn Corps'). (See ÖStA KA MLST Karton-Nr. 11.715 Monath Tabella pro Januario 1795 és Monath Tabella pro Februario 1795. Regarding the denomination we note that Wrede calls incorrectly the unit as Croatian-Slavonic *Grenz Freikorps* ('Croatisch-slavonisches Grenz-Frei-Corps') omitting the Hussar term in the second part of the Third Volume of his book. (Cp. Wrede: III/2. 923.) Elsewhere he claims wrongly the cavalry of the *Freikorps* became an independent unit under the name of Croatian-Slavonic *Grenz* Hussar Regiment in 1795, since the unit was reorganized as a regiment under the similar name only in 1798. Cp. WREDE: II. 501.