

KOSSUTH AND GÖRGEY; THE POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP IN THE  
HUNGARIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1848-1849

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## ABSTRACT

KOSSUTH AND GÖRGEY; THE POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP IN THE HUNGARIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1848-1849 by Janos Noszko, 100 pages

In the spring of 1849, the rebel Hungarians defeated the Austrian army and liberated their country. The leaders of this struggle were Louis Kossuth, one of Hungary's most brilliant statesmen and Arthur Görgey, one of Hungary's most talented generals. Franz Joseph I of Austria begged for help to Nicholas I, the Russian Tsar, who, in the name of the Holy Alliance, sent 200,000 soldiers to put down the Hungarian revolution. The two great patriots, Kossuth and Görgey, saw differently how Hungary could win and they clashed over how to wage the war against the heavy odds. The politician intervened into operations while the general wanted to dictate the policy of the country. They did so when Hungary had no time for the luxury of internal conflicts. Nevertheless, the War of Independence did not fail due to domestic challenges but it was inevitably defeated by the combined Russo-Austrian offensive. This thesis is going to be a concise history of the armed conflict, with special emphasis on the relationship between Governor-president Louis Kossuth and General Arthur Görgey, the political and the military leaders of the War of Independence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER 1 HUNGARY BEFORE 1848.....	1
Kossuth and Görgey.....	1
The Land of Saint Stephen.....	6
CHAPTER 2 THE ARMIES OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.....	17
The Army of the Habsburgs.....	17
Army from Scratch .....	22
CHAPTER 3 FROM SCHWEHAT TO VÁC .....	30
From Revolution to War of Independence .....	30
Regular War or Insurgency.....	32
Windisch-Graetz's Attack.....	35
CHAPTER 4 WINTER CAMPAIGN .....	38
The Vác Proclamation .....	38
Transylvania.....	42
The Battle of Kápolna and its Aftermath .....	46
CHAPTER 5 THE SPRING CAMPAIGN.....	51
Military situation in March and April 1849.....	51
Vienna or Buda .....	58
Negotiations with the Peace Party .....	66
Summer Campaign .....	68
Kossuth or Görgey .....	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	95

## CHAPTER 1

### HUNGARY BEFORE 1848

#### Kossuth and Görgey

This thesis examines the political-military relationship during the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-1849. However, to understand the reasons and the events of this war, the background and the story of the war must be introduced. Only after the reader becomes familiar with the history, can the analysis take place. One needs to go back in the early 1800s' to understand the debate between Governor-President Louis Kossuth and Commander-in-Chief General Arthur Görgey. The differences between the two political orientations, which they represented, started during the Age of Reforms between Kossuth and Count István Széchenyi.

The Kossuth-Széchenyi debate was between Széchenyi, the moderate, and Kossuth, the radical, about the ends, the ways, and the means of reform. Széchenyi, one of the wealthiest magnates, wanted to implement economic and social reforms in conjunction with Austria, respect the minorities, and keep Hungary in the Habsburg Empire. Kossuth was more radical and nationalist. His program was for sovereignty with an unquestionable leading role for the Hungarian nobility, but still within the Empire. "The prehistory of 1848 was marked and symbolized by the rivalry between Széchenyi and Kossuth," and, according to the Hungarian scholars, "Széchenyi was right and Kossuth was wrong."<sup>1</sup> As far as the Kossuth-Görgey dispute is concerned, a different judgment is made.

Arthur Görgey was the young, barely thirty, military leader of the War of Independence. Kossuth handpicked him to be the commander of the Upper-Danube

Army, the strongest Hungarian Army, which was facing the main effort of the Habsburg Army. With Görgey's promotion, their dispute started and lasted to the end of the war and far beyond. "The 'Görgey-question' has continually agitated the Hungarian public opinion, splitting families and friends, labeling parliamentary parties, and marking each successive political situation."<sup>2</sup>

Görgey is distinguished as "modern Hungary's greatest military genius," but "of the two men, Kossuth was undoubtedly the greater figure."<sup>3</sup> Görgey "could accomplish miracles whenever politics did not obscure his judgment or thwart his strategy,"<sup>4</sup> but in the political questions, he always debated with Kossuth. István Deak, one of the best scholars of the revolution, argues that Görgey, "was confused and uncertain about nonmilitary matters."<sup>5</sup> However, if one examines the significant political events marking their debate one will find contradictory thoughts. Having withdrawn from the border and giving up the capital, the army started to fall apart as the officers resigned *en masse*. Görgey issued the Vác Proclamation that affirmed that the army "would remain loyal to the constitution sanctioned by the king."<sup>6</sup> With this manifesto, the general saved the army, but made Kossuth suspicious, because he misunderstood the proclamation.

The other landmark is Kossuth's act, the Declaration of Independence, and the dethronement of the Habsburgs. With these, Kossuth went far beyond his prior political program, and it proved a great mistake. With the Declaration of Independence, Kossuth closed any chance of reconciliation for Hungary. He made compromise with Austria impossible and a military solution inevitable. It is true that Austria had never wanted to negotiate with the revolutionary government of Hungary and that the Court's goal was to restore the pre-revolutionary conditions of the Empire. However, the Declaration of

Independence turned the moderates over, caused uncertainty within the officer corps, who had been fighting according to the Vác Proclamation, and gave a formal *casus belli* for the Russian intervention. (The intervention was already decided before the Declaration of Independence.) As Görgey engaged in political issues, so, too, did Kossuth intervene into military affairs.

The question of whether to go to Vienna or Buda still fires up passions in Hungary. Whether the army should have turned west and chased the defeated Austrians or turned east and take Buda? Some scholars assume that “this was Görgey’s worst decision.”<sup>7</sup> Modern Hungarian historians, such as COL Gábor Bona, argue that the Hungarian army was not in a condition to advance further. They were almost barefoot; the personnel of the battalions shrunk from 1000 to 600-800, and the supply routes stretched more than 250 miles. The army needed rest, fresh troops, and equipment.<sup>8</sup>

After the Russian intervention, a new question emerged whether Komárom or Szeged? Deak argues that Görgey’s plan to concentrate all available forces “on the Upper-Danube to inflict a last great blow on the Austrians” was a “collective suicide in Komárom,” and Kossuth’s Szeged Plan, a general withdrawal to southeastern Hungary where “the combined armies were to make a final stand and hopefully demolish both enemies” was a better choice.<sup>9</sup> Modern Hungarian military historians, such as Róbert Hermann, argue that from a military aspect the Komárom-plan was the best available. Komárom was one of the strongest fortifications in the Habsburg-empire, and while the Hungarian Army was there, it posed a threat to Vienna, thus the Austrian could not advance towards the Hungarian capital. With the Szeged Plan, the government gave up most of the country and the withdrawing armies focused on themselves both the Austrian

and Russian armies.<sup>10</sup> Who were they, whose decisions ultimately decided the course of the Hungarian history? Where did they come from? What did they do before the revolution?

Lajos (Louis) Kossuth (Monok, 19 September 1802 – Turin, 20 March 1894) was born in northeast Hungary, as the first child of a lower noble father, and a German burgher's daughter. He graduated as a lawyer and started his political career as the judge of the Zemplén County Court (táblabíró). He attended the Diet of 1832-36 as a deputy for absentee aristocrats. There, Kossuth started to write letters to his friends in Zemplén County about the Diet. These letters reported more than the official gazettes and became so popular that Kossuth started to dictate to a group of young lawyers who were in Pozsony, the so-called Dietal Youth. The letters, called Dietal Reports (*Országgyűlési Tudósítások*), soon were distributed to every corner of Hungary. These reports had an enormous impact, breaking the censorship, spreading liberal thoughts, and making Kossuth a respected politician nationwide. After the Diet, Kossuth organized a local correspondent net and continued to report on the county assemblies in the Municipal Reports (*Törvényhatósági Tudósítások*). The Vienna Court could not sit passively and in May 1837 arrested Kossuth. He was charged with disloyalty and sedition and was sentenced to a three-year prison term. He was released in May 1840 and in January 1841 published his own newspaper, the *Pesti Hírlap* (Pest News). In six months, the number of subscribers of *Pesti Hírlap* reached five thousand (an incredible number in Hungary). In mid-1844 the Court removed him from the *Pesti Hírlap*. Kossuth was one of the editors of the program of the Opposition Party, the Opposition Declaration (*Ellenzéki Nyilatkozat*). In the Diet of 1847-48, he was the leader of the opposition. He played a

major role in passing the April Laws. Kossuth was the Ministry of Finance in Lajos Batthyány's government. From September 1848, as the head of the National Defense Committee, Kossuth technically was the Chief of State.<sup>11</sup>

The Hungarian Commander-in-Chief, General Arthur Görgey (Toporc, 30 January 1818 – Budapest, 21 May 1916) came from an impoverished noble family. In 1832, he went to the engineering cadet school at Tulln of Austria. Görgey was commissioned as a lieutenant in 1837, and started to serve in the Hungarian Noble Guards in Vienna. In 1842, he became first lieutenant in the 12th Palatine's Hussar Regiment. In 1845, he resigned his commission to study chemistry at Prague University. He discovered lauric acid and graduated with honors. He was appointed an assistant at the University of Lemberg, but did not occupy the post. He returned to Hungary to manage his aunt's estate. After the March Revolution, he joined the Honvéd Army and was appointed to the 5th Honvéd Battalion as a captain on 13 June 1848. In June and August on Batthyány's orders, Görgey traveled to Wiener Neustadt and Prague to buy fusees and percussion caps. In Wiener Neustadt, he learnt the process of manufacturing fusees and submitted a plan for the establishment of a factory for fusees and percussion caps. On 27 August, Batthyány appointed him the commander of the Mobile National Guard at Szolnok as a major.<sup>12</sup>

On September 29, during the operations against Jellačić and Major General Karl Roth, Counts Edmund and Paul Zichy were arrested at one of Görgey's outposts' line. Count Edmund Zichy was a former Habsburg administrator. He met Jellačić in Székesfehérvár, where he agreed to carry proclamations to Roth. Zichy had estates nearby, so he might be able to cross the Hungarian lines. However, Edmund and Paul,

who knew nothing about Edmund's business, were escorted to Görgey. The peasants tried to lynch the counts, but Görgey saved them, and as commander in chief in the Lower Danube Valley, took them to court martial. The court martial condemned Count Eugene Zichy and he was executed. The innocent Count Paul Zichy was handed over to civilian court and later released. In November, he asked to serve under Görgey's command.<sup>13</sup>

In October, Görgey led the operations that resulted the encirclement and capture of Roth's 9,000 troops and twelve cannons. On October 9, Kossuth and the National Defense Committee promoted him to colonel. He distinguished himself in the Battle of Schwehat as a brigade commander. After the battle, he became a major general and the commander of the Hungarian Royal Corps of the Upper Danube, the main Hungarian army.

### The Land of Saint Stephen

Since 1222 when the Golden Bull of Andreas II was issued, the Hungarian monarchy had been elective. On August 29, 1526, the Battle of Mohács meant the failure of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom. Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia died in the battle against the Turks. Part of the Hungarian nobility elected Louis II's brother-in-law Ferdinand I as king. Ferdinand I won control over the western third of Hungary and the beginning of the Habsburg rule in Hungary was born. Over the next one hundred and fifty years, the Habsburgs had to defend their new conquest from the Ottomans by arms. In 1687, as a result of the liberation of Hungary from the Turks, the Hungarian estates recognized the Habsburgs' hereditary rights to the Hungarian throne. In 1722-23, the two houses of the Hungarian Diet accepted the succession in the female line of the Habsburgs. In this new law, the Pragmatic Sanction, the Vienna Court reinforced the

rights and liberties of the Hungarian nobility in exchange for the recognition of the female heredity. The Diet had the right to confirm the Habsburg candidate as king, and the king also had to swear to hold the Hungarian Constitution. The Pragmatic Sanction also recognized that Hungary and other Habsburg lands were indivisible and inseparable, and in case of foreign attack common action needed.<sup>14</sup>

Hungary could describe as Hungary proper, or, on the other hand, the area of the middle age Hungarian Kingdom that included Croatia and Slavonia, Transylvania and the Military Frontier. In theory, her own laws governed Hungary, but in practicality, Austria still held the cards in terms of power. Various bureaus strictly subordinate to Austrian institutions administrated Hungary. The Royal Hungarian Court Chancellery (*Königliche Ungarische Hofkanzley*), seated in Vienna, was the highest organ, and was responsible for the submission of Hungarian matters to the sovereign and the issue of the royal orders. The other chief office was the Royal Hungarian Locotenential Council (*Königliche Ungarische Statthalterey* or *Consilium Regium Locumtenentiale Hungaricum*) in Buda. Its five departments dealt with domestic issues such as religious affairs, education, military taxation, and economics. The highest financial office was the Royal Hungarian Chamber (*Hofkammer*) in Vienna, which oversaw the salt and mine industries, taxes, and postal revenues, and supervised the free royal cities. The military issues and the administration of the Military Border were the domains of the Court Council of War (*Hofkriegsrat*), at the Vienna Court.<sup>15</sup>

The counties and the two houses of the Diet formed the center stage of Hungarian politics, although the important decisions were made in Vienna. The Diet held its sessions in Pozsony (modern day Bratislava) forty miles from Vienna. As an alternative

to having German as the national language, the official language of Hungary became Latin to accommodate the Slavic and Romanian populations residing in Hungary. Therefore, Latin was spoken in the Diet during its sessions. The Diet had the right to confirm the Habsburg candidate as king, elect the palatine (royal governor, viceroy), to consent to the taxation and conscription, and to legislate domestic rules. The king summoned the Diet, and its two chambers had to agree on the law. Still, the king reserved the right to veto; he might refuse to give his consent to the law.<sup>16</sup> The members of the Upper House or Upper Table were the aristocrats, the high officials of Catholic clergy and the lord-lieutenants. Each county sent two elected representatives to the Lower House or Lower Table of the Diet where they sat together with the representatives of the free royal towns, the privileged nations such as Cumans or Jazygi, and the deputies of the absent aristocrats.<sup>17</sup>

The fifty-five counties were the basis of the domestic politics. Their highest officials were the lord-lieutenants (German: *Obergespann*; Latin: *comes*; Hungarian: *főispán*) appointed by the king. They were aristocrats or Catholic bishops. Meanwhile the lord-lieutenant served in a supervisory role in the county's administration, while the deputy lord-lieutenants (*Untergespann*, *vicecomes*, *alispán*) were responsible for the everyday issues. They usually were members of the *bene possessionati*, the wealthiest mid-size landowners. Therefore, the administration in the local government was at the mercy of the lesser nobility against the king and the aristocracy.<sup>18</sup>

In Hungary, the nobility meant the political nation or *natio Hungarica*. Of the population, 5 percent, some 550,000 nobles, exercised the rights of the nobility. These rights were (1) *habeas corpus*, the freedom from arrest and imprisonment except with due

cause, (2) free ownership of their land, (3) exemption from taxes, (4) exemption from service to the state except for military service in war, and (5) *jus resistendi*, the right of using force to resist royal infringement of the constitution.

Legally all nobles were equal, but in reality they were divided into estates: the aristocrats (*barones*) and the lesser or common nobles. The magnates made enormous profits by raising grain, filling the highest offices of the state, and securing membership in the Upper House of the Diet. These aristocrats accepted the Habsburg-given titles, sent their sons to Western European schools, and spoke French and German. In short, the aristocratic Hungarians were quickly losing their Hungarian identity.

The lesser nobility were referred to as the *bene possessionati*, landowners with middle size holdings who wielded great power and influence in the national and local politics. Below them were the poorer landowners down to the “sandal wearing” nobles at the bottom. They lived as peasants and even had to pay taxes. The lesser nobility stayed at home in Hungary: their culture was classical Latin culture, while the focus of the aristocrats was French or German. However, by the 19th century many nobles responded to forced Germanization by celebrating Hungarian culture among themselves: they were beginning to find their own identity. These nobles refused to use German as an official language, began writing poems, novels, scientific books in Hungarian, and the first Hungarian newspaper in 1780.<sup>19</sup> These lesser nobles became the leaders of the country. They were the core of the political nation as well as the administration.

The Catholic clergy maintained the same rights as the nobles. The prelates were part of the aristocracy, appointed by the apostolic king; they were conservative, and loyal to the Court. Their high officials sat in the Diet, but played a relatively minor role in

politics. The burghers of the free royal towns and mining cities were usually Germans. They had corporate nobility, but paid taxes and were under the direct control of the Hungarian Chamber. Each free royal town sent two deputies to the Diet, but the combined votes of all the towns counted as one. The cities were bypassed in the grain trade as the great landowners exported directly to Western Europe; meanwhile the cheap import of Western European industrial goods undermined their economies. The *honoratiores*, (commoners) lawyers, journalist, writers, physicians, Protestant clergymen played an increased role in the society and politics. They had no political rights, but due to their higher education maintained growing influence in both the national and local politics. The privileged nations, the 180,000 Cumans (*kun*), Jazygi (*jász*), and the 61,000 Heyducks (*hajdú*), were basically peasants, but were considered free people.<sup>20</sup> Another group, which enjoyed few rights, was the peasantry.

The peasants were direct subjects of their landowners, paid taxes and were subject to the draft, though they could not bear arms. They could not leave the manor without consent, could be arrested at will, and landlords acted as judge without appeal. Due to the prosperous grain trade, the nobility was able to reinstitute feudal dues. Peasants in Eastern Europe underwent a second-serfdom, and peasants owed 104 days unpaid labor (*robot*) to their landowners by the end of 18th century. Nevertheless, classes and nationalities divided Hungary as well.

The population of Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia and Transylvania), according to the 1842 census was thirteen million. Of the population, 4.8 million were Hungarian. The 1.6 million Slovaks lived in Upper Hungary. They were peasants or lumberjacks. There were 1.2 million Germans in Hungary. Their first wave arrived in the

Middle Ages, and in a much greater numbers they inhabited the devastated Hungary after the Ottoman wars. Of their two groups, the Swabians lived in Hungary while the Saxons resided in Transylvania. They were burghers of the free royal towns or rather prosperous peasants.<sup>21</sup> The 2.2 million Romanians resided in Hungary proper, Transylvania, and the Military Border.

Transylvania had been an integral part of Hungary before the Ottoman occupation. After the Battle of Mohács, the majority of the Hungarian nobles elected János Zápolyai, the vajda of Transylvania as a national king, while a group of magnates supported the Habsburg Archduke of Austria, Ferdinand I.<sup>22</sup> The war ended with the partition of Hungary for one hundred and fifty years between the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Principality of Transylvania. The Habsburgs dominated in Western and Upper Hungary and portions of Croatia (Royal Hungary), while the Ottomans held central Hungary and suzerainty over semi-independent Transylvania. Transylvania was placed under Habsburg rule at the end of the Turkish Wars. It was renamed as Grand Principality of Transylvania and was governed separately from Hungary through the Transylvanian Chancellery in Vienna. It had its own Diet with the representatives of Transylvania's three political nations: the Hungarians, the Székelys (an ancient Hungarian tribe in Transylvania), and the Saxons. Transylvania's absolute majority, the Romanians, had no political rights. They were mostly peasants with a growing number of merchants and intellectuals.<sup>23</sup> Among the minorities in Hungary, the Germans were at the highest level of political and cultural progress. They were followed by the Croats.

Saint Ladislaus I annexed Croatia to Hungary in 1091 and since then Hungarian kings had held the title of Croatian king. Croatia had not been part of the Hungarian realm and had maintained her self-governance. The *ban* represented the king, and Croatia had her own Diet, the *sabor* in Zagreb. At the beginning of the Ottoman wars, Croatia, as a part of Hungary, fell under Habsburg rule. As a military measure, the Vienna Court instituted the Military Border in Croatia in 1522. As a military frontier, this territory belonged neither to Croatia nor Hungary. It was governed through Court War Council. The people of this military frontier were peasants and soldiers. They were a strong pillar of the Habsburg Army. In the middle of the 19th century, the population of Croatia (officially named Croatia-Slavonia) and the Military Border was 1.5 million. Of this population, two thirds (about 900,000) was Croatian and one third was Serbian. The Serbs came to Hungary in 1690, escaping from the Turks. The 800,000 Serbs resided in the Military Border and in Southern Hungary.

The area of Hungary was 125,000 square miles ([approximately the size of New Mexico], including Hungary proper 86,000 sq miles, Transylvania 22,000 sq miles, Croatia 17,000 sq miles). The distance between her eastern and western borders were 500 miles, and 340 miles between her northern and southern borders. Historical Hungary is the political term describing this area, and the Carpathian Basin is the geographical one.

The Carpathian Mountains surround and protect the Great Hungarian Plain from the north, the east, and the southeast. Its highest peak is in Upper Hungary, Lomnici (Lomnický) peak is 8642 feet. Armies can cross the mountains in several passes; elsewhere the terrain is severely restricted. From the south, the Danube and Sava rivers and the mountains of the Balkans were the obstacles for an invading enemy. From the

west, from Austria, there is no natural obstacle. The Alps roll down gently to the Little Hungarian Plain (*Kisalföld*) in the north, and to the Transdanubian hills in the south. Only the low Transdanubian Mountains (650-2300 feet) can show some restrictions. From the Danube to Transylvania, in the middle of the basin, is the Great Hungarian Plain or the *Alföld*. It is flat like a table, and lacks forests. The Bihari Mountains separate Hungary from Transylvania. The three most important passes between Hungary and Transylvania are the Szamos River valley in the north, the Király pass in the middle, and the Maros River valley in the south.

Hungary's two greatest rivers are the Danube and the Tisza. The Danube crosses the Little Hungarian Plain from west to east then turns to the south in the Danube Bend, where the river breaks through between the Transdanubian Mountains and the North Hungarian Mountains. Because an attacking army could approach the Hungarian capital both either the north or south bank of the river, it was not an obstacle. From the capital all the way long to the Turkish border, the east side of the river was swampy. The only permanent crossing point was the Chain Bridge (*Lánchíd*) in Budapest. It was under construction in 1848-49, but troops used the half-ready bridge for river crossing. Other important crossing sites were the temporary pontoon bridges at Pozsony, Komárom, Esztergom and Pétervárad.

The Tisza originates from the northeastern Carpathians and reaches the Alföld as a fast, mountain river. Then, on the Alföld, it slows down, and flows gently to the south. In 1848, it was an unregulated river. Its floods made large portions of the Alföld into impassable marshes for most of the year. The most important crossing sites of the Tisza were at Tokaj, Tiszafüred, Szolnok, and Szeged, where timber trestles were built.

The lack of roads made the transportation slow and difficult in Hungary. Few roads, such as the Vienna-Buda postal road, the Pest-Miskolc-Kassa-Galicia, Pest-Kiraly pass-Transylvania roads were more or less well maintained. Most of the other roads were nothing else than wagon trails. These trails were passable during the winter freeze and hot summer. In rainy weather, the wagons sank into mud.<sup>24</sup> There were four railroads in Hungary. On two of them, the Pozsony-Nagyszombat and the Sopron-Bécsújhely, the cars were drawn by horses. The first railroad was opened in 1846 between Pest and Vác. This railroad was 15 miles long. In 1847, the 61 miles long Pest-Szolnok line was opened.

One of the most important fortifications of the Habsburg Empire was Komárom. It was not completed in 1848, but due to its geographical position, it still played extremely important role during the War of Independence. This fortress system was situated where the River Vág-Danube join the River Danube, halfway between Vienna and Buda. The fortress had strategic importance. It had space for an entire army, and it controlled the road between the imperial and the Hungarian capital. The fortress controlled the crossing points of both the Danube and the Vág-Danube. The Buda Castle at the capital had no military but political importance. More to the South, along the Danube, other important fortress securing a crossing site was Pétervárad. Arad and Temesvár were also important fortification. The first was small, but very well defendable. The latter could facilitate quarters for a 9,000 strong garrison and was the key strongpoint in southern Hungary.<sup>25</sup> Lipótvár in the Vág valley, 40 miles north from Pozsony, Eszék securing a crossing site at the River Dráva in Slavonia, and Munkács in northeastern Hungary were obsolete and less important fortifications. Transylvania's most modern and

important fortress was at Gyulafehérvár. Déva was a small castle in the Maros valley. Nagyszeben and Brassó were fortified Saxon towns surrounded by weak walls, but they were important bases of the imperial troops in Transylvania.

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<sup>1</sup> Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849* (London: Phoenix, 2001), 62, 182.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>8</sup> Gábor Bona, "A Téli Hadjárat (1848. December-1849. Február)," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 221.

<sup>9</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 307-8.

<sup>10</sup> Róbert Hermann, "A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 246-48.

<sup>11</sup> "Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon," <http://mek.niif.hu/00300/00355/html/index.htm> (accessed 4 May, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Tamás Katona, *Bevezető Az Életem És Működésem Magyarországon 1848-Ban És 1849-Ben*, <http://www.elib.hu/04700/04739/html/gorgey1001/gorgey1001.html>.

<sup>14</sup> István Deák, "The Revolution and the War of Independence, 1848-1849," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar, Peter Hanak, and Tibor Frank (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 143-44.

<sup>15</sup> National Archives of Hungary, "Archives of the the Hungarian Treasury," , [http://www.mol.gov.hu/index.php?akt\\_menu=647#top](http://www.mol.gov.hu/index.php?akt_menu=647#top) (accessed November 16, 2008).;

Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 14-15.; Horst Haselsteiner, "Cooperation and Confrontation between Rulers and the Noble Estates, 1711-1790," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 140-41.

<sup>16</sup> George Barany, "The Age of Royal Absolutism, 1790-1848," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 188-89.

<sup>17</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>19</sup> Stewen W. Soward, "Twenty-Five Lectures on Modern Balkan History (the Balkans in the Age of Nationalism): Lecture 4: Hungary and the Limits of Habsburg Authority," <http://staff.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lecture4.html> (accessed November 20, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> National Archives of Hungary, *Archives of the the Hungarian Treasury*; Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 3-5, 7-9.; László Bencze, "A Habsburg Birodalom Katonai Rendszere," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849* (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 24.; Soward, *Twenty-Five Lectures on Modern Balkan History (the Balkans in the Age of Nationalism): Lecture 4: Hungary and the Limits of Habsburg Authority*; Haselsteiner, *Cooperation and Confrontation between Rulers and the Noble Estates, 1711-1790*, 137, 140-41.

<sup>21</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ferenc Szakály, "The Early Ottoman Period, Including Royal Hungary, 1526-1606," in *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 83.

<sup>23</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 124-25.

<sup>24</sup> Gábor Bona, ed. *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848-1849; A Military History*, ed. Béla K. Király, Kenneth Murphy, and László Veszprémy, trans. Nóra Arató (New York: Social Science Monographs, Boulder, Colorado, Atlantic Research and Publication, Inc., Highland Lakes, New Jersey, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1999), 178.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ARMIES OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

#### The Army of the Habsburgs

In theory, the peacetime strength of the Habsburg army was 400,000 men. It could be expanded to 800,000 by summoning the Hungarian noble insurrection and mobilizing the Austrian *Landwehr*. In practice, the military expenditures were cut as a percent of the budget from 50 percent to 20 percent. The active members of the army were reduced by discharges and early retirements, and approximately one third of the personnel were on permanent leave.<sup>1</sup> The branches of this (in theory) 400,000 men peacetime army were 315,000 infantry, 49,000 cavalry, 24,000 artillery, 5,400 engineers and 4,000 logistics.<sup>2</sup> This imperial army was an instrument for Prince Clemens von Metternich, the Austrian Minister of State, to execute the policy of the Holy Alliance in Europe as well as within the empire. The Habsburg army intervened several times between 1815 and 1848, such as in Naples and Piedmont in 1821, in Parma and Modena in 1831, or in Cracow in 1846. At home, the army put down riots and political turmoil such as the Cholera uprising in northern Hungary in 1831 or the strike of textile workers in Prague in 1844. Because there were no real police forces in the empire, the army was used as a supplemental police force.

Ninety-three percent of the senior staff of the Habsburg army were Austrian aristocrats and higher nobles.<sup>3</sup> Also, it had been a long tradition to accept the service of foreigners, for example, Richard Guyon, an Englishman, who later became a general of the rebel Hungarian army, served as a hussar officer. Besides these foreigners, eighty percent of the officer corps had German origins. The military command language was

German and the officers were under no obligation to learn their soldiers' language and were not expected to talk to them.<sup>4</sup> Appointment to higher position depended not on military skills, but loyalty to the monarch. It was not surprising, therefore, that the officer corps, whose welfare and privileges depended on the emperor, remained with few exceptions loyal to him during the coming revolutions.

The enlisted soldiers from the German, Czech, and Galician provinces served eighteen years in the regular army and additional thirteen years in the Landwehr. Soldiers recruited from Tirol and Northern Italy had to serve eight years. For Hungarians, however, military service was a life sentence. They had to stay in the army for their entire lives. Local governments got rid of criminals turning over them to recruiters. However, the service time was made standard in the entire empire and reduced to ten years in 1840, and eight years in 1845. In Hungary, nobles, civil servants, students with good grades, doctors of sciences were exempt for recruitment, as well as wealthy citizens whose family paid for a replacement.<sup>5</sup>

The Austrian Emperor was the commander in chief of the armed forces. The Court War Council conducted military affairs through the twelve military districts, the *Generalkommandos*. Commanding generals of the districts administered the units and were responsible for the security and law and order in their area. They were also responsible for the recruitment of the regiments originated from their districts. The Habsburg Army had three branches: infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Infantry had fifty-eight line infantry regiments, twenty grenadier battalions, eighteen frontier regiments, one Tyrolean rifle regiments, twelve rifle battalions, and six garrison battalions. Cavalry consisted of eight cuirassier regiments, six dragoon regiments, seven chevaux-leger

regiments, twelve hussar regiments, and four uhlan regiments. Artillery had five field artillery regiments. Moreover, the army's auxiliary forces consisted of the river flotilla, various engineer, sapper, pioneer, wagon, and garrison units.

In war, a line regiment consisted of four battalions of six companies each. During peace, the line regiments consisted of two field battalions and one depot battalion. The depot battalion was the third battalion, which remained at home and served as a recruitment center for the regiment. The infantry companies consisted of one captain, one lieutenant, two sub-lieutenants, two sergeants, twelve corporals, twelve lance corporals, 180-200 privates, two buglers, two drummers, and two pioneers. In war, the regiments had approximately 7,000 men, in peacetime, with two grenadier and eighteen line infantry companies, 3693 men.

Each battalion had a grenadier company (two grenadier companies in each regiment), which was detached from the regiment and organized into grenadier battalions. Grenadier companies from three regiments formed a grenadier battalion of six companies each.

The frontier (*Grenzer*, Border Guard) regiments came from the Military Border. The men of the military frontiers were free peasants who owed military service to the emperor. In the fall and the winter, they assembled in military camps and trained; in the spring and the summer they did their agricultural work. There were eighteen frontier regiments, fourteen of them were Croatian, Serbian or Romanian from the Military Border. There were two Romanian and two Székely regiments in Transylvania. The frontier regiments consisted of two battalions with 2570 men.<sup>6</sup> The Tyrolean rifle

regiment and the rifle battalions were recruited from Austria proper. They were equipped with rifled small arms and primary were used as skirmishers.

Major General George B. McClellan described the organization and training of Austrian infantry in his book, *The Armies of Europe*:

The company is divided into 4 platoons, and the formation is always in 3 ranks....

The school of the recruit comprises the individual squad, and platoon drills, in close order, and as skirmishers; it contains full instructions as to running, jumping, &c., detailed instructions in regard to target-practice and the theory of firing, and a full system for fencing with the bayonet.

In the skirmish drill the chain is composed of groups of three men; the rear rank, or a part of it, being habitually employed as skirmishers.<sup>7</sup>

The primary weapon of the infantry was the smoothbore, percussion cap priming 1842M Augustin musket. In theory, the range was 650-760 yards, but beyond 270 yards the bullet lost its energy and became harmless. Firing at 300 steps (250 yards), 30% percent of the bullets hit the target (a two yards by twenty yards wooden plank, the approximate size of an infantry company), and firing at a target board, only 7 percent. At one hundred steps (eighty-two yards) 75% of the bullets hit the plank, and only one-quarter hit the target board. The infantrymen in line were prohibited to aim as the mass of fire was the desired effect. The company usually opened fire at 200 yards, but the bayonet charge was the decisive act.<sup>8</sup>

The heavy cavalry regiments, the cuirassiers and the dragoons, had three divisions of two squadrons each. The cuirassiers were recruited from Bohemia and Moravia; the dragoons came from Galicia, Austria proper and from northern Italy. The heavy cavalry horseman was armed with saber, pistol, and carbine; they wore a metal helmet and the cuirassier, an additional metal breastplate. The heavy cavalry had the decisive role; their

charge was to break the enemy. The light cavalry regiments, hussars, Chevaux-legers, and uhlans, had four divisions of two squadrons each. The hussars were armed with saber, pistol, and carbine. They were uniquely levied from Hungary. The hussar was an elite branch. They executed reconnaissance missions and operated at the back of the enemy armies. During the War of Independence, due to the lack of heavy cavalry, the Hungarians employed hussars as heavy, battle cavalry. The Chevaux-legers were the German light cavalry with similar arms and role to those of the Hungarian hussars. The Chevaux-legers were recruited mostly from the German speaking provinces. The uhlans (lancers) were Polish from Galicia, equipped with lance, saber, and pistols.

There was no artillery regiment recruited from Hungary. Of the five artillery regiments only one, the Fifth Bervaldo Artillery Regiment was stationed in Hungary. The most common gun was the smoothbore, muzzle-loaded 6-pounder gun. It could fire shot, shell, spherical case shell, and canister. Its effective range was 1,000 yards with shell, and 400 yards with canister. There was a horse artillery version as well. A six-pounder battery consisted of four 6-pounder guns and two 7-pounder howitzers. The cannon were drawn by four horses. A battery consisted of six ammunition wagons, one forge wagon, two carriage wagons, two hay-wagons, and one more wagon. Four horses drew the ammunition wagons and there were thirty-one other horses in one battery.

Fifteen regular army regiments and twelve hussar regiments were recruited from Hungary.<sup>9</sup> These infantry and hussar regiments were named as Hungarian regiments. That was true for their areas of recruitment, but the nationality of their enlisted personnel were the nationality of the people from their recruitment area. For example, in the Second

Infantry Regiment one-third were native Slovaks, in the Fiftieth two-third. <sup>10</sup>Most of the Hungarian regiments were not in Hungary.

### Army from Scratch

The revolutions of 1848 shook the Habsburg Empire. Revolts erupted in Milan and Venice, Prague and Pest-Buda, and even in Vienna, the capital of the empire. War broke out between Piedmont and Austria in northern Italy. Because of this turmoil, the Court was weak and Ferdinand V gave his consent to the April Laws, the new and democratic Hungarian constitution. A national Hungarian government, responsible to the newly elected Hungarian National Assembly, which replaced the feudal Diet, started to formulate the political, economical, and military institutions of the new Hungary. The framework of the government's program was based on the program of the Opposition Party from 1847, the so-called "Opposition Manifesto" and on the more radical "Twelve Demands." The "Opposition Manifesto" recognized the Pragmatic Sanction on which Hungary and Austria relations were based. Hungary wanted to preserve unity with Austria, but with equal rights and with the consent of Hungary's constitution. It requested union with Transylvania, responsible government, freedom of association, free press, general taxation, representation of the non-nobles, equality before the law, abolition of serfdom with state guaranteed compensation to the landowners, and the cessation of the law of entail.<sup>11</sup> This program was formulated in 1847 by Kossuth and Ferenc Deák. This program was to be fulfilled by lawful means at the Diet. The "Twelve Demands" was the program of the young radicals, and it was printed during the Pest's revolution on March 15 without a censor's permission, and so became the first free press product. The "Twelve Demands" was based on the "Opposition Manifesto" and demanded actions that

were more radical. The “Twelve Demands” were: (1) the freedom of the press, abolition of censorship, (2) government responsible to the Parliament in Pest-Buda, (3) annual sessions of the Parliament in Pest, (4) equality before the law, (5) National Guard, (6) general taxation, (7) elimination of the law of entail, (8) trial by jury and equal representation, (9) a national bank, (10) the army shall swear loyalty to the constitution, withdrawal of foreign soldiers, and Hungarian soldiers should remain in Hungary, (11) the freeing of political prisoners, (12) union with Transylvania.<sup>12</sup> The young radicals were to execute their program at any cost, if even arms needed it. During the spring and the summer of 1848, the shaky conditions of the Empire did not allow the Court to oppose the Hungarian government openly, therefore the government established the basis on which the coming war would be waged.

First, the National Guard was organized. After the spontaneous establishments following the revolution in Pest on March 15, militia units were set up in every larger Hungarian city and villages. Article XXII of 1848 made the service in the National Guard compulsory for every man at age between 20 and 50 who met the requirements of a census. Due to this census, 10 percent of the population was allowed to serve in the National Guard. The less politically reliable elements, such as the former serfs, Jews, or urban workers, were excluded. By September, 400,000 militiamen were registered. The primary tasks of the National Guard were to defend property and maintain order. The National Guard units elected their officers until the rank of captain, officers with the rank of major and above were appointed by the government. In theory, the government was to provide weapons and instructors for training, but practically, most of the National Guard

units went to fight with modified agricultural tools and with very limited training.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly, it became clear that the National Guard would not be a capable military force.

On 15 May, the government received a report claiming that the Principality of Serbia was about to launch an attack against Hungary. However, this report proved false, but because of the already tense situation in southern Hungary the government decided to set up a permanent force. The next day, Prime Minister Count Batthyány called to arms 10,000 volunteers for three years. For the new volunteers no census was required, and anybody could join this new army regardless his financial status. The first ten battalions were the 1st and 2nd in Pest, 3rd in Szeged, 4th in Pozsony, 5th in Győr, 6th in Veszprém, 7th in Szombathely, 8th in Pécs, 9th in Kassa, and 10th in Debrecen. This new military force later was named the *honvéd*. *Honvéd* means home defender or defender of the fatherland. Officers and NCOs from the imperial army could join the *Honvéd* Army and some of them did, like János Damjanich, later general and corps commander. Many of the officers were retired Imperial officers like Arthur Görgey or György Klapka, who later played important roles in the war.

The enlisted personnel were mostly former serfs or urban proletarians. (The newly enlisted soldiers received a twenty forints bounty and a reasonable payment later.) Beside of the farmers and urban workers, 10-12 percent of the army was university students, young lawyers, physicians, and engineers. They enlisted in the *honvéd* army because of their political views. They were radical, young democrats who wanted to fight for Hungary's independence, for the victory of the "world freedom," and for the victory over the *ancient regime*. Their commitment and their influence over the other members of their unit made the first ten *honvéd* battalions the elite of the Hungarian Army.

These ten battalions were inadequate to meet the threat of the Serbian insurgency and Jellačić, the Croatian ban's military preparations. On 11 July, Kossuth asked the Parliament to increase the Hungarian army to 200,000.<sup>14</sup> On 23 August, the Parliament passed a law that would come into effect after the Croatian attack in September. According to this new law, the counties had to raise and equip two soldiers after each 127 men. By Windisch-Graetz attack in mid-December, Hungary raised and equipped a 100,000-110,000 men army. This army consisted of sixty-two honvéd battalions, twenty-six (former imperial) regular line battalions, ten volunteer National Guard battalions and numerous volunteer and foreign units. The conscription continued throughout the war. By July 1849, the army had 170,000 personnel; the highest numbered *honvéd* battalion was the 148th.<sup>15</sup>

The Hungarian artillery was based on the Fifth Bervaldo Artillery Regiment. This regiment stationed in Pest-Buda in 1848. The Hungarian government used their cadres and cannons to train the *honvéd* artillery. By December, the artillery had thirty-two batteries, six to eight cannons each, altogether 250-260 cannons and 4,000-5,000 artillerymen. In the fortresses in Hungarian hands, there were additionally 500 heavy siege cannons. By July 1849, the numbers of cannon increased to 550 and there were 10,000 artillerymen. Due to that mostly highly educated engineers and technicians volunteered into the artillery units, the Hungarian artillery became one of the most respected branches of the *honvéd* army. The performance of the Hungarian batteries convinced the Austrians that they were facing French artillery and sometimes they reported that to their headquarters.

The cavalry of the revolution was based on the hussar regiments. The First, Second, Third and Eleventh Regiments were stationed in Hungary. During the summer, the Vienna Court released the Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Regiments to return home. The Sixth and Eighth Regiments escaped home from Galicia. The government raised eight new regiments. Three of them were to replace the Twelfth Regiment, which had tried to breakout of Bohemia many times, but only about a hundred hussars reached Hungary, and the Fifth and Seventh Regiments, which remained in Italy.

There were foreign legions fighting in Hungary. One of the two Polish legions fought in Upper-Hungary and consisted of three battalions of infantry and four uhlan companies. This legion had approximately 2,500 men. The other fought in Transylvania with two infantry battalions and some uhlan companies. The Italian Legion had a battalion with six companies, a battalion with two companies, a sharpshooter unit, and a light cavalry company. There were Austrians and Germans who fought on the Hungarian side of the War of Independence. The Viennese Legion, were the refugees of the Viennese revolution fought in Transylvania. They fought so well, that the survivors of the legion were promoted to lieutenant in the *honvéd* battalions in May 1849. Other German units were the Tyrolean Battalion and the German Legion.<sup>16</sup>

Some volunteer and guerilla units were operating at the beginning of the war. Later, they were integrated into the *honvéd* army. The Zrínyi unit became the 35th, the Hunyadi unit the 50th, and the Bocskai unit the 52nd *honvéd* battalions.<sup>17</sup> Besides raising an army, the government had to establish a military industry to supply and equip the newly formed military forces.

Before the revolution, there was no military industry in Hungary. The country was agricultural with very limited industrial capabilities. The government had to find the way to supply and equip its army on this weak industrial foundation. The most important and urgent question was of small arms and ammunition. Where the government could, it confiscated the weapons in the Imperial armories in Hungary. These arsenals had limited numbers of weapons, and after October, the Austrian officers did not cooperate with the Hungarian government. Other method was to buy weapons abroad. The government sent agents in Europe to purchase weapons. In this way, 25,000 muskets arrived in Hungary. But in October, Austria closed the Hungarian borders and the foreign purchase were no longer available. The only remaining way to obtain weapons was domestic production. Due to the lack of machinery and skilled workers, the production was delayed. The government hired a company in April to build a weapon factory and manufacture muskets, but by November, the factory still had not started production. The National Defense Committee nationalized the factory, and centralized musket, cannon and ammunition production. After these measures, the musket production finally started but did not last long. Windisch-Graetz took the capital in January, so the factory had to move. It was moved to Nagyvárád, and started to work again on January 26. Together with the weapons factory, the ammunition and cannon factory had to move as well. Those were also reestablished and supervised by the government. The production of weapons and ammunition depended upon the availability of raw materials and the small workshops manufacturing parts of the weapons. In April, after the liberation of the capital, the government decided to move the weapon factories back to Pest-Buda. The military situation changed, and the factories had to move again, first to Szeged, than Arad. During

the summer campaign, the factories were moving and were not producing any weapons when it was most needed. When the arms factory was operating, between September 28, 1848 and April 22, 1849, it produced 35,318 muskets, 40,172 carbines, 12,464 pistols, and 29,024 bayonets.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lohr E. Miller, "Politics, the Nationality Problem, and the Habsburg Army, 1848-1914" (Umi, 1994), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bona, *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848-1849; A Military History*, 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, *Politics, the Nationality Problem, and the Habsburg Army, 1848-1914*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Bona, *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848-1849; A Military History*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> George B. McClellan, *The Armies of Europe* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1861), 64.

<sup>8</sup> Kedves Gyula, "A Szabadságharc Fegyverei," , [http://www.wysocki.hu/irasok/dok/szabadsagharc\\_fegyverei.pdf](http://www.wysocki.hu/irasok/dok/szabadsagharc_fegyverei.pdf) (accessed May 4, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Bencze, *A Habsburg Birodalom Katonai Rendszere*, 27-28. The Hungarian line regiments and their recreating centers were: 2. Pozsony, 19. Győr, 31. Nagyszeben, 32. Pest, 33. Zólyom, 34. Kassa, 37. Nagyvárád, 39. Debrecen, 48. Sopron, 51. Kolozsvár, 52. Pécs, 53. Eszék, 60. Eperjes, 61. Temesvár, 62. Marosvásárhely. The hussar regiments and their Colonel-in-Chief were: 1. Emperor's Own, 2. Hannover, 3. Ferdinand D'Este, 4. Alexander of Hessen, 5. Radetzky, 6. Wilhelm I of Würtemberg, 7. Liechtenstein, 8. Koburg, 9. Nicholas I of Russia, 10. Wilhelm III of Russia, 11. Székely, 12. Palatine.

<sup>10</sup> Gábor Bona, "A Szabadságharc Fegyveres Ereje," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Barany, *The Age of Royal Absolutism, 1790-1848*, 204-5.

<sup>12</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 71.

<sup>13</sup> Bona, *A Szabadságharc Fegyveres Ereje*, 58-60.

<sup>14</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Bona, *A Szabadságharc Fegyveres Ereje*, 61-74.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>18</sup> Tamás Csikány, "A Honvédsereg Ellátása És Utánpótlása," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 86.

## CHAPTER 3

### FROM SCHWEHAT TO VÁC

#### From Revolution to War of Independence

The revolutionary wave of 1848 reached Hungary on March 15, when a bloodless revolution broke out in the twin cities of Pest-Buda.<sup>1</sup> The revolution in Pest stimulated the Hungarian Diet at Pozsony.<sup>2</sup> The Diet passed thirty-one new laws and Ferdinand V gave his assent to Hungary's new legislation on April 11. The "April Laws" made Hungary practically independent. The country became a constitutional monarchy with a government responsible to the parliament. The Habsburg monarch remained the Hungarian king, but all of his decisions had to be approved by a minister. Hungary remained within the Habsburg Empire with common war and foreign policy, but with sovereign executive, legislative, and judicial power.<sup>3</sup> The Premier, Count Lajos Batthyány, worried about the nationalities,<sup>4</sup> especially the Serbs and Croats' movements, created a new, national army, the *honvéd*<sup>5</sup> army. On June 12, the opening salvo was fired and this new army, together with those Imperial regiments which were stationed in Hungary, was deployed into southern Hungary<sup>6</sup> against the Serb's insurgency.

After Field Marshall Count Joseph Radetzky's victories in northern Italy, the Vienna Court felt itself strong enough to restore the order in Hungary. On September 11, Lieutenant General Josip Jellačić, the ban of Croatia, with the consent and support of Vienna, crossed the Drava River, the internal border between Hungary and Croatia, with 50,000 troops to put down the Hungarian rebellion. The small Hungarian force withdrew. The government resigned. A parliamentary commission, the National Defense Committee

assumed the executive power. The head of the committee was Louis Kossuth, the Batthyány-government's Minister of Finance.

Jellačić marched unopposed to Pákozd, thirty miles southwest of the capital, where the reinforced Hungarian army made a stand and, on September 29, defeated the Croats. A three-day armistice followed the battle that Jellačić used to retreat to Vienna. By retreating to the west, Jellačić left his southern column isolated. A small Hungarian detachment, lead by a young *honvéd* officer, Major Arthur Görgei, and the militia of the southern Transdanubian counties, encircled and forced to surrender this column near Ozora. On October 7, Hungarians captured 9,000 people, rifles, and twelve guns with ammo.<sup>7</sup>

The main Hungarian army followed Jellačić to the Austrian-Hungarian border, where it stopped waiting for political decision whether or not to cross the border. On October 6, in Vienna, a new revolution broke out. The Court fled to Olmütz (Olomouc, now in Czech Republic). While the Hungarian National Assembly waited for an official call made by Viennese revolutionists, the Hungarian officer corps and Imperial regiments were concerned about fighting against Habsburg troops with whom they had been in the same Habsburg Army. When the political decision finally was made, the army crossed the border, but it was too late. Having restored Austrian rule in Prague, Field Marshall Prince Alfred Windisch-Graetz arrived at Vienna, where Jellačić joined him. With Jellačić's army, Windisch-Graetz had 80,000 troops and 210 guns. Most of his army was applied to the siege of Vienna. He sent Jellačić with 25,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and ninety-nine guns against the Hungarians. Most of Jellačić army were experienced veterans. The Hungarian army consisted of 27,000 troops with eighty-two guns. Half of

the Hungarian army were new recruits, national guard, and militia.<sup>8</sup> On 30 October, in the Battle of Schwechat, Jellačić easily defeated the inexperienced Hungarian army which retreated to Hungary. Next day, Windisch-Graetz took Vienna. Kossuth made Görgey commander of the remnants of the Hungarian army, and ordered him to defend the country's northwestern borders against Windisch-Graetz.

### Regular War or Insurgency

Kossuth, as Minister of Finance, first heard about Görgey, a young honvéd captain who developed a plan of a percussion cap factory. They met first, when Görgey, then major, was appointed to command one of the four volunteer National Guard camps in Szolnok. They met couple of times during the following days as a soldier and a Minister of Finance and discussed issues related to the camp at Szolnok. On 24 September, Kossuth left the capital to levy volunteers for the Honvéd Army, while Görgey started his campaign against Roth and Philipovich. They did not meet until 11 October. By then, Kossuth was the head of the National Defense Committee; in practice, he ran the country. Görgey, now colonel, had already had his bright victory over the Croatian corps and he had Count Zichy executed. At this meeting, Kossuth entrusted Görgey to travel to the Hungarian Army, which had stopped at the Austrian border, keep an eye on the, commander, General Móga, who was an old-fashioned Imperial officer, and was expected to quit in any minute. Görgey was ordered to take command if it had been necessary. Kossuth promoted him to major general, but it remained unannounced to the time when Görgey finally took command.<sup>9</sup> In the Battle of Schwechat, Görgey commanded the advanced brigade of the Hungarian army and distinguished himself even if the battle was lost. On 1 November, his promotion to major general and commander of

the Hungarian Royal Corps of the Upper Danube were announced. During the months of November and December, the first scene of their debate took place. Kossuth wanted the National Guard and the insurgency to be employed, Görgey opposed it. The general wanted a professional, regular army. His opinion about the National Guard was anything, but high.

The militia came, and the militia went, just as it felt inclined. Generally, however, it came when the enemy was far off; when the enemy approached, the militia departed. In a word, it liked to avoid seeing enemy. When, by accident, however, and in spite of every precaution, it had the misfortune to come so near to enemy as to hear his shots, it shouted ‘Treachery!’ and ran away as fast as it could. The utmost degree of physical weariness was on such occasions the only means of bringing the militia-men to a stand, that is, to a lying down.

These good people were mostly armed with scythes, and a very few of them with old rusty muskets, to which ‘going-off’ was almost as rare an occurrence as it was to their scythes.

The militia-men had a particular predilection for cannons. These they drew after them with enthusiasm, even without orders. Their first question to the person who presented himself as their leader, always was, whether he had cannons. If his answer was in the affirmative, they joyfully prepared to march; if not, he could scarcely reckon on any considerable number of adherents. For this reason their leaders very often made use of the artifice of assuring them that they had sent their guns already in advance against the enemy. Clumsy as this trick was, it was sometimes sufficient to keep the militia-men on their legs for some days.

The attachment of the militia to heavy guns (naturally to friendly ones) was severed in the first moment of danger from the enemy. It might be calculated with certainty, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, that from zealous expedition of militia with artillery, in a very short time all the men would return, somewhat exhausted indeed, yet otherwise unhurt, but without the cannons.<sup>10</sup>

Görgey won this debate, and the National Guard was sent home or those who wished were incorporated in the honvéd army. This decision had an enormous impact on the following war. Hungary decided that she was going to fight a regular war instead of an insurgency. The various National Guard, militia, and insurgent units performed in a

broad scale in terms of efficiency. They were good at cordon missions against the Serbian insurgency in southern Hungary and they had a success against Jellačić's border guards in September 1848. However, they fought against similarly equipped and trained (or similarly not equipped and not trained) insurgents in Southern Hungary, where they defended their homes and families from being destructed. Insurgency worked well in the back of Jellačić second-class border guards (the first line units were already in Italy) who forged and devastated the grapes orchards of Transdanubia just before the first free harvest of the recently liberated serfs. However, they did not stand against regular line infantry and especially artillery (not to mention the cavalry). The peasant-soldiers ran away after the first shot was fired at them, as it happened at Schwehat. No serious insurgency occurred during the war against either the Austrians or the Russian. Whoever wished to fight had already enlisted. When the Austrians or the Russians occupied a Hungarian territory, except for active supporters (local authorities, clergymen etc.) "the vast majority of the population was not penalized; many peasant were probably unaware that they had change masters."<sup>11</sup> In addition, the non-Magyar population was even hostile to the Magyar's revolution. The only successful insurgency against regular troops took place in the Székelyföld. However, in Transylvania, the Hungarians were surrounded by hostile Romanians and Saxons, who actively supported the Austrian troops. Puchner employed the Romanian insurgents as an auxiliary force, and an Austrian victory meant the total destruction of the Hungarian villages nearby. The Romanians and the Hungarians slaughtered each other. Thousands of people were killed and many of the villages destroyed. Bem and Puchner's armies operated in the midst of a bloody civil

war.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the Russians put the Székely National Guard to flight and put down the Székely insurgency shortly. The country was exhausted by the summer of 1849.

Having examined the actually existed local insurgencies and the likelihood of a general popular uprising, Görgey probably was right. The decision to build a regular army and dismiss the militia forces enabled the country to concentrate her limited manpower and industrial capabilities. However, Kossuth won another argument against Görgey, concerning military issues. Görgey wanted his forces to concentrate backwards and a weak force to screen the border. In the meantime, Kossuth wanted the whole army forward to defend along the border for political reasons. Görgey finally acceded.

#### Windisch-Graetz's Attack

The Viennese Court made careful political and military preparations for the upcoming campaign. On 3 October, the emperor-king issued a manifesto dismissing the Hungarian parliament and appointing Jellačić commander-in-chief in Hungary. The manifesto was sent to every imperial commander throughout Hungary. After that date, whoever remained on Hungarian side was considered a traitor.<sup>13</sup> However, the Viennese revolution impeded the process, and after Windisch-Graetz seized Vienna more arrangements were taken. On 2 December, the Court disposed of the feeble-minded, but very popular Ferdinand V, who compromised himself by giving his assent to the April Laws. His eighteen-year old nephew, Francis Joseph I took the throne, who could have been easily controlled. The real power was in the hands of General Prince Felix zu Schwarzenberg, the new Prime Minister and Prince Windisch-Graetz.<sup>14</sup> The Hungarian parliament refused both the 3 October manifesto and the abdication of Ferdinand V. Hungary regarded these acts as unlawful, and decided to follow the April Laws.

By early December, military preparations were completed as well. The Imperial troops, together with the Serbian and Romanian insurgents, launched a concentrated attack from every direction. Windisch-Graetz's main army, 50,000 troops and 216 guns, began its attack on 16 December. General Görgei's Hungarian Royal Upper Danube Corps, with 28,000 troops and 103 guns tried to defend the western border. The Upper Danube Corps fought some delaying battles, but Görgei's aim could not be more than save the army. The capital was evacuated. The government, the Parliament, most of the offices, the banknotes presses, and the armament factories began to move to the eastern Hungarian town, Debrecen on New Year's Eve. The distance to Debrecen was 150 miles of which sixty miles could have been traveled on railway, on the rest of it the people and the machines had to travel on wagons in the winter. In the meantime, on 6 December, Lieutenant General Count Franz Schlik with his corps, 8,000 troops and twenty-seven guns, entered northeastern Hungary across the Dukla-pass. Colonel Pulszky had two *honvéd* battalions and numerous militias to stop Schlik. At Budamér (north of Kassa, now Kosice, Slovakia) Schlik put Pulszky's corps to flight on 11 December. The government sent General Lázár Mészáros, the Minister of War with some reinforcements to northern Hungary, but on 4 January, Schlik won again and the road was open to Debrecen from the north.

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<sup>1</sup> Pest-Buda (German Ofen-Pest) is the then current name of today's Budapest, the capital of Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> Pozsony (German Pressburg, Slovak Bratislava, Latin Posonium, now capital of Slovakia) was the seat of the Hungarian Diet; therefore, it was regarded as the capital of Kingdom of Hungary.

<sup>3</sup> Deák, *The Revolution and the War of Independence, 1848-1849*, 214.

<sup>4</sup> About 40% of the population was Hungarian. The other 60% were Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Ruthenes, Germans, and Romanians.

<sup>5</sup> *Honvéd* means Defender of the Fatherland.

<sup>6</sup> Hungarian *Délvidék*, or later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century *Vajdaság*, now Autonomous Province of *Vojvodina* in northern Serbia.

<sup>7</sup> Róbert Hermann, "Az 1848. Őszi Hadi Események a Dunántúlon És a Felvidéken," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 145.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>9</sup> Róbert Hermann, "Kossuth És Görgei," *Iskolakutúra*, no. 3 (March 1998, 1998), 79-81.

<sup>10</sup> Artúr Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849* (New York: Harper, 1852), 37-38.

<sup>11</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 241.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>13</sup> Deák, *The Revolution and the War of Independence, 1848-1849*, 224.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

CHAPTER 4  
WINTER CAMPAIGN

The Vác Proclamation

On 2 January, a war council was held in Pest, where the resulting plan was for Görgey's corps would go to northern Hungary with the object "to divert the hostile main army from the shortest line of operation against Debrecen."<sup>1</sup> General Mór Perczel corps would go to Szolnok, to the middle Tisza, where his troops would combine with Colonel Count István Vécsey's from southern Hungary, to defend the new seat of government.

Previously, during the withdrawal from the border to Pest, Kossuth urged Görgey to stop and fight a battle, but the general did not listen and continue to withdraw. Kossuth worried about the moral of the country, Görgey did so about the existence of the army. In this case, Görgey was right; any attempt that the 23,000 Hungarians would have made to fight against Windisch-Graetz's 50,000 would have led the destruction of the Hungarian forces, as it happened to Perczel. On 30 December, Perczel did what Kossuth wanted to. Perczel attacked Windisch-Graetz right wing corps and lost. His casualties were 1,500 men and some of the precious cannons.<sup>2</sup> Kossuth still urged for a battle in front of the capitals. He needed a battle for political reasons, but Görgey did not risk his army. On New Year's Day, Kossuth and the government left for Debrecen, therefore they were not present at the Council of War on the 2nd. At that meeting, the demonstration in Windisch-Graetz's back was decided and Görgey left for north. From Pest to Vác, within twenty miles and two days, two thirds of its field grade officers, and about 100 junior officers left the Army of the Upper Danube. To keep the integrity of the army Görgey issued the Proclamation of Vác. The first part of the proclamation harshly criticized the

National Defense Committee and accused it of being cowardly and creating the bad military situation in which the Army of the Upper Danube was. The second part announced that the Army of the Upper Danube would fight for the constitution.

“To be able to maintain its position unshaken and upon strictly lawful grounds amid the political intrigues to which our poor country may very shortly be exposed, the corps d’armee of the upper Danube publicly makes the following declaration:

1. The corps d’armee of the upper Danube remains faithful to its oath, to fight resolutely against every external enemy for the maintenance of the constitution of the kingdom of Hungary sanctioned by King Ferdinand V.

2. With the same resolution, the corps d’armee of the upper Danube will oppose itself to all those who may attempt to overthrow the constitutional monarchy by untimely republican intrigues in the interior of the country.

3. It is natural consequence of the right understanding of constitutional monarchy – a form of government for the maintenance of which corps d’armee of the upper Danube is determined to contend to the last – that is can obey only and exclusively those orders which are forwarded to it in the form prescribed by law through the responsible royal Hungarian minister of war, or through his representative appointed by himself (at present General Vetter).

4. The corps d’armee of the upper Danube, mindful of the oath taken to the constitution of Hungary and mindful of its own honor, having remained perfectly conscious of what it has to do and it determined to do, declares, finally, that it will adhere to the result of any convention made with the enemy, only if it guarantees on the once

hand the has sworn, and on the other, if it is not inimical to the military honor of the corps d'armee itself.”<sup>3</sup>

After the 3 October manifesto and Windisch-Graetz's attack, the clique of the radicals strengthened. They demanded the dethronement of the Habsburgs and the declaration of a republic. Görgey wanted to assure the moderates, and the vast majority of the official corps was moderate, that the army would not support any “republican intrigues,” and would remain loyal to the April Laws, the constitution of 1848. Görgey achieved what he wanted, the massive resignation of the officers stopped immediately after the proclamation. (Even if one assumes that, by that time anybody who wanted to had already left.)<sup>4</sup> The untruthful accusations hurt Kossuth and the proclamation itself challenged the legitimacy of the National Defense Committee. Kossuth saw it as a first step towards treachery. He wrote: “Görgey has come close to being a traitor - unless he is already a traitor.”<sup>5</sup> Kossuth misunderstood the proclamation. Görgey had no intention to desert or surrender. When Windisch-Graetz demanded unconditional surrender in the end of January, Görgey refused, and handed over a copy of the proclamation to the Imperial officer who delivered Windisch-Graetz request. Görgey was ready to negotiate, not to surrender.<sup>6</sup> Görgey first time made a political step and this one as controversial as the upcoming ones. So far, he opposed the government and Kossuth in pure military questions but now he openly blamed and challenged the legitimacy of the National Defense Committee. So far, he took actions as a radical revolutionist. His letters, articles, actions, and addresses from that time still showed him as a radical. The Proclamation of Vác was an exception and did not fit into the line. Probably he issued the proclamation, because he had to stop the resignations and he used the argument that was the best to

convince the officer corps. Probably he accused the National Defense Committee of losing the war, because he wanted to raise the moral of the withdrawing army. In his memoir, Görgey argued that the Proclamation of Vác was his political program, but he wrote his memoir later, explaining his decisions. What he wrote later was contradictory to his original thoughts and deeds from 1848-49. When he was a soldier, he was calm, clear, intelligent, simple, and usually right. When he tried to be a politician, everything became ambiguous, blurred, fuzzy, and vague. If he made a mistake as a soldier, he usually assumed the responsibility. When he made a mistake as a politician, he never admitted.

The Proclamation of Vác saved the army and the operational plan worked. Windisch-Graetz did not leave Pest and missed the window of opportunity to put down the revolution first time. After the Battle of Kápolna, he missed his second chance. In the meantime, the third Act of the drama of Kossuth and Görgey started. During the withdrawal, two-thirds of field officers and about a hundred junior officers left the army. On 4 January, Görgey issued a proclamation in Vác. He declared that the army would fight against any enemy of the constitution sanctioned by Ferdinand V, but would oppose any attempt to convert the constitutional monarchy into a republic.<sup>7</sup> With this manifesto, Görgey saved the army, but challenged Kossuth and the National Defense Committee.

The Hungarian plan proved right. Windisch-Graetz occupied Pest-Buda, but having Görgey's corps in his back, did not risk a defensive blow against Debrecen. Instead, he sent a corps after Görgei, and reported to Vienna that the rebellion was over. Schlik also was passive. The Habsburg generals let the chance to take Debrecen go.

## Transylvania

In Transylvania, Lieutenant General Baron Anton Puchner, commander of the General-Commando of Transylvania, having received the manifesto of 3 October, on 18 October, he issued a proclamation, in which he announced that he would not follow the orders of the National Defense Committee. The Emperor's troops together with the Romanian insurgents and the Saxon militia drove the 2,000-3,000 *honvéd* troops out from Transylvania. Puchner waited for the general Austrian attack and recruited. The province was in the state of civil war; fierce and merciless fighting erupted between Romanians and Hungarians. Most of Puchner's army was employed against the Székelyföld<sup>8</sup>, where a popular uprising had broken out against the restoration of Habsburg order. On Windisch-Graetz order, Puchner resumed his attack in mid-December. He sent General Wardener with 4,500 Imperial troops and 5,000-6,000 Romanian insurgents against the Csucsá-pass, which was the gate between Hungary and Transylvania, forty miles from Nagyvárad (modern days Oradea, Romania), where the arsenal and armament factory was moving to, and eighty miles from Debrecen. The National Defense Committee sent 10,000 troops and twenty-four guns to defend the pass, and Kossuth appointed as commander-in-chief the Polish General Jozef Bem, a veteran of the Russo-Polish War of 1830-31. Uncle Bem, as his soldiers called him, began a counterattack on 20 December. On 25 December, Bem reoccupied Kolozsvár (German Klausenburg, Romanian Cluj-Napoca, now in Romania), the capitol of Transylvania and by January 3, rushed Wardener's brigades into Bukovina. Within two weeks, Bem liberated North-Transylvania and secured the backdoor of Hungary.

Having learned about Bem's victories, Puchner moved out from his operational base, the fortified city of Nagyszeben (German Hermannstadt, now Sibiu, Romania). Bem defeated Puchner at Gálszécs, and pursued him back to Nagyszeben. Bem tried to seize the fortification, but failed against the superior numbers, and withdrew to Vízakna. Bem had left units to secure northern Transylvania, and had sent troops to the Székelyföld; he retained 4,000 troops. The Austrian general had 8,000 regular troops, and 6,000-7,000 Romanian insurgents. On 4 February, Puchner attacked and defeated Bem. Only half of the Hungarian army was able to withdraw, and fifteen of twenty-one guns were lost. Bem commanded only 1,500 troops and six guns after the battle. The Imperial troops pursued the withdrawing Hungarians, who had to open their road by force through the hostile Romanian land. Puchner could employ all his forces; he did not have to detach troops to secure Nagyszeben and Brassó,<sup>9</sup> because two Russian columns entered into Transylvania to reinforce the beset Austrians. General Skariatin's 2,200 strong brigade secured Nagyszeben, while General Engelhard's 4,800 strong brigade secured Brassó.<sup>10</sup>

After the defeat at Vízakna, Bem retreated to Déva (Deva, Romania), where he met the reinforcement from the Temesköz.<sup>11</sup> Bem had 8,000 troops again when Puchner caught up and attacked his detachment at Piski village on the Sztrigy River. The Austrians tried to seize the bridge over the Sztrigy. The Eleventh *Honvéd* Battalion pushed them back. Heavy fighting started. During the battle, the Thirty-seventh Máriassy Infantry Regiment ran on the bridge to clear it from the Austrians. The Austrian troops on the bridge happened to be the Sixty-third Bianchi Infantry Regiment. When the two Imperial line regiments met, they stopped, put down the weapons, and started a conversation. The Thirty-seventh just arrived from the Temesköz, where they fought

against the Serbian insurgency. They had never fought other Imperial troops until then, nor had the Sixty-third. The Sixty-third had fought against *honvéd* battalions in Transylvania, but had not met a former Imperial regiment fighting on Hungarian side before. Lieutenant Colonel Baron Farkas Kemény, a Hungarian brigade commander rode there to figure out what was going on. The Austrians tried to capture the Hungarian officer but the nearby Eleventh *Honvéd* Battalion fired to save the brigade commander. The fighting started again. The Thirty-seventh pushed the Austrians down the bridge. The battle lasted all day long. By 6 p.m., Puchner had no choice but withdrawing. The casualties were heavy, 780-780 (about one tenth of the combatants) on both sides. The Austrians in Transylvania would never be able to recover from this defeat. Bem bypassed the retreating Puchner and marched into northern Transylvania again, to where the Austrians came back from Bukovina.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, operations in northeastern Hungary continued, when Schlik resumed his offensive on 17 January and attacked towards Debrecen from the north. Colonel György Klapka faced him. Colonel Klapka replaced Lieutenant General Lázár Mészáros, the Minister of War, who traveled to Debrecen. Klapka's Corps of Upper Tisza was 6,000-7,000 troops, four fifths of them regular *honvéd* troops. The *honvéds* stopped the Austrians in numerous small battles. Having received 4,500 reinforcements, Schlik attacked again on 31 January. At Tokaj, the Imperial troops made a last attempt to cross the Tisza, but Klapka's *honvéds* stopped them again. Schlik no longer could cross the river because Görgey's Army of Upper Danube arrived to his rear.<sup>13</sup>

According to the plan accepted at the council of war in Pest on 4 January, Görgey 12,000 strong corps was to march towards the besieged Lipótvár.<sup>14</sup> With that maneuver,

Görgei threatened Windisch-Graetz lines of communications back to Austria, and could relieve Lipótvár. Windisch-Graetz sent Lieutenant General Count Ladislaus von Wrbona's corps to pursue Görgey, while Lieutenant General Balthasar von Simunich's division stood at Lipótvár, and Lieutenant General Christian Goetz's brigade approached from the north. Having already diverted significant troops of Windisch-Graetz's army from operations against the new seat of the Hungarian government, Görgey did not try to relieve Lipótvár anymore, but he turned towards the mountainous mining towns to elude encirclement and rest his corps.<sup>15</sup>

The pause lasted less time than Görgey expected. Mészáros, the Minister of War ordered Görgey to Kassa to help out the beset Klapka. At the same time, the Imperial troops continued their attacks against the mining towns. The Army of the Upper Danube recruited new *honvéd* battalions in the mining towns (most of them were Slovaks), and started to move again on 25 January. They took the cash and the mints with them.<sup>16</sup>

In the mountainous terrain of Upper Hungary there was no easy march for an army with guns and logistics tail. Because of a sudden warming, the streams and rivers flooded. The soldiers had to march in three-foot deep of icy water. Imperial troops trapped a division, so they had to reopen an abandoned mining tunnel to escape from the trap.

The weather turned snowy again when the four divisions of the corps reunited in the Szepesség<sup>17</sup>. A 2,000 strong detachment of Schlick's corps stood between Görgey and Klapka. It was not strong in number, but occupied an extremely strong position in the Branyiszkó Pass. Görgey ordered Colonel Richard Guyon, an Englishman, to take the pass. Guyon's division was the least experienced and had the worst record of the four

from the corps'. Görgey had the other three division rest and send Guyon's "fourteen-day"<sup>18</sup> soldiers alone to attack the pass. Görgey already had written his report of the victory *before* the battle, only left the time and the casualties' rows blank. On 5 February, Guyon's division attacked and after bitter fight on the steep slopes of Branyiszkó, took the pass. This victory cost 400 casualties, but the road was open to the Great Hungarian Plain to rejoin the other Hungarian troops.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, Windisch-Graetz occupied Pest-Buda on 5 January. He sent Lieutenant General Franz Ottinger's cavalry brigade, which consisted 2,000 horsemen to pursue General Perczel. Ottinger occupied Szolnok, a town with crossing site, on the western side of the Tisza. Perczel received reinforcement from Debrecen and from southern Hungary. His corps had 14,310 troops and thirty-four guns by mid-January. Perczel crossed the Tisza and defeated Ottinger twice. First, at Szolnok on 22 January, then at Cegléd, on 25 January. Windisch-Graetz worried about Perczel's victories called back Wrbara's corps, which was pursuing Görgey, and concentrated his troops in vicinity Pest-Buda. However, the Hungarian government worried about Debrecen's safety, called back Perczel to the eastern side of the Tisza.<sup>20</sup>

#### The Battle of Kápolna and its Aftermaths

When Görgey appeared in the rear of Schlik, the Austrian general had no other choice, but retreat west to Windisch-Graetz. He eluded the trap set by the Hungarians and reported the Hungarian concentration. Windisch-Graetz received the thought that the Hungarian opposition probably had not ended yet. He moved off from the capital and assembled his troops vicinity of Gödöllő, twenty miles northeast from Pest.

In the meantime, the Hungarians concentrated their troops and the strength of the *honvéd* army was about 50,000. Before that, the corps commanders acted independently, but in late January, Kossuth appointed Lieutenant General Count Henryk Dembinski to commander-in-chief of the Hungarian Army. Dembinski was Polish and a hero of the Russo-Polish War of 1830-31, just like Bem. However, the similarities ended there. Bem was a good choice; he was a talented general who taught the Hungarian troops to win in Transylvania. Dembinski was a bad choice, who never lived up to his fame. Kossuth still bridled at Görgey, due to the Vác Proclamation, in which Görgey accused the National Defense Committee for the military failures. Therefore, he picked a foreigner over the Hungarian generals.

There were two east-west avenues of approach from Buda to Debrecen. The Pest-Hatvan-Mezőkövesd-Tiszafüred-Debrecen corridor in the north and the Pest-Szolnok-Debrecen corridor in the south. Dembinski decided to use the northern corridor, where he thought Windisch-Graetz was. General János Damjanich and Count General Károly Vécsey's divisions had to do a feint at Szolnok to allow this.

On 26 February, the two main armies, 50,000 troops respectively, met at Kápolna, sixty miles northeast of Pest. In the following two-day battle, on 26-27 February, the Hungarians fought well but Dembinski was not able to concentrate his troops on time and the Hungarians retreated behind the Tisza again. The Austrians won the first battle between the two main armies.

After the battle, the Hungarian (former Imperial-Royal) high-ranking officers turned against Dembinski. They accused him, rightly, for the defeat. Dembinski was arrogant and secretive. He never shared his plans with anybody, which was one of the

reasons of the defeat at Kápolna. The officer corps led by Görgey as the senior general under Dembinski command, wanted Dembinski to hold a war council and share his plans. Bertalan Szemere, the Government Commissioner of the army, joined the officers. When Dembinski refused to disclose his plans, Szemere relieved Dembinski and appointed Görgey as commander-in-chief. When Kossuth learned about what happened, he left Debrecen for the camp with the intent of having Görgey executed. But even Kossuth had to yield. On 4 March, Kossuth, Lázár Mészáros, Minister of War, and Major General Antal Vetter, the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defense, traveled to the army. In Tiszafüred, at the army Kossuth understood that Dembinski could not remain commander. He still did not trust Görgey, so he made Vetter commander in chief. Vetter was a good general, but not as good as Görgey. Everybody knew it, even Vetter and Kossuth. When Vetter got sick, Kossuth had no other choice but Görgey. On 30 March, Kossuth accepted the inevitable. For the time of Vetter's illness, Kossuth appointed Görgey to temporary commander in chief.<sup>21</sup> Kossuth was still hurt by the Proclamation of Vác and tried to resist, but he was a brilliant politician and a real statesman. He appreciated that Görgey was the general who was able to win the war. Finally, he found the man for the job and let him work. However, the battle had another consequence.

Following the battle, Windisch-Graetz decided, not for the first but certainly for the last time in his career, that the war would soon be over. He reported to the Court at Olmütz: "The rebel hordes appeared at Kápolna in awesome numbers. I dispersed them and destroyed the large majority. The rest fled across the Tisza. I hope to be in Debrecen in a few days and take possession of the nest of the insurrection."<sup>22</sup>

This report encouraged the Court to issue the Stadium Constitution, which was to abolish the April Laws and make Hungary simply a province of the Habsburg Empire.<sup>23</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 122.
- <sup>2</sup> Bona, *A Téli Hadjárat (1848. December-1849. Február)*, 172.
- <sup>3</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 131.
- <sup>4</sup> Bona, *A Téli Hadjárat (1848. December-1849. Február)*, 181.
- <sup>5</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 234.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.
- <sup>8</sup> The land inhabited by the Transylvanian Hungarians, who are distinguished from the Hungarians in Hungary by calling them *Székelys*.
- <sup>9</sup> Brassó (German Kronstadt, Romanian Brasov) was the other Saxon center in Southern Transylvania besides Nagyszeben, and served as an operational base for the Habsburg armies as well.
- <sup>10</sup> Bona, *A Téli Hadjárat (1848. December-1849. Február)*, 167-168, 174-176.
- <sup>11</sup> An area between the Temes and the Danube rivers. Now the Serbian-Romanian border divides it.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-88.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-180
- <sup>14</sup> Lipótvár (German Leopoldstadt) was a small fort in Northwestern Hungary being besieged by Lieutenant General Balthasar Simunich divisions.
- <sup>15</sup> Körmöcbánya (German Kremnitz, Slovak ), Besztercebánya (German Neusohl, Slovak Banská Bistrica), Selmezbánya (German Schemnitz, Slovak ) and Zólyom (German Altsohl, Slovak ) were the so-called mining towns. These towns were the gold-, and silver mining towns of Hungary, where the Royal Mints were located.
- <sup>16</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 237
- <sup>17</sup> Szepesség (German Zips) was the name of the district of the German burgher towns in Upper Hungary. In 1849, it was already incorporated into Szepes County.
- <sup>18</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 160

<sup>19</sup> Bona, *A Téli Hadjárat (1848. December-1849. Február)*, 184

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-185

<sup>21</sup> Hermann, *Kossuth És Görgei*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 249.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 252

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SPRING CAMPAIGN

#### Military situation in March and April 1849

In spite of the disturbances within the army (or maybe because of them), the orders for Damjanich's and Vécsey's divisions remained valid. On March 5, the two divisions crossed the Tisza at Szolnok and attacked Ottinger's brigades. The two Imperial brigades lost 800 casualties. The Hungarians captured another 800 troops and eleven guns. Due to this victory, Vetter decided to shift the axis of the new Hungarian attack to the south. The main army marched to Szolnok and crossed the river again on 16-17 March. During this time, Görgey's corps feinted in the north and kept Windisch-Graetz thinking that the Hungarians would attack there.

Windisch-Graetz, after his victory at Kápolna, tried to cross the Tisza at Tiszafured, but he started to worry that the Hungarians, starting off Szolnok, could cut his lines of communication back to Budapest. Windisch-Graetz turned back again and forgot to fulfill his promise that he would be in Debrecen in a few days. He marched to Nagykőrös, a town between Szolnok and Budapest. He planned to cross the Tisza at Szolnok to attack on Debrecen.

The two armies were approaching each other when Vetter learned that he was facing the main Imperial army, so he crossed the Tisza again, and then turned back to the eastern side once again. Now, Damjanich blamed Vetter for the fiasco; Vetter could not bear the pressure and fell sick. Now, Kossuth had no choice, but to appoint Görgey to commander-in-chief.

Before March 1849, the different Hungarian armies had operated independently. There was no commander-in-chief or centralized command. The different armies were named after their commanders or the area they operated within. In March, the corps got numbers.

After Vetter's withdrawal, General Klapka developed a new Hungarian plan. The strongest Hungarian corps, the Seventh, 15,000 men, would attack and fix the Austrian forces while the three other Hungarian corps, the First, under General Klapka with 12,000 men, the Second, commanded by General Lajos Aulich, 9,000 men, and General János Damjanich's Third Corps with 6,000 men, would march from Tiszafüred through Jászberény and Nagykáta to the back of Windisch-Graetz's army, and somewhere around Gödöllő, the encircled enemy would be defeated.

On 24 March, a Hungarian detachment from the Seventh Corps crushed an Austrian unit in Losonc. The Austrian troops believed this detachment to be the main Hungarian army approaching from the north to relieve Komárom. Therefore, the Austrians concentrated their troops near Gödöllő, a position from which they could operate both to the north and the south avenues of approach. By late March, the Second and the Third Corps concentrated at Gödöllő, and the First was coming from the south. Forty-five thousand imperial troops were there.

On 2 April, the Hungarian main army started to move. Colonel András Gáspár led the Seventh Corps, instead of Görgey, who was commanding the entire army. The Seventh Corps was moving towards the Zagyva River when they encountered Schlik's Third Corps at Hort. Schlik had moved out from Hatvan on Windisch-Graetz orders to find the Hungarians. The battle took place halfway between Hatvan and Hort. The

Seventh Corps pushed back the Austrian forward brigade, which joined the line of the main body just east of Hatvan. Colonel Gáspár tried to envelop Schlik's left wing while another Hungarian unit tried to do so with the right flank. This unit came from the main Hungarian column. It was close enough to help out the Seventh Corps and when they heard the gunfight they sent out a detachment. Schlik had to retreat to avoid the envelopment. However, there was only one bridge across the Zagyva, but an Austrian covering force was able to hold back the Hungarians long enough. Schlik lost 200 troops; Gáspár lost 150. The first battle was won. The Seventh Corps was along the River Zagyva. The operational success of the battle was that the Seventh army "facilitated the masking of the maneuver"<sup>1</sup> of the main forces. The tactical success was that the Seventh Corps, standing along the river, could resist any Austrian attack, even if with superior numbers. During the battle, Görgey remained in his headquarters in Gyöngyös, because he did not want to "embarrass . . . his substitute . . . on his *debut* as an independent commander."<sup>2</sup>

The First, Second and Third Hungarian Corps executed the turning movement on 4 April. Having received a report that Jellačić's Corps moved to the north, Klapka's First Corps marched into Tápióbicske. The village was situated on the west bank of the small Tápió River. The main body of Jellačić's Corps had left the village previously, but two of his brigades had arrived there just before the Hungarians. The First Corps marched into the village carelessly where Jellačić's Croatian border guards fired at them from the dwellings of the village. The First Corps routed and the arriving Third Corps had to stop them. A bloody and long battle developed. Finally, the First and the Third Corps combined to attack and seized the bridge over the Tápió. The Hungarians won the battle,

but with heavy casualties. The worst aftermath of the battle was that Windisch-Graetz learned that a strong Hungarian army was approaching from the south and he repositioned his troops to avoid the encirclement. He sent Schlick's corps on his left wing, facing the Seventh Corps and positioned Jellačić's Corps on his right wing, at the village of Isaszeg, facing to the south. He remained in Gödöllő with the reserve.

On 6 April, the Seventh Hungarian Corps attacked Schlick's Corps. According to the original plan, the Seventh Corps had to take villages of Bag and Aszód. Schlick did not fight; he abandoned the villages and withdrew. At 1 p.m., the First and the Third Hungarian Corps reached Windisch-Graetz's southern line at Isaszeg. Klapka (First Corps) was on the Hungarian left wing and Damjanich (Third Corps) was on the right. The two corps attacked Jellačić advanced brigades in the Királyerdő (The King's Forest) east of the village. The Hungarians drove out the ban's troops from the forest and took the village. Here, they met Jellačić main line, which was a steep ridge along the western bank of the creek. Jellačić counterattacked and forced Klapka's First Corps to withdraw onto the Hungarian left wing. On the right wing, Damjanich did not retreat. He sent a brigade to protect his left wing, which was in the air after Klapka's withdrawal, and continued his assault towards the village. However, one of Schlick's divisions arrived at the battlefield from the north and attacked Damjanich's corps.

Gáspár's Seventh Corps seized Bag and Aszód, but stopped and did not continue its attack. Gáspár stuck to the original plan, and despite of the gunfight, which was heard, and the begging of his divisions' commanders, did not move. In his defense, Gáspár did not receive any orders from Görgey or the Army headquarters to move. The inactivity of the Seventh Corps allowed Schlick to send troops to the south. One of his divisions

attacked Damjanich from the north. Nevertheless, Damjanich stood and repelled four Austrian assaults. This was the situation when Görgey arrived.

Görgey was able to stop Klapka's Corps rout, reorganize them, and launch an attack on the left wing again. By that time, Aulich's Second Corps arrived and joined the First Corps' attack. Meanwhile Windisch-Graetz arrived at the battlefield and ordered his heavy cavalry against the Hungarian hussars. While the cavalry battle was waging in the center, Klapka's and Aulich's corps took Isaszeg. The Imperial army started to retreat to Gödöllő. The Hungarian army was victorious. The Austrian army suffered about 1,000 dead, wounded and prisoners. The Hungarian casualties were similar. Besides a heavy loss of material, the loss of moral was more important. Being equal in numbers, the rebel army had defeated the Imperial army three times in six days in open battles. The *honvéd* army was not a "rebel horde in awesome numbers" anymore. It was a well trained, battle proved, skillfully commanded regular army equipped with the best what Hungary could give.

A war council was held on 7 April to gain approval a new plan of operations. Kossuth was also present. Colonel Bayer József, Görgey's Chief of Staff formulated this new plan. Instead of a frontal attack on the capital, the army would march to Komárom and relieve the fortress, which had been under siege since December. Aulich's Second Corps reinforced with Lieutenant Colonel Lajos Asbóth's Twelve Division would demonstrate against Pest. The Seventh, First and Third Corps would march north, towards Vác, cross the Garam River, and relieved Komárom. At Komárom, they would be able to cross the Danube and cut the lines of communication of the Imperial army at Pest-Buda. The risk of this plan was that if the main Imperial army did not stay passive

but instead attacked the Second Corps east of the capital. With these operations the Austrians could threaten the Hungarian lines of communication between the main army and the war supplies existing behind the Tisza. Therefore, instead of the shortest and fastest Gyöngyös route, the longer, but more secure northern Miskolc route was chosen as main supply route.<sup>3</sup>

On 8 April, the operation started. The First, Third and Seventh Corps left Gödöllő, and on the 10th, they reached Vác. Windisch-Graetz was worried that the Hungarians would try to relieve Komárom via Vác, so he sent a 7,500 men strong division commanded by General Christian Götz to the city. The First and the Third Corps took the city in a fierce battle during which General Götz was killed.

On 12 April, Windisch-Graetz was relieved. Field Marshal Ludwig Welden became the new Austrian commander. Besides the new commander, reinforcement was sent to Hungary as well. Ten thousand men under Lieutenant General Ludwig von Wohlgemuth were joined by the remnants of Götz's division forming a new Fourth Imperial Corps of 16,000 men. This Fourth Corps was marching from Pozsony to Komárom tasked with preventing the Hungarians from relieving Komárom. On 19 April, one brigade of the former Götz division, now commanded by Major General Prince Felix Jablonowski, attacked the Hungarians pickets at Nagysalló. The alarmed First and the Third Corps after an hour-long fight in the village retook Nagysalló. The Austrian brigade withdrew to Nagymás. There, Jablonowski united his brigades and assaulted with his entire division against Nagysalló again. He could not take it, and was forced to retreat the hills south of the village. Klapka and Damjanich's corps were about to assault the ridge when their right wing was attacked by General Anton Elder von Herzinger's

brigade. The Hungarian right wing repelled this attack, and when its wings were secured, the center assaulted Jablonowski's division on the ridge, south of the village. In the meantime, the cavalry of the Seventh Corps crossed the Garam, and arrived at the battlefield. The joint cavalry of the three Hungarian corps put the Austrian cavalry to flight and cut the road between the Imperial troops and Komárom. Wohlgemuth was forced to retreat to the west towards the Nyitra River. The hussars pursued the retreating Austrians till the Nyitra. At this battle, the Hungarian casualties were 600-700, while the Fourth Imperial Corps suffered 2,000 casualties, 12.5 percent of the corps. About half of them were captured by the Hungarians.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the Battle of Nagysalló, the road was open to Komárom. The Hungarians reached the northern walls of the fortress on the 22nd. Simunich's siege forces withdrew to the southern side of the Danube. Komárom was relieved. In the meantime, Welden ordered Jellačić to execute a reconnaissance in force east of Pest. Jellačić reported that 20,000 (in reality 12,000) Hungarians were standing east of Pest. When Welden learned about the defeat at Nagysalló, he decided to withdraw from Pest-Buda, merge the siege forces at Komárom into his army, and retreat to Pozsony, in order to defend Vienna. The Imperial Second and Third Corps left the capital on the 20 April. Jellačić's First Corps marched to southern Hungary, where the situation was also desperate for the Imperials, on 24 April. Only Major General Hienrich Hentzi 5,000 men garrison remained at Castle Hill. When a bridge over the Danube finally was finished and the Hungarian army was able to cross the river, the Austrian Second and Third Corps were already at Komárom. The first Battle of Komárom on 26 April was a draw. The

Austrians' casualties were 1,200, the Hungarians' were 800, but the main Imperial forces were able to withdraw to Pozsony.<sup>5</sup> The encirclement was not success.

### Vienna or Buda

After the Battle of Komárom, the Hungarian political and military leaders again had to answer the question: What is next? The obvious step would be to pursue the weakened, but far from defeated enemy. Every officer and politician knew that. However, there were other factors to consider. The army ammunition supply was transported from Nagyvárad, which was more than 200 miles from Komárom. Additionally, the shortest route via the Chain Bridge, the only permanent bridge over the Danube, was within the range of the Austrian garrison on Castle Hill. During the battle on the 26 April, the army almost ran out of artillery cartridges.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the spring campaign, the *honvéd* battalions were 1,000 men strong. Due to casualties from the prolonged fighting and different diseases, the battalions had 600-800 men. Soldiers' uniform and footwear were worn out.

Colonel Bayer, Görgey's Chief of General Staff, wanted to pursue Welden's army. He believed that the ammunition supply would arrive within a few days. Klapka, who formulated the plan of the spring campaign, and who was not only a corps commander but also Görgey's adviser, wanted to take Buda first in order to secure the shortest line of communication between the army and the war supplies existing behind the Tisza. The Buda Castle cut not just the shortest line of communication between the army and Debrecen, but the traffic on the Danube as well.

General Klapka, on the contrary, pleaded for the urgent necessity of taking Ofen, pointing out that this fortress, so long as it was occupied by the enemy, blocked up the chain-bridge, the most important communication for us across the

Danube during the just-proposed offensive. This communication, he added was the most important, because situated on the shortest line between the active army on the right bank of the Danube and the war-stores behind the Theiss, and as permanent solid connection between both banks of the Danube the least exposed to disturbing influences.

General Kalpka mentioned further, that the hostile garrison of Ofen rendered insecure the principal communication with the roads leading from central Hungary, and stopped completely the traffic on the Danube between the north and south of the country. It was true that another communication, out of the immediate reach of the fortress, might be substituted in the mean time, and could be perfectly secured by closely investing the fortress with a force sufficient to frustrate all sallies of the hostile troops od occupation, but as the deduction of such considerable forces as seemed necessary for closely investing it could by no means be borne, considering the proposed offensive against Raab, only a one-sided palliative would be gained by the investment, for the traffic on the Danube would remain interrupted, as before, in its most enterprise against for the reduction of the fortress.<sup>7</sup>

Welden had approximately 50,000 men in front of Vienna with short lines of communication. The Imperial troops became stronger by every day, receiving newly raised troops from other provinces and reinforcement of veteran troops from Italy. Since March, Radetzky sent approximately 15,000 men each month to the Hungarian theater of war.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Jellačić's corps with 15,000 men was south of Buda and his intentions were unclear to the Hungarians. The German and Slav population of the Empire, except the Polish in Galicia, were hostile to the Hungarians, therefore the Imperial troops had the popular support necessary to continue the war. In the meantime, Görgey had 27,000 men and 107 guns at Komárom. The *honvéd* army, even with the garrison of Komárom and with the troops in front of Pest, could not match the strength of the Austrians. Beside pure military reasons, political questions had to be considered.

Kossuth also wanted to take the capital for political reasons. Having declared Hungary's independence and dethroned the House of Habsburg, he hoped foreign recognition with the liberation of the capital. The success of the spring campaign

established the conditions for Kossuth to declare the independence. On 4 March, after Windisch-Graetz's optimistic report of the Battle of Kápolna, Franz Joseph I promulgated the Stadion or "Octroyed" Constitution. The relationship of Hungary and Austria was defined by series of historical treaties, but the Stadion Constitution would make Hungary just one of the simple province of the Empire. It would detach Transylvania, Fiume and the Hungarian Littoral, Croatia-Slavonia, the Military Border, and the Serbian Vojvodina from Hungary. Kossuth wanted to reply to the Stadion Constitution with the Declaration of Independence, but first, he wanted to convince the army. Between 7-11 April, Kossuth spent five days with the army in the camp at Gödöllő. He met Görgey and other generals. Beside of the formulation of the new plan of operations, Kossuth tried to figure out the army's opinion about the independence. He met Görgey face to face on the 7th. The only common point regarding to this meeting in their writings was that the meeting happened. According to Görgey, Kossuth informed him about his plan to declare Hungary independence, but Görgey objected it. Kossuth tried to convince Görgey that the only adequate answer to the Stadion Constitution was the declaration of independence, which would hopefully bring Hungary's recognition by Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire, and that the British, French, Germans, and Italians would enter the war on Hungary's side.<sup>9</sup> Görgey objected to the plan. He argued that the declaration of independence would make the just cause unjust.

The separation of Hungary from Austria would no longer be a just cause; the struggle for this would not be a struggle for, but against the law; not a struggle for self-defense, but an attack on the existence of the united Austrian monarchy.<sup>10</sup>

Görgey wrote these lines years after the war. Most likely, he did not oppose Kossuth's plan firmly enough.<sup>11</sup> Next day Kossuth told his plan to the generals. He was

talking about the political answer that Hungary had to give to the Stadion Constitution, but he did not state clearly that it would be the dethronement of the Habsburgs. However, the generals did not protest, and Görgey remained silent. Nevertheless, the Declaration of Independence surprised the generals later. General Gáspár, the Seventh Corps commander resigned in protest, but others also opposed openly the declaration. Görgey never opposed the Declaration of Independence openly. He argued later that he did not want divide the unity when the nation was at war. In his memoirs, Görgey tried to maintain a picture that his political aim was to preserve the Hungarian constitution sanctioned by Ferdinand V and wanted to keep Hungary within the Empire. This Görgey is completely different from the Görgey during the War of Independence. In his memoirs, he admitted his military mistakes and often critical to his military performance, but he never confessed any of his political mistakes.<sup>12</sup> He tried to legitimize his political decisions but it was a futile and unnecessary act. He was a soldier, not a politician. As Deak wrote: “he could master the art of war, but he remained an amateur in the art of politics.”<sup>13</sup>

Kossuth traveled back to Debrecen. On 14 April, he had the Hungarian Parliament declare the independence of Hungary and dethrone “the perfidious House of Habsburg-Lorraine”. The form of government was not determine. It was up to the National Assembly in the future. Until that the country would led by a governor-president, Louis Kossuth.<sup>14</sup>

Kossuth knew that Hungary could not win without foreign support. He declared independence in the hope of foreign military aid or at least recognition.<sup>15</sup> Before the final and decisive turn in the war, which was coming in the summer, Hungary must have a

foreign allied nation against Austria. From the great powers, Russia had already been preparing for a war against Hungary. Britain favored the preservation of the Habsburg Monarchy to contain Russia in the Balkans. France was preoccupied with domestic issues, and she wanted to preserve the Habsburg Empire for the same reasons as Britain. In the question of German unity, Prussia was against Austria in the long term, but in the short term, the House of Hohenzollern was allied with the House of Habsburg in the midst of the revolutionary waves.

Hungary could make alliance with other small European nations sympathetic to her cause. Hungary's was unofficially allied with the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. However, on 23 March 1849, Radetzky utterly defeated the Piedmont king Charles Albert's army at Novara. Charles Albert abdicated in favor of his son Victor Emanuel II. The Piedmont army suffered heavy losses and was not capable to continue the war. Austria did not have to fight two fronts anymore. Radetzky could send more reinforcements to Hungary.

Hungary could try to cooperate with other revolutionary governments in Europe, such as Venice, Rome, the revolutionary northern Italian towns, or German states. However, Venice was besieged by Austria; France intervened militarily in Rome; the ancient regime was restored in Florence and Tuscany; and all the revolutionary German states were overthrown by Prussia.

The only feasible solution was to obtain a foreign intervention in the Ottoman Empire. Russian troops occupied the Danubian Principalities, Moldavia, and Wallachia. A treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire granted the presence of Russian troops in the Danubian Principalities. When Jozef Bem, the Hungarian commander drove the

Imperial troops out from Transylvania to the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian troops presence in Turkish soil was illegitimate by international law. In May 1849, the Austrians attacked southern Hungary from Wallachia, but Bem drove them out again. The Hungarian government protested. According to international laws, the Turks should have disarmed the Imperial troops. The presence of Russian troops in the Danubian Principalities, which legally belonged to the Ottoman Empire, had already humiliated the Porte. Now, the Russians and Austrians used Turkish soil to attack Hungary, which was friendly to them. The Porte mobilized its army and navy. Only Britain's intervention could have stopped the war. Nonetheless, the Hungarian government's assumption of an international conflict was still feasible. If the Turks had disarmed the Austrians, the Russians would have intervened. The Russian intervention would have triggered an armed conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. France and Britain would not have allowed a war in the Balkans so they would have had to intervene. The armed conflict in the Balkans would have been ultimately tied to the war in Hungary.<sup>16</sup> This scenario almost happened in October 1849. Yet, the crises emerged over the defeated revolutionary exiles, especially the Polish, but not over the beaten Austrians. Russia demanded the extradition of refugees; France and Britain pressed for refusal. The situation was so tight that Britain threatened Russia with war.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it happened too late and over different circumstances than the Hungarian government hoped.

Kossuth wished to assault Castle Hill, but he never ordered the whole army to Buda. Even if he had done so, Görgey may have been able to persuade him of the military impracticability of such an operation as he already had done in December 1848. Then Kossuth wanted a decisive battle in front of the capital to stop Windisch-Graetz, but

not taking the army into risk. Görgey had been able to persuade Kossuth, that such a battle, between 30,000 untrained *honvéds* and 45,000 first line Imperial troops, with the Danube behind of the *honvéd* troops, would lead to a disaster. In December 1848, Görgey was able to defy Kossuth's wishes, and it is likely that he would have been able to do that again in April 1849. The decision rested on Görgey's shoulders.

In his memoirs, he wrote that he made a political decision.

My personal conviction of the impossibility of including those parts of the main army which were opposed to the law of the 14th of April, even assuming the most favorable course of the proposed operations on the line to Raab, to prosecute them beyond the frontier of the country, led me – considering the insignificant military importance of the western frontiers of Hungary situated next to the right bank of the Danube – to perceive that the final strategic aim, which ought to have formed the basis of those operations, was wanting.

Through this conviction I was further led to the idea of giving to those operations – should the fortune-of-war repeatedly smile upon us them – at least a political conclusion, by inviting, immediately after reaching the Lajtha, in the name of the victorious Hungarian army, the Austrian Government as well as the Hungarian Diet to prefer the way of a peaceable agreement, based on the Hungarian constitution of 1848, to the exasperated continuance of an unhappy civil war.

He wrote his memoirs later, with the intentions to create the image of the leader of the self-defense war, while he was not. His negotiations with the Peace Party would be still in the future. According to his public addresses about the “perfidious and hideous dynasty” and the “saintliest rights of the people to fight against usurping tyranny” during this time, and his acts such as Count Zichy's execution, he was more radical than moderate. Moreover, at the end of April 1849, he still was a soldier, not a politician. Therefore, instead of political decision, he made a pure military one.

Görgey recognized that the *honvéd* army's spring offensive had culminated. The lines of communications were overstretched. The army needed rest, reinforcement, and

equipment. The victory at Buda seemed assured, the garrison was expected to surrender when the Hungarian troops would arrive in overwhelming numbers. During this siege, the army could receive reinforcement, ammunition, weapons, and new equipment. The entire country as well as the soldiers of the army wished for the liberation of the capital. If the victory at Buda did not give recognition to Hungary, it would certainly raise the morale of the Hungarians and decrease that of the Austrians. Görgey decided to march Buda and start the siege with his entire army. Choosing Castle Hill, he chose an attainable military objective, but let go of the already slight chance to take the war into Austrian soil.

The siege of Castle Hill was neither easy, nor short. Görgey's 31,000 troops arrived at Castle Hill on 4 May. On the very same day, a division attacked the waterworks of the fortress but it was repelled. It became clear that defenders were committed, and a long siege would be needed. Major General Heinrich Hentzi commanded the 5,000 garrison with ninety cannons. The Hungarian army had no heavy siege artillery, which had to be transported from Komárom. The first heavy cannons arrived on 12 May. After heavy bombardment, Castle Hill was taken by a fierce assault on 21 May. During the siege, the Imperial artillery bombed Pest, destroying the palaces along the Danube and tried to blow up the Chain Bridge, but fortunately that attempt failed. The Austrian casualties were 710 dead and 4,200 prisoners, among them 113 officers; the Hungarian casualties were 370 dead and 670 wounded.<sup>18</sup> Large amount of ammunitions and many weapons and guns were captured. However, Hungary had lost three weeks of precious time.

### Negotiations with the Peace Party

In late April, Görgey had intelligence from Austrian prisoners of war about the upcoming Russian intervention. During the siege of Castle Hill, when he finally learned officially and undoubtedly about the intervention, he believed that the Russian intervention was due to the Declaration of Independence. As a soldier, he clearly understood that Hungary had no chance to win the war against Russia. He was ready to do anything, even a military coup d'état to abolish the Declaration of Independence.

On 15 April, after commanding the spring campaign and driving the Imperials out of Hungary, Görgey was offered to be minister of war by Kossuth. Görgey assumed the position, which he saw as a mean to achieve his goals. However, he wanted to stay with the army until the end of the fighting. He sent Damjanich to be the deputy minister of war, but unfortunately, Damjanich broke his leg in an accident and was out of service in the rest of the war. Görgey then sent Klapka to Debrecen.<sup>19</sup> During the siege of Buda, Klapka came back from Debrecen and visited Görgey. Klapka described Hungary's situation as miserable.

The resources of the country General Klapka described as insufficient for energetically carrying on the war even for half a year longer. Apart from the financial difficulty, which was moreover no secret to the army, Klapka pointed especially to the circumstance, that the supplies of gunpowder and of saltpeter were not enough for even the complete equipment of the fortresses which were in our power; and that the manufactories of arms furnished but a small part of what the government had publicly announced they were capable of producing.

General Kalpka on that occasion declared undisguisedly his sorrowful conviction, that the salvation of Hungary was impossible without foreign assistance, and that this would be probable only if we succeeded in resisting the combined attacks of the Austrians and Russians – of the intervention of the latter he doubted just as little as myself – until the end of next autumn; because in consequence of the prevailing peculiarities of this season of the year in by far the greater part of Hungary, a suspension of operations on the part of the hostile armies would be unavoidable, and the continuance of the resistance until the next

spring be facilitated to us, and thereby the necessary time be secured to induce foreign countries to take part with Hungary.<sup>20</sup>

On 1 June, Görgey traveled to Debrecen where he met the representatives of the Peace Party. The members of the Peace Party were the moderate deputies of the National Assembly, who had been seeking a compromise with the Court since the beginning of the hostilities in October 1848. The Peace Party opposed the Declaration of Independence and they, as well as Görgey, believed that the Russian intervention was triggered by Kossuth's actions. It was a logical assumption, but incorrect. Nevertheless, they believed that the annulment of the Declaration of Independence would stop the Russians and give way to the peace talks. However, Görgey's negotiations with the Peace Party did not go well. The Parliament was about to move to the liberated capital and would assemble in July, when the Russian troops would be deep in Hungary. This made impossible the constitutional solution. Then Görgey proposed a military coup d'état. The deputies "interrupted . . . [Görgey] . . . with vigorous shouts of, 'No military revolution! No government of the sabre!'"<sup>21</sup> The assembly ended with the decision that the Peace Party would try to gain the majority within the Parliament on the by-elections.<sup>22</sup>

Görgey was ready to achieve his goals by either parliamentary or military means. Without the Peace Party's strong political support, Görgey dropped the plan of a military solution due to Kossuth's supporters within the army. The radical, revolutionary generals like Bem or Perczel were Kossuth's allies who would have turned a military coup d'état into a civil war in the midst of the Russian intervention. Görgey would follow another path to oppose Kossuth and his politics within and out of the Parliament.

In parliament the peace-party had to be strengthened by the addition of new forces. To this end, the officers serving in the main army who had parliamentary qualifications, and on whose political sentiments I could rely, were

urged to solicit most zealously their election as representatives for any places accidentally vacant.

Out of parliament I had to endeavor to deprive the party of the 14th of April of its most influential supporters. These were the leaders of the national forces isolated from the main army: Bem, Moritz Perczel, Dembinski, and besides, Count Guyon, commander of the fortress of Komorn.

These had to be removed from their posts, and the vacant commands intrusted to men whom at the decisive moment I had no reason to fear opposition in support of the declaration of independence.

I could accomplish this, however, only as acting minister-of-war. The conviction of this fully determined me to overcome the moral aversion I felt to taking the oath to a law, the overthrow of which, even in the most favorable case, seemed indispensable to the salvation of the great cause of Hungary.<sup>23</sup>

Görgey remained the minister of war, however, due to the changing military situation, he returned to his army and did what he truly mastered: he continued to wage the war.

### Summer Campaign

The liberation of Buda was the brightest military victory of the War of Independence. However, it did not give international recognition to Hungary. Hungary was alone and faced Russian intervention. Austria and Russia made an alliance in 1833 at Münchengraetz. Prussia joined in the same year. In this treaty, “the three rulers swore to come to each other’s aid, upon request, against all domestic and foreign enemies.”<sup>24</sup> In the spring of 1848, Nicholas I mobilized his army after the revolution in Paris. Russia occupied the Danubian Principalities in June 1848. The Tsar was eager to give military aid to Austria. On 4 February 1849, a small Russian auxiliary force, approximately 6,000 troops, entered Transylvania upon request of General Anton Puchner, the Transylvanian Imperial commander. Bem drove the combined Russian-Austrian army out of

Transylvania by middle March. Russia was humiliated. The Tsar still wanted to assist the young Franz Joseph I, and could not wait for the Austrian request. This request arrived after the Hungarian victories in the spring of 1849. Austrian generals, especially Windisch-Graetz and Welden were in panic and urged immediate Russian help. Although, negotiation started as early as March, the official appeal was taken a month later. Felix zu Schwarzenberg, Austrian Prime Minister asked the Russian ambassador in Vienna for military assistance officially on 21 April, and Franz Joseph I wrote a letter personally to Nicholas I, asking for help on 1 May.<sup>25</sup> On the same day, Russians concluded a treaty with the Ottomans at Baltaliman, which granted equal rights to Russia with the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. The treaty concerned Britain, but she wanted to preserve the Habsburg monarchy in order to contain Russia in the Balkans.

Having secured its positions in the Balkans, Nicholas I decided to send an overwhelming army to Hungary to avoid the shame that had occurred in Transylvania. By June, Austria had assembled 71,000 troops and 288 guns at the Danube under the command of Field Marshall Baron Julius Haynau. The Russian Ninth Combined Infantry Division commanded by Lieutenant General Fyodor Sergeyeovich Panyutin with 10,659 men and 48 cannons reinforced this army.<sup>26</sup> The combined strength of the Russo-Austrian forces was 83,000 troops and 336 cannons. Görgey's main army, which was facing Haynau, consisted of 53,000 troops, 196 field and 244 siege cannons, including the garrison of Komárom. In Transylvania, Bem had 39,000 men and 107 cannons against the combined Russian-Austrian army, which consisted of 53,000 men and 133 cannons. In southern Hungary, 34,000 Hungarians with 249 cannons faced 53,000 Imperial soldiers and Serb insurgents who had 401 cannons. Here, in southern Hungary, the

*honvéd* army besieged Arad and Temesvár. In Upper Hungary, facing the main Russian army there were 16,500 Hungarian soldiers with 49 cannons commanded by the Polish Major General Jozef Wysocki. Field Marshall Prince Ivan Paskevich commanded the main Russian army. It consisted of 135,500 men and 448 cannons. In Austria, there was an Austrian reserve corps with 25,000 men and 36 cannons. At the beginning of the summer campaign, the *Honvéd* Army consisted of approximately 150,000 men with 464 field and 393 siege cannons. Austria had 165,000 troops and 770 field and siege cannons. The Russian expeditionary force consisted of 193,000 men and 584 cannons. The Austrian-Russian combined forces strength was 358,000 soldiers with 1,354 cannons against 150,000 *honvéds* with 857 cannons. There were additionally 60,000 Russians in Galicia and 15,000 Russian troops in Wallachia as a reserve.<sup>27</sup>

The combined Austrian-Russian war plan was a converging attack toward Pest-Buda. Paskevich was to cross the Carpathians in northeastern Hungary, and then would march through Miskolc to Pest. Haynau would attack towards Buda on the southern side of the Danube. In the meantime, General Count Alexander Nikolayevich Lüders's Fifth Corps cooperating with Lieutenant General Count Eduard Clam-Gallas's (successor of Puchner) Austrian corps would occupy Transylvania. Despite of the combined Russo-Austrian strategy and war plan, the two armies operated independently both at operational and tactical level. The only exception was Panyutin's division, which would integrate Haynau's army. Although, Austria promised to nourish the huge Russian army, she was unable to fulfill her word, and the Russian army completely depended on its own lines of communication all the way back to Galicia. Both Paskevich and Haynau desired the victory over the rebels for themselves. Haynau called on the Russians auxiliary units,

whose only task was to assist his army. Being urged by the Tsar for a decisive victory, Paskevich maneuvered by himself. More time passed, more tension increased between the two allies.<sup>28</sup>

In March, Kossuth tried to put aside Bem's reports about the presence of Russian troops in Transylvania. He and the governor commissariat in Transylvania insisted that the dead bodies in Russian uniform were Romanian peasants dressed up by Imperials as a deception.<sup>29</sup> Because Nicholas I demanded Franz Joseph I to ask for help publicly, the Austrian emperor's letter was published in the *Wiener Zeitung*, Austria official newspaper. Since Hungary was sealed from the outside world, the government learned about the official appeal two weeks later from a French paper, which reached Hungary through the Ottoman Empire.<sup>30</sup> The Russian intervention now became a bitter reality for Hungary. What could Hungary do against these odds?

As mentioned earlier, General Damjanich, the commander of the Third Corps, smashed his leg in a wagon accident and he was out of service for the rest of the war. General Gáspár, the Seventh Corps commander, resigned as an objection to the dethronement. The Second Corps commander, General Aulich resigned as corps commander, due to his health. General Klapka, the First Corps commander, substituted Görgey in the government as deputy minister of war, and later assumed the command of the Eight Corps, the garrison of Komárom. The leadership of the *honvéd* army had totally changed. Of the new corps commanders, Colonel Lajos Asbóth, commander of the Second Corps, and Major General Ernő Poeltenberg, the Seventh Corps commander, proved reasonably able commanders. Unfortunately for the Hungarians, the other

substitutes, the First Corps commander, Major General József Nagysándor and Colonel Károly Knezich, Third Corps commander, lacked the talent of their predecessors.

According to the new Hungarian war plan, formulated by Klapka, the Army of the Upper Danube was to remain in the vicinity of Komárom. Bem, with the Transylvanian army, was to seize the fortresses of Gyulafehérvár and Déva and put down the Romanian insurgency in Transylvania. Then he was to seize Titel, the last strongpoint of the Serbian insurgency, relieve the besieged fortress of Pétervárad, and march either to Fiume or to Komárom. Perczel's corps was to secure southern Hungary and seize Arad and Temesvár, the two Austrian fortresses in southern Hungary. The plan was bad. It gave too many tasks to Bem and Perczel, but nothing to the Army of the Upper Danube. Nevertheless, its biggest flaw was that it did not consider the Russian intervention.<sup>31</sup> All three theater of operation commanders, Görgey at Komárom, Bem in Transylvania, and Perczel in southern Hungary refused to follow the plan. In the meantime, menacing events had happened in Austria as well.

General Welden became the governor of Vienna. The new Austrian commander, Field Marshal Baron Julius Haynau was a decent commander but a brutal dictator. On 5 June, he had two captured Hungarian officers executed for treason. The Hungarians had treated well the captured Austrian officers. They lived free on parole and received payment. Now, the executions showed that the former Habsburg officers now serving in the honvéd army could not expect mercy, even in case of unconditional surrender. Kossuth, the government, and majority of the Parliament did not want to negotiate for peace. They still believed in victory.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Görgey still believed in a compromise, but the Austrians had refused any attempt of appeasement so far, and would

not negotiate unless beaten seriously. The only way to force Austria to negotiate before the Russian army reached the heart of the country was to defeat Haynau's army.

Görgey decided to attack the Austrians to compel them to negotiate before the Russians arrived. His troops stood in a hundred miles long arch, between the Austrian border and Komárom. The Hungarian units from north to south were: 2,700 men in the mining towns, 1,300 men at Nyitra, the First Corps, 7,400 men, the Third Corps, 9,200 men, the Second Corps, 8,600 men, and finally, on the bends of Danube, a division with 4,000 men from the garrison of Komárom. On the right (southern) side of the Danube the Seventh Corps, 9,200 men, stood at Győr. The southernmost end of the arch was György Kmety's separated division with 5,100 men. The strength of the Army of the Upper Danube, together with reinforcement from Komárom, was 51,000 soldiers.<sup>33</sup> They were facing General Haynau's Army of the Danube. The Second and Fourth Corps and Panyutin's Russian division were on the northern side of the Danube. The First and the Third Corps stood south of the river. This army consisted of approximately 66,000 men and 290 cannons. Before the attack of the Hungarian forces on the left (northern) side of the Danube, Poeltenberg's Seventh Corps and Kmety's division attacked and defeated Wyss's brigade on Haynau's right wing at Csorna on 13 June. The Austrian commander, Wyss died in the battle. The Hungarian main effort attacked in the north, on 16 June, but it was repelled. Görgey repeated the attack on 20 June. The Hungarian took the villages of Királyrév, Zsigárd and Pered, but they were not able to beat the Austrians due to mostly Knezich's delay. Görgey grew furious and after the battle relieved the hesitant Knezich. Görgey also relieved Asbóth, although he had done well during the battle. Relieving Knezich was reasonable, but Asbóth replacement was not. It was due to

Görgey's growing angst over the deteriorating military situation. Colonel Count Károly Leiningen-Westerburg replaced Knezich as a commander of the Third Corps, while Colonel József Kászonyi took command over the Second Corps. Next day, on 21 June, Haynau seized the initiative and after heavy fighting forced Görgey to retreat. The first offensive to defeat decisively the Austrians failed.

In southern Hungary, things did not go well for Hungary either. The Hungarian commander there was General Mór Perczel. According to the Klapka's war plan, he had to send 12,000 men to Komárom by the end of June. Perczel tried to seize the last strong point of the Serbian insurgency, Titel. In May, he launched three assaults against the marshy high ground of Titel, but the Serbian defenders repelled all three attempts. However, after having left Buda, Jellačić's 13,000 men Fourth Corps arrived in southern Hungary in late May. On 7 June at Káty, the two armies clashed. The Austrian heavy cavalry smashed the Hungarian lines. The result of the battle was catastrophic. The Hungarians had 1,500 casualties, the Imperials lost two dead and twelve wounded. Perczel was replaced; the new commander Colonel Ágoston Tóth withdrew to Szeged. The planned 12,000 reinforcement could not have been sent to the north. The only success was that the garrison of Arad surrendered to the Hungarians on 30 June. Now, Temesvár remained the only Imperial fortress in southern Hungary.<sup>34</sup>

In Transylvania Bem had 39,000 men and 107 cannons against the combined Russo-Austrian forces' 53,000 men and 133 cannons. However, Bem had to apply 10,000 men against the Romanian insurgency (approximately 10,000 troops as well) and to maintain a siege around Gyulafehérvár. Moreover, two-thirds of Bem's soldiers were new, inexperienced local recruits, who would run home after the first lost battles. In June,

the Hungarians tried to put down the Romanian insurgency without any success. On 19 June, the Russian offensive started. Luders's Fifth Corps broke to the mountain passes and took Brassó. On 21 June, Lieutenant General Magnus Johann Grotenhjem's division launched its attack in northern Transylvania. He defeated the Hungarian troops in several battles, but did not march deeper into Transylvania. He remained close to the mountain passes.

On 15 June, General (Cavalry) Friedrich Wilhelm von Rüdiger, the commander of the Third Russian Corps crossed the border in northeastern Hungary. General Paskevich and the Third and Fourth Corps followed him between 17-19 June. Major General Jozef Wysocki's Ninth Corps, the Polish Legion, and Colonel Lajos Kazinczy's division, 16,500 men and 49 guns, stood in front of 135,500 Russian troops and 448 cannons. Wysocki did what he could. He delayed position by position and forced the Russians to deploy themselves into battle lines, then he moved again. Wysocki could delay the Russians; it took two weeks to reach the Great Hungarian Plains. Due to the interruptions in the food provision, and a recent cholera epidemic, Paskevich remained in Miskolc, at the northern edge of the Plains, until 8 July.<sup>35</sup>

On June 26, at a cabinet meeting, Görgey, as minister of war proposed his plan, "Stroke upon stroke at Austria alone!"<sup>36</sup> According to this plan, the Army of the Upper Danube, the First, Second, Third, Seventh, and Eight Corps was to concentrate around Komárom, using the fortress as an operational base. This army's only task was to defeat the Austrian army. The Ninth Corps was to delay as long as it could, the advancing Russian Army. The Hungarian armies in Transylvania, Southern Hungary, and in the central of the country were to deny the Russian army to advance into the Trans Tisza

area. The decisive operation was to defeat the Austrians. This plan, the Komárom-plan, would give two weeks, while the Russians arrive, to defeat seriously the Habsburg army. Once the Imperial army beaten, Austria would force to negotiate and Hungary could reach some kind of agreement. Komárom was a strong base and could serve either as an operational base for an attack or a safe heaven, if the things went bad. While a strong army was at Komárom, Haynau was not able to march towards Buda, because the Hungarians could operate either against his line of communication or against Vienna. In Komárom, the army would hold out for months. During a long siege, political situation would have been able to change. The prolonged staging of Russian troops in Hungary would increase the tension already existed between Russia and Austria. Foreign powers, mainly Britain and France, worrying about the Russian intervention, would have interfered. The cabinet approved Görgey's plan. Kossuth wrote Bem, that the strategy had already decided, however if Bem had any concerns, should propose a new plan. Bem agreed. However, Kossuth would change his mind in three days.

Haynau concentrated his army on the left (southern) bank of the Danube. This movement remained concealed for the Hungarians. On June 28, Haynau started his offensive. The Seventh Corps delayed Haynau's advance, but finally had to withdraw. The Austrians took Győr. After the defeat, Görgey wrote Kossuth and suggest that the government left Pest-Buda either for Komárom or Nagyvárad. Ludvigh, the governor commissariat of the Army of the Upper Danube proposed so. The news of the defeat reached the government at the same time with the report, that the Russians crossed the Tisza. On June 29, the governments summoned again. In this meeting, it abandoned the Komárom-plan and put forward the Szeged-plan. This new plan was to left a 15,000 men

strong garrison in Komárom and required all the armies, including the Army of the Upper Danube, to march south to Szeged, where in a final blow the united Hungarian forces would defeat both enemies. The new plan abandoned most of the country's territory, the coming harvest, and sent the armies to southern Hungary, which was devastated in the Serbian insurgency had been waged since June 1848.<sup>37</sup> Concentrating all Hungarian armies at Szeged mean that the pursuing Austrian and Russian armies would also united their forces. Szeged also lacked the strong fortifications, which existed at Komárom. Temesvár, the main fortress of Southern Hungary, which was almost as modern and strong as Komárom, was in Austrian hands. The Komárom-plan would keep more territories and offered the possibility of spectacular victories, which were necessary for foreign recognition. The Szeged-plan abandoned them.<sup>38</sup>

Having experienced Görgey's stubbornness in military questions, Kossuth sent a delegation to ensure that Görgey would follow the new plan. The members of this delegate were selected carefully. Görgey respected government commissariat Laszló Csányi, as his father, General Aulich was his old friend, and General Ernő Kiss was senior to Görgey in rank. Before the delegation's arrival, Görgey sent an angry and furious letter to Kossuth in which he utterly criticized both the governor-president and the government. This letter was registered as Number 939. The delegation was able to persuade Görgey to follow the new plan and march to Szeged. Görgey had Kossuth know about his decision in letter Number 940. Kossuth read letter Number 940 before 939. He did not pay attention to the registration numbers and believed that Görgey had gone back on his words and would not follow the orders from the government.<sup>39</sup> At the government meeting on July 1, Kossuth relieved Görgey as commander of the Army of the Upper

Danube and ordered back to the capital to assume his position as Minister of War. Kossuth appointed Mészáros to commander of chief of every Hungarian armies, and Dembinski as Mészáros's chief of staff. In short, Görgey should have had to go to the capital as Minister of War, while Mészáros should have led the Army of the Upper Danube to Szeged. On July 2, Mészáros headed for Komárom on a steamboat when he heard gunfight and turned back.<sup>40</sup> The news of government meeting did not reach Komárom. The war was going on and changed the course of the events.

On July 2, Haynau attacked the Hungarian positions on the south side of the Danube, in order to secure the road to Buda. His troops took the Monostor-redoubt and Ószőny village. The redoubt was an important position, a strongpoint of Komárom's southern defense line. Ószőny was in key position on the Buda road. If Görgey wanted to go to Buda, he would have to take back the village. A full-scale battle developed between the two main armies. Görgey led a hussar assault in person. Three Corps entire cavalry, about twenty-four companies, participated in that charge. The assault took place in the center and enabled the left wing to take back Ószőny. The honvéd army pushed back Haynau and kept open the shortest road to Buda.(Hermann 1998c250-51.)<sup>41</sup> During the cavalry charge, Görgey wounded seriously. He was delirious for days and out of duty to July 11. According to Tamás Katona, one of the best scholars of the War of Independence, if Görgey had died than, he would have been the hero of the War of Independence. Hungary would have been defeated anyway but Kossuth would have had to find another traitor. However, Görgey did not die and saved his fellow generals of being accused of treasury.<sup>42</sup>

The news of Görgey's replacement and Mészáros's appointment reached Komárom after the battle. At a Council of War on July 4, the officer corps of the Army of the Upper Danube objected Görgey's replacement. Klapka and Nagysándor travelled to the capital and persuaded the government to keep Görgey as commander of the Army of the Upper Danube. The government agreed and called upon the army again to march to Szeged. On July 11, Klapka (Görgey was still out of service) tried to break through Haynau's line on the right bank of the Danube, but this time Haynau was victorious and the shortest road to Buda and towards Szeged, remained closed. By July 12, Görgey recovered enough to command. On that day, finally, the Army of the Upper Danube started to move to Szeged.

After the Battle of Győr, Major General György Kmety's division was separated from the Army of the Upper Danube by Haynau's army. Rejoining the main army at Komárom through Haynau was hopeless, therefore the division was ordered to southern Hungary. Kmety joined the Hungarian troops in Southern Hungary on July 12. The strengthened Hungarian army attacked and defeated Jellačić, who retreated on the southern side of the River Sava and remained there to the end of the war. Southern Hungary, between the Tisza and the Danube was clear from the Austrians and the Serbian insurgency, except the Titel area. On July 23, the Hungarians tried to take Titel, but they were not successful. Due to the deteriorating military situation, the troops were withdrawn. By August 3, there were no Hungarian units west of the Tisza with the exception of the garrison of Pétervárad.<sup>43</sup>(Hermann 1998c257-58.)

In Transylvania, Lüders defeated the Hungarian divisions and brigades one after the other and took Nagyszeben. The road in the Maros valley, which led to Szeged, in the

back of the planned Hungarian concentration, was open to him. However, from the inactivity of the Russian forces at the mountain passes, Bem derived that their task is to guard the passes and secure the lines of communications. Bem went to Székelyföld, and attacked into Moldova with 2,000 troops. Bem defeated the Russian units there and called for an insurgency, without any success. However, the call was not successful, Lüders, now third time, turned back from the Maros valley. Lüders's 9,200 men, 32 cannons, and Bem's 2,400 men met in Székelyföld, at Segesvár on July 31. In the battle, Bem lost 1,300 men, among them his adjutant, Sándor Petőfi, the poet of the War of Independence. Lüders lost 250 men and his chief of staff. Bem was able to reorganize his army once again, but at Nagyszeben, on August 6 he lost again 2,000 men from his 5,900. The Hungarian army in Transylvania was destroyed, but Bem was able to hold the Russians in Transylvania and they could not reach Hungary proxy at the end of the war.

In the main theater, Görgey left Komárom on July 12. On the 15th, he reached Vác, where he clashed with Russian Cossacks. Paskevich had left Miskolc and arrived at Vác at the same time as Görgey. The road to Szeged was closed again. On the 16th, Görgey left Vác for the north. He executed a similar maneuver as he did in January. He passed the Russian army from the north. He marched through the mountains from Vác to Miskolc, at the Upper Tisza. With Görgey's army in their back, the Russian could not join the Austrians at Pest-Buda and could not go towards Szeged. With this maneuver, Görgey draw the entire Russian army back to northeastern Hungary from the center of the country. Görgey marched faster among the mountains as the Russian on the plains and arrived in Miskolc July 22. There the Hungarian army encountered with the Russians in couple of delaying battles. The Army of the Upper Danube tried to buy some time for the

southern concentration by keeping the Russian Army in North. Finally, the army crossed the Tisza at Tokaj on July 29. On that day, the joint Hungarian forces arrived at Szeged in southern Hungary.<sup>44</sup>

After Görgey left Komárom, Haynau marched east, and occupied Buda on. On the same time, Russian troops entered into Pest. Pakevich's Russian and Haynau's Austrian army almost joined, but due to Görgey's maneuver the Russian left for northeast. Haynau pursued the Hungarians by himself. On 29 July, Mészáros resigned and the government appointed Dembinski to commander in chief. He withdrew from Szeged, and did not attack Haynau when he crossed the Tisza. On 5 August, Haynau's entire army crossed the river and attacked Dembinski, who after a short encounter withdrew to Temesvár. In the meantime, Kossuth appointed Bem to commander in chief, who left Transylvania and arrived at Temesvar on 9 August and assumed command. Bem had 60,000 men while Haynau has 30,000. Bem decided to attack. The battle started well for the Hungarians, but shortly the artillery ran out of ammunition. One Austrian corps flanked the Hungarian right flank. Bem tried to intervene in person but he fell down from his horse. Panic broke out and the entire Hungarian army routed towards the Ottoman border. Görgey's Army of the Upper Danube remained the only one capable Hungarian force.

Görgey crossed the Tisza on 29 July. One of his corps lost a delaying battle at Debrecen, but the Army remained intact. During the withdrawal, negotiations started between Görgey and the pursuing Russian troops about an armistice. The talks started accidentally, when a Russian unit got too close to the main Hungarian army, and its commander worried that the Hungarians would destroy his separated detachment. He sent two officers into the Hungarian camp as Paskevich envoys. The envoys asked for a 48

hours ceasefire. Görgey recognized the decoy, but he used this event to start official talks, which began soon.<sup>45</sup>

The Russians wanted the most capable Hungarian army to put down the weapons, Görgey wanted to broaden the already existing gap between the Russians and the Austrians.<sup>46</sup> Görgey let the Hungarian government know about the negotiations. Soon, Prime Minister Bertalan Szemere and Kázmér Batthyány, the Minister of Foreign Affairs arrived at the army. On 10 August, not knowing the lost battle at Temesvár, the Hungarian government offered the Hungarian crown to a member of Nicholas I's family. The Hungarian terms were that the future sovereign accept the April Laws, and Hungary, within the Russian Empire, shall maintain the same rights as the Congressional Poland did between 1815-30. Hungary was ready to annul the Declaration of Independence and accept Franz Joseph as king, if he should consent the April Laws. The government decided that if the negotiations fell, after a final battle, it would surrender to Russia.<sup>47</sup>

On 10 August, Kossuth met Görgey last time in the Arad castle. They did not know the result of the Battle of Temesvár. Kossuth received news about a victory, but they were waiting for confirmation.

During the night, the news of the defeat arrived. Next day, Kossuth appointed Görgey as commander in chief and dictator of Hungary. Kossuth and some of the cabinet members resigned. Kossuth shaved his beard and with two false passports in his pocket left Arad for the Turkish border.

After the defeat at Temesvár, only two capable Hungarian armies remained Klapka's 18,000-strength garrison in Komárom, and Görgey's army, which consisted of 30,000 men, including 5,000 unarmed fresh recruits, and 144 cannons. The army had 200

shells per cannons and 1.5 cartridges per muskets. Görgey decided to surrender. He wrote a letter to Rüdiger, the commander of the pursuing Russian troops in which he announced that he was ready for the unconditional surrender to the Russian Army. He asked for saving his comrades life, but not for his own. He wrote his position, so Rüdiger could maneuver between the Hungarians and the Austrians who were approaching quickly.

On August 13, at Világos, the Army of the Upper Danube, 29,998 soldiers, 9389 horses, 144 cannons, laid down the weapons in front of the Russian army. Görgey was ready to die and he hoped that the Russians would be able to save the lives of the former Imperial officers. Surrendering to Russia was a sign that the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence were defeated by not Austria but by the intervention of the Russian Empire.

Görgey's hope for saving his comrades lives did not come true. Austria was thirsty for revenge. The Russian was not able to save the life of officers. The only exception was Görgey. Paskevich tried to save the life of all the Hungarian officers, but Austria was relentless.<sup>48</sup> The tsar appealed for Görgey in person and Franz Joseph gave amnesty to the general. However, the others were transferred to Austria. The Vienna Court gave general pardon to the enlisted men and the junior officers. This amnesty meant that they were not prosecuted but were enlisted to the Imperial Army. Nevertheless, most of them were discharged soon. The high rank officers and those who previously served in the Imperial Army, as well as, higher ranking government officials were court martialed. 498 former Imperial officers were tried, 231 were condemned to death, and about 40 were executed.<sup>49</sup> The most infamous were the executions of thirteen Hungarian generals in Arad, on 6 October, and the execution of the first Prime Minister

Count Lajos Batthyány in Pest on the same day. However, not everyone was tried. Hundreds escaped to abroad and the garrisons of Pétervárad and Komárom negotiated amnesties. Klapka held Komárom and he was able to reach a general pardon to his men. An amnesty was given to the rank and file and the civilians, while the officers and politicians were allowed to travel abroad. (This amnesty was extended to the garrison of Pétervárad, which capitulated on 7 September.)<sup>50</sup> The fortress of Komárom surrendered on 2 October. This meant the end of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-1849.

### Kossuth or Görgey

On September 12, Kossuth explained the revolution to Europe in his open Letter of Vidin. In this letter, he accused Görgey being a traitor. Kossuth stated that Hungary lost the war against the two great powers because of Görgey's treachery and that the general solely responsible of the failure of the revolution.<sup>51</sup> Kossuth never withdrew his accusation against Görgey. The debate over Görgey's rule in the revolution has still divide the Hungarians since the Letter of Vidin. Was he a traitor or not? If he had been a moderate, as he tried to depict himself in his memoir, why did he execute an aristocrat? Did he desert the National Defense Committee in his Proclamation of Vác? Or did he save the army? Did he defy Dembinski because he wanted to be in power? Or because he wanted to win the war? Why did not he oppose Kossuth's plan of the Declaration of Independence more seriously early on? And why did he oppose it later so much? Should he have attacked Vienna or was the liberation of Buda the wise move? If he wanted power, why did not make a coup d'état with the Peace Party and become dictator earlier? Did he delay leaving Komárom intentionally? Should he have had to continue the fight or was the surrender the only feasible option? And one could continue the list. So many

questions emerged during that one and a half year period while Görgey played a leading role in the Hungarian history and many of his decisions shaped the fate of Hungary.

Görgey was a soldier; he wanted to fight a regular war, with a small professional army. Kossuth was a politician and he believed that the people wished to fight a guerrilla war. Görgey's decision to put aside the idea of guerilla war was based on his early experiments from the operations against Jellačić and Windisch-Graetz. However, putting the idea of the guerrilla war completely aside in the early phases of a revolutionary war against a stronger enemy does not look a good idea today. In retrospect, Kossuth's attempts to call up insurgency and general uprising in the summer of 1849 were a complete failure and supported Görgey's decision. However, in the summer of 1849, the country was exhausted and the government had nothing, but Kossuth's speeches to support that insurgency. Görgey's decision saved the limited resources for the regular army, but one cannot know what would have happened, if more effort had been taken into an insurgency.

Kossuth's idea to defend the western border forward was wrong. He had political and economic reasons (retain as much Hungarian soil and many resources as possible) to order that. However, militarily, it was a wrong decision, and after the Austrian attack, Görgey abandoned it and he ignored Kossuth's request for a battle during the withdrawal from the border as well. Görgey wanted to save the army while Kossuth wanted to defend the capital. Görgey was right. The capital fell to Windisch-Graetz, but the revolution did not, because the army remained strong enough to threaten the Austrians.

In the Vác Proclamation, Görgey said the same as Kossuth, that Hungary was going to defend its constitution. However, the language that Görgey used and the bitter

charges against the National Defense Committee had very serious consequences. The resignation ended, but Kossuth did not trust Görgey anymore. Kossuth's bitterness was so deep, that he tended to pick anybody, but Görgey to command the Hungarian army. Kossuth's choice to appoint Dembinsky led to a defeat at Kápolna and an officer mutiny. When Kossuth finally appointed Görgey, he defeated the Imperial army, liberated Hungary, relieved the most important fortress, and seized the capital within two months.

Liberating Castle Hill was the brightest spot in the War of Independence. (21 May, the day when the *honvéds* assaulted and conquered Castle Hill, is the *Honvédelem Napja* [Armed Forces' Day] in Hungary.) The decision to terminate the pursuit of the Austrians and turn against Buda rested on Görgey's shoulders. Of the important decision makers, only Colonel József Bayer, Görgey's chief of staff wanted to pursue the Imperial army without any delay. Everybody else, Kossuth, Klapka, the politicians, the army, the journalists, and the people wanted to liberate the capital. Görgey accounted the pros and cons. Nobody knew better the army, nobody knew better what were they capable of, and nobody was a better general in May 1849 than Görgey, and he chose Buda. The spring campaign culminated, the army was exhausted, the lines of communication were overstretched, and the whole country wished for the victory at Buda. The siege was expected to be an easy and quick one. But it was neither easy nor quick. It took three weeks and lots of casualties. When the Hungarian army resumed its attack on 16 June the slight chance to defeat the Imperial army, and take Vienna was gone.

After the Declaration of Independence, Kossuth and Görgey drifted away. Görgey believed that the declaration was the reason of the Russian intervention. Logical idea, but not true. The intervention had been already decided. Nevertheless, Görgey

believed it and turned against Kossuth. In the meantime, Kossuth's anxiety about Görgey's treachery and a military coup d'état awakened again. Kossuth refused Görgey's Komárom Plan and relieved him as commander in chief. A second mutiny of the officers kept Görgey as commander, but the Komárom Plan was abandoned. Kossuth's choices for Szeged as an operational base and Mészáros, and later, Dembinski as commander in chief were disastrous. Dembinski was not able to make the sixty miles road from Szeged to Arad. The Polish general led the army to Temesvár, the Austrian strongpoint, where the army was eliminated. Görgey did not fulfill anything from Kossuth's fears. He followed the orders of the government and left Komárom for the southern concentration. Görgey was able to reach Arad, which proved too hard for Dembinski. Görgey not only reached Arad, but he kept away the entire Russian army from the other Hungarian units as well. After the defeat at Temesvár, Görgey's army, 30,000 men, remained the only operating Hungarian army. On 13 August, at Világos, the Army of the Upper Danube surrendered.

Without the Vác Proclamation, Kossuth might have trusted Görgey. Without the Declaration of Independence, Görgey might have trusted Kossuth. When they argued, the nation suffered, when they worked together, they accomplished miracles. On 21 May 1849 in Warsaw, Francis Joseph I, Austrian emperor went down on bended knee and kissed the hand of Nicholas I because the Tsar was about to send 200,000 soldiers to put down the Hungarian rebels. On the same day, those Hungarian rebels, after three weeks of fierce fighting, seized Castle Hill in Buda, the Hungarian capital, finishing their "Glorious Spring Campaign" in which they liberated nine-tenths of their country from Austrian troops. One year before, in March 1848, Hungary was an agricultural Habsburg province utterly controlled by the Viennese Court. Two thirds of the country's population

were non-Magyars, who saw Hungarians as their enemies. The people of Hungary lived under the miserable conditions of serfdom; their masters were expressing their grievances and desperately clinging to their privileges at the Diet. People of Hungary were drafted into the Habsburg army and stationed in faraway provinces of the Empire while soldiers from those faraway provinces stayed in their dwellings. However, this poor country was able to build an army from scratch, first defeat and then drove the strong and well-equipped Imperial army out of Hungary. The Civil Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849 did not fail by internal reasons; it was finally defeated by the combination of the armies of two European great powers, Austria and Russia. Eighteen years later, in the Great Compromise of 1867, Hungary achieved all the goals she had fought for in the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>4</sup> Gábor Bona, "A Tavaszi Hadjárat (1849. Március-Május)," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig; 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 216. The all U.S. casualties, killed, wounded, and missing in action were about 6,000 during the entire Mexican War.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>6</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 312.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>8</sup> Gusztáv Gömöry "Ausztria hadereje az 1792-től 1866-ig folytatott háborúkbán. A cs. kir. hadi levéltár állománykimutatásai, létszám és szolgálati táblázatai alapján," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 1893: 409.

<sup>9</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 259.

- <sup>10</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 275.
- <sup>11</sup> Katona, *Bevezető Az Életem És Működésem Magyarországon 1848-Ban És 1849-Ben*
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 260.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 260.
- <sup>15</sup> Deák, *The Revolution and the War of Independence, 1848-1849*, 230.
- <sup>16</sup> Róbert Hermann, "Tenni Kevés, De Halni Volt Esély; Az 1849. Évi Nyári Hadjárat," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 112, no. 2 (1999), 5., <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00018/00009/pdf/hermann.pdf> (accessed May 4, 2009).
- <sup>17</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 340.
- <sup>18</sup> Bona, *A Tavaszi Hadjárat (1849. Március-Május)*, 224.
- <sup>19</sup> Róbert Hermann, "Az Áprilisi Törvények Hadügyi Rendelkezései, a Hadügyminisztérium És a Katonai Közigazgatás a Szabadságharc Idején," in *A Szabadságharc Katonai Története: Pákozdtól Világosig, 1848-1849*, ed. Gábor Bona (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1998), 50.
- <sup>20</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 349.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 363.
- <sup>22</sup> Hermann, *Kossuth És Görgei*, 90.
- <sup>23</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 358.
- <sup>24</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 286.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 289-90.
- <sup>26</sup> Iván Ivánovics Oreusz, *Oroszország Háborúja a Magyarok Ellen 1849-Ben*, trans. Ildikó Rosonczy (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2002), 108.
- <sup>27</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 234-35.
- <sup>28</sup> Oreusz, *Oroszország Háborúja a Magyarok Ellen 1849-Ben*, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 288.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 289, 291.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 233.

<sup>32</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 285.

<sup>33</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 237-39.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 235-36.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>36</sup> Görgey, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, 424.

<sup>37</sup> Katona, *Bevezető Az Életem És Működésem Magyarországon 1848-Ban És 1849-Ben*

<sup>38</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 246-50.

<sup>39</sup> Hermann, *Kossuth És Görgei*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> Katona, *Bevezető Az Életem És Működésem Magyarországon 1848-Ban És 1849-Ben*

<sup>41</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 250-51.

<sup>42</sup> Katona, *Bevezető Az Életem És Működésem Magyarországon 1848-Ban És 1849-Ben*

<sup>43</sup> Hermann, *A Nyári Hadjárat (1849. Június-Augusztus)*, 257-58.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 253-56.

<sup>45</sup> Hermann, *Tenni Kevés, De Halni Volt Esély; Az 1849. Évi Nyári Hadjárat*, 44.

<sup>46</sup> Hermann, *Kossuth És Görgei*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Hermann, *Tenni Kevés, De Halni Volt Esély; Az 1849. Évi Nyári Hadjárat*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, 324-25.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-31.

50. <sup>50</sup> Hermann, *Tenni Kevés, De Halni Volt Esély; Az 1849. Évi Nyári Hadjárat*, 49-

<sup>51</sup> Hermann, *Kossuth És Görgői*, 94.

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