

Géza Radics

The Origin and Concise History of the Hungarians

Part Four

HUNGARIAN COAT OF ARMS



The small Coat of Arms

Hungary was one of the most powerful countries of Europe for over six hundred years. Her downturn began with the Turkish invasion in 1541. Then through marriages, the Habsburg dynasty seized power. As a result in 1867, Austria and Hungary eventually became a dual Monarchy. Even so, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Croatia, Transylvania and Fiume (a city and port on the Adriatic Sea, now Rijeka) remained part of the Hungarian Kingdom until the end of the First World War.



The oldest known Hungarian flag from the XI. Century.

Through the centuries, the Hungarian kings used many different coats of arms, but the three major components; the four red and four white bars, the double crossbars cross and the triple peaked mountain, were an integral part of it since the middle thirteen hundreds. The cross first appeared in the early twelve hundreds, while the triple peaked mountain with the cross on the top of it have been displayed in the **Képes (Illustrated) Chronicle** by Márk Kálti. The origin of the double crossbars cross and the triple peaked mountain goes all the way back to the Neolithic. They had been used by the Sumerians and the Egyptians – among others – as symbols in the pictographs with a definite meaning. Their use carried over to antiquity and even to the Middle Ages in numerous cultures with the same meaning. It is not clear at this time just how and why these two components came into use by the Hungarian kings, but once they appeared, their use remained constant.

In 1896 the Congress regulated by law the use and the position of the components of the Coat of Arms. The small Coat of Arms was used by government entities in Hungary proper, and it has been in use today since 1990. On the right half (facing left) there are four red bars and four white bars. These stripes represent the federation of eight nations, which conquered the Carpathian Basin in A.D. 895, preceded by the Covenant of Blood (Vérszövetség in Hungarian). The XI century flag (the flag of the federation) underscores this interpretation: the color red represents the hierarchy of government, the white the nobility, indicating that they have shared the power to rule. In the left half (facing right), lies a cross, a crown, and a green triple peaked mountain. This combination of symbols has two possible interpretations: 1. **Apostolic Kingdom**. In this case, the cross represents apostolic power, because it was bestowed on the Hungarian kings; the green triple mountain stands for country or kingdom; or 2. **God's Country**. In this case, based on ancient pictographs, the cross symbolizes **God** and the triple mountain stands for **country**. The crown between the cross and mountain appeared in the beginning of the seventeen hundreds. The Holy Crown of Hungary resides on the top of the Coat of Arms.



The middle Coat of Arms of Hungary

The middle Coat of Arms represented the countries and territories of the Hungarian Kingdom, along with the government ministries under which they functioned. Each of these countries and territories were represented as follows: (facing the coat of arms.) upper left, Dalmatia; lower left, Slavonia; upper right, Croatia; lower right, Transylvania; bottom, Fiume; in the center, Hungary - and on the very top is the Hungarian Holy Crown held by two angels.

The Hungarian Coat of Arms was not designed by anybody; it developed into what it is today through the turbulent centuries.

1848: Revolution and The War of Independence...

Jenő Katona, Jr.

The year of 1848 was a turning point in the political history of Europe in general and that of the Hungarian nation in particular. Revolution after revolution swept through the continent, upheaval beginning in Paris in February, continuing in Italy, then followed by revolution in Vienna in the month of March.



The portrait of Lajos Kossuth

Lajos *Kossuth* (a key figure in the war of independence who spearheaded the movement toward reform), known to the Magyar people as "**Kossuth apánk**" (our father, Kossuth), delivered a speech to the **Diet** (Congress) in **Pozsony** on the 3rd of March in which he proclaimed the following sweeping reforms in 12 points:

1. Freedom of the press and abolition of censorship
2. Appointment of a Hungarian Ministry
3. An annual Diet elected by universal suffrage
4. Equality of all in the eyes of the law
5. Formation of a National Guard
6. Taxation of the clergy and nobles
7. Eliminate feudal rights
8. Elected juries for criminal cases
9. Creation of a National Bank
10. Creation of a National Army
11. Liberation of political prisoners
12. Unification of Hungary and Transylvania

On March 15th, on the steps of the National Museum in Budapest, the young poet Sándor *Petőfi* recited his **Nemzeti Dal** (National Song) to a patriotic crowd of 10,000. The words echoed here, calling for the rebirth of the nation, were to become the overture to the revolution. With the

approval of Emperor-King *Ferdinand V* from Vienna, the Diet in Pozsony (Bratislava) put the revolutionary reforms into effect within 3 short weeks, thereby laying the foundation of a new Hungary as a result of a bloodless, peaceful, and lawful revolution.

For the people of the Carpathian Basin, this promising new and happier era that seemed to appear on the horizon was followed by a dark cloud in the form of a clique in the Emperor's Court; they had already begun their intrigues to undermine the reform work of the new Hungarian Ministry. Its main weapon was the idea of the age: **nationalism**, and as tools they used the nationalities. The fever of reform and equality that swept through the Carpathian Basin also aroused the various ethnic groups who were eager to carve out for themselves a piece of Hungary itself! To make a significant note to the earlier thought, that it was never, ever the "thousand year long dream" of these "oppressed nationalities" to secede from Hungary, thereby dismembering a thousand year old Hungarian Kingdom. These nationalities had through the ages lived side-by-side with their Magyar brothers and had shared the fate of the country, in prosperity and famine, in peace and occupation.

The sinister plan of inciting the nationalities against Hungary worked. With the backing of the government of Vienna, armed Croatian, Serbian and Rumanian peasants went on a rampage in the mainly Magyar inhabited areas, looting, burning, and claiming thousands of innocent Hungarian lives. While the Slovaks generally supported the Magyars, following Vienna's call, that number dwindled to only a handful; the German and Ruthenian nationalities did not take up arms against their Hungarian brothers.



Honvéd flag of 1848

On September 11th, the Croats, with an army of 40,000 troops under Ban (viceroy) Jossio *Jellaschich*, crossed the Hungarian frontier and spearheaded an armed intrusion into Hungary, marching against Buda-Pest from the south. The Serbs under their nationalist leader *Statimirovitch* also invaded from the South, while the Wallachians (Rumanians) rebelled and created havoc in Transylvania. The following months saw a well trained Imperial Austrian Army, helped by the nationalities' movements, defeat and outmaneuver any resistance by the honvéds (Hungarian Army) and the National Guard, who were still ill-equipped and lacked battle experience. It was here again that Lajos Kossuth came and saved the day. He became the heart and soul of the movement to accelerate the formation of the Honvéd Army and his oratorical

magic inspired an unprecedented patriotic fever, which prompted students and teachers, factory workers and peasants by the tens of thousands to march under his banner and report for the defense of the country.

Following the first chaotic months of the War of Independence, Kossuth succeeded in creating a formidable Honvéd force. He appointed Josef *Bem* (a legendary exiled Polish general) as commander in chief of military operations in Transylvania. In a series of battles, Bem defeated the Imperial Army and the Wallachian insurgents, and drove the Austrian troops across the Carpathians and out of Transylvania. To the south, János *Damjanich* (a Serb by birth, but whose love for Hungary made him the most ardent defender of the country) defeated the Imperial Army's Cavalry troops in a surprise attack, forcing them to retreat back to the Hungarian frontier. With three powerful army corps (under generals György *Klapka*, János *Damjanich* and Lajos *Aulich*), Arthur *Görgey*, who was to become one of the war's greatest generals, gave the order to begin what is now known as the Magyar Spring Offensive. Kossuth fueled the fighting man's spirit with the famous "Kossuth Song" sung by the Honvéds as they marched into battle. Victory upon glorious victory followed with the dashing "**Hungarian Hussar**" cavalymen serving as the cutting edge of the Magyar Army. The Magyar women also contributed to the war effort offering their gold and jewelry so that the Magyar soldiers could be provisioned with uniforms and guns.



Hungarian Hussar

On April 14th in the city of Debrecen, the Diet dethroned the Habsburg Dynasty and elected Kossuth as governing "President of Hungary". The country's newly won freedom was to be short-lived, however. The Emperor could not stand to be humiliated any longer, so he sent *Czar Nicholas* an urgent request for an armed intervention against Hungary. The Czar did not hesitate and in a few short weeks, the Russian attack began, coming from the north and the east with 200,000 troops following almost the same route the Mongols had used six centuries earlier. In June of 1849, a combined Austrian-Russian offensive threw 370,000 men and 1,200 guns against Hungary's 152,000 Honvéds with only 450 guns. The rest of the War of Independence was a hopeless fight, being fought by tens of thousands of patriotic, battle weary and freedom

loving people against the tyranny and subjugation-driven beliefs of the Emperor and the Czar. Flashes of Magyar valor and unseen heroism were commonplace all over the battlefield.

In the end, with the number of wounded and dying quickly rising and to further spare his country and his troops from any more senseless bloodshed, Arthur Görgey announced his decision to surrender. On August 13th, his forces laid down their arms before the Russians at **Világos**. Many who could not believe and could not accept such a disastrous end to the war that they had so vigorously and valiantly fought, simply shot themselves in the head, while others with tears in their eyes looked on and followed. Others went into hiding, but were soon hunted down and made to stand trial for their part in the revolution. Still others sought refuge in foreign lands and continued to fight on with their brilliant speeches and patriotic writings, the most famous of these exiled leaders being Lajos Kossuth. Through his magnificent gift of oratory, he obtained an enormous sympathy for the Hungarian cause.

With the surrender at Világos, the age of dashing Hussar cavalymen and glorious battles came to an end, but a more sinister and darker era was just looming over the horizon. The Viennese government unleashed the sadist General *Haynau* to exact retribution. His desire to wreak vengeance on the Magyars was best demonstrated on October 6, 1849 in the city of Arad, by the abominable act of executing 13 of the ablest generals of the Honvéd Army, some by firing squad but most by the hangman's rope. This served as a warning and preceded the mass of imprisonments and executions that followed.

To this day, historians still ponder the question: Could the Hungarians have prevailed as the victors of the War of Independence? According to the famous historian, István *Nemeskürthy*, militarily the Hungarian Army of 1849 was well equipped and drilled enough to secure itself a victory on the battlefield. The mere fact of mustering such an impressive army in such short notice (200,000 Honvéds) clearly showed the willingness and sacrifice the nation was ready to make for the defense of the country. In addition, the secret to the swift and sweeping successes on the battlefield lay in the hands of the brilliant and experienced military generals (Damjanich, Klapka, Görgey) and their knowledge of modern military tactics. The tactics used during the war were to be fully understood and imitated only well after the second half of the century. The Emperor knew very well that without some sort of outside military intervention, Austria would have to suspend its military campaign and suffer a humiliating defeat, thereby recognizing Hungary's independence. As we now know, the arrival of the well rested Russian troops with their heavy guns proved to be too much for any of the generals to handle. The further continuation of the war would have meant more bloodshed and destruction to a country that had already suffered enough. Today, the people of our nation are now beginning to understand General Görgey's controversial decision to surrender and not continue the inevitable bloodletting.

Hungary, 1956

Very few people can claim in their lifetime to have witnessed an extraordinary event that came close to altering the course of history. The 1956 Hungarian uprising for freedom was just such an event. Therefore, on the eve of every anniversary, the survivors of those glorious days feel obligated to recall that event and pay homage to the fallen friends and comrades whose supreme sacrifice made it possible for Hungary to free herself from Russian oppression thirty-four years later.



When the Soviet dictator, *Stalin* died in 1953, it was obvious to all of Russia that whoever came to take control of the vast Soviet empire would not follow in the footsteps of his predecessors and would not allow the Soviet Union to relinquish its leadership in the Eastern block. At the same time it was also obvious that changes had to be made within the Soviet Union as well as within the Eastern Block. Because of the tarnished image of the Communist Party, its leadership was compelled to publicly confess its wrongdoing. They vowed to change course and work for a better future. The stage was set and the events began to unfold rapidly.



The faces of the freedom fighters

On October 23rd, 1956, students organized a huge rally and demonstrated in front of the statue of General Bem (the hero of 1848) at the Polish Embassy, demanding reforms and democracy. They marched to the state radio building and demanded to be heard over the Budapest radio. After the police tried to disperse the crowd by force, the peaceful demonstration turned into a riot and martial law was declared. Soviet troops were called in. In the meantime, the Communist Party's central committee announced minor personnel changes in the Party's hierarchy: Imre Nagy replaced András Hegedűs as Premier, but Ernő Gerő remained First Secretary of the Party. Fighting soon broke out between the Soviet troops and the Hungarian people and spread to other cities such as Debrecen, Szolnok and Szeged. The Party's central committee was helpless and totally disorganized. As a result, Ernő Gerő was relieved of his position and replaced by János Kádár. More changes were promised: reorganization of the government and negotiation for withdrawal of Soviet troops - still the fighting went on. So, more and more changes were promised: martial law was declared unconstitutional and complete amnesty was promised to all participants if they laid down their arms. Nothing seemed to work. As a result, the formation of a new government was announced. Non-communist Zoltán Tildy and Béla Kovács were appointed by Imre Nagy. Negotiations with Soviet troop commanders continued, now on the local level as well.



The destruction on the streets of Pest

On October 28th, the government announced a cease-fire. An emergency committee was formed to assume temporary leadership of the Party. More promises were made. The most important of these included: withdrawal of Soviet troops, political and economic equality of relations between the Soviet Union and Hungary, revision of the economy, democratization, changes in government organization and personnel, dissolution of the secret police (ÁVO), protection of those taking part in the revolution, withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, Hungarian neutrality, and a call for free press, free election, speech, assembly, and worship. On October 29th, some of the Soviet troops began their withdrawal from Budapest to their bases outside of the city. At the same time, Premier Nagy announced abolition of the one-party system, a return to the political conditions prevailing after 1945, and negotiations for immediate withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Hungary. Cardinal *Mindszenty* was freed from house arrest. The Hungarian Air Force threatened to bomb Soviet tanks unless they left Budapest. Two days later the **Independent Smallholders Party** announced the formation of a new executive committee and resumed control of its former newspaper, **Kis Újság**. The **Hungarian Social Democratic Party** reorganized in Budapest, with *Anna Kéthly* as its president. The high command of the Hungarian Army also reorganized, with *István Nagy* becoming the new Chief of Staff. On October 31st, Premier Nagy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, proclaiming Hungarian neutrality and asking the United Nations to place the Hungarian question on its agenda. Kádár openly criticized past leaders and policies of the Hungarian Communist Party, announcing the reorganization of the Party under the name of the **Hungarian Socialist Workers Party**. The next day the Hungarian government officially entered a protest to the Soviet Embassy regarding the re-entry of the Soviet troops onto Hungarian soil. In a second official note within two days, the United Nations was then notified of Soviet activities and was requested to appeal to the great powers of the world to recognize Hungarian neutrality.*

All was in vain as Soviet reinforcements and the movement of troops continued at an accelerated pace. Russian tanks surrounded uranium mines at Pécs. On November 4th, Premier Nagy announced a Soviet attack on Budapest, while heavy fighting erupted in Budapest, Győr,

Sopron, Pécs, Csepel and Kőbánya. Russian forces took over most of the country: airfields, highway junctions, bridges, and railways. Repeated Free Radio broadcasts calling for Western help went unanswered. The heroic effort failed and Hungary was again an *"unwilling satellite"*.

We, the survivors of that historic event, profess to the immortal words of John F. Kennedy that *"October 23, 1956, is a day that will forever live in the annals of free men and free nations. It was a day of courage, conscience, and triumph. No other day since history began has shown more clearly man's unquenchable and eternal desire to be free, whatever the odds against success, whatever the sacrifice required"*.

* (One of the most famed Hungarian freedom fighters of 1956, Gergely Pongrácz, in his book titled **Corvin köz 1956**, quotes from the Congressional Record (Volume 106, Part 14, Eighty-sixth Congress, Second Session. 31 August, 1960. 18783-18790.) by Congressman Michael A. Feighan, regarding a telegram sent by the US State Department to Yugoslav dictator Tito on the 2nd of November, 1956, which states:

"The Government of the United States does not look with favor upon governments unfriendly to the Soviet Union on the border of the Soviet Union.")

Hungarian and Hungarian born scientists and inventors

In spite of many difficulties, Hungary has produced numbers of great scientists and inventors thanks to the excellent schools of the country. Most of them, however, although educated in Hungary, achieved their notoriety in foreign lands and as citizens of another country. Here are some of the most noted ones:

Nobel Prize winners:

Fülöp *Lénárd*: Physics in 1905. Research in cathode rays.

Róbert *Bárány*: Medicine in 1914. Conducted research of the human ear.

Richard *Zsigmond*: Chemistry in 1925. Pioneering work in colloid chemistry.

Albert *Szent-Györgyi*: Medicine in 1937. Discovered vitamin C in paprika.

György *Hevesy*: Chemistry in 1943. Discovering new ways to use isotope tracers.

György *Békésy*: Medicine in 1961. Studies and research of the inner ear.

Jenő *Wigner*: Physics in 1963. The development of the theory of atoms and elementary particles.

Gábor *Dénes*: Physics in 1971. The invention and development of holography.

Scientists and inventors:

János *Bólyai* (1802-1860) the discoverer of hyperbolic geometry, that laid the foundation for modern geometry.

Ányos *Jedlik* (1800-1895) in 1827 invented the first electromotor, but he failed to patent it.

János *Irinyi* (1817-1895) in 1840 invented the match that greatly simplified the lighting of a fire.

Ignatius *Semmelweis* (1818-1865) discovered the cause of the childbed or puerperal fever. Introduced sterilization in the hospital where he worked.

Tivadar *Puskás* (1844-1893) the co-worker of Bell and Edison first thought of the telephone exchange.

Loránd *Eötvös* (1848-1919) invented the Eötvös gravitation of torsion balance for measuring terrestrial magnetism.

Kálmán *Kandó* (1869-1931) inventor of the electric locomotive.

Oscar *Asbóth* (1881-1960) invented helicopter in 1928.

Albert *Fonó* (1881-1960) patented the first jet propulsion engine.

Ede *Teller* (1908-2003) physicist, the Father of the Hydrogen Bomb. Recipient of the Enrico Fermi Award.

Musicians, composers, conductors:

Joseph *Hayden* (Hajdú?) (1732-1809). Some believe that he was the son of Hungarian peasants.

Ferenc *Erkel* (1810-1893) is the best-known Hungarian operatic composer. He composed the music of the Hungarian National Anthem also.

Ferenc *Liszt* (1811-1886) is the most famous Hungarian composer. His rhapsodies are known worldwide.

Jenő *Hubay* (1858-1937) developed an outstanding method for strings training.

Ferenc *Lehár* (1870-1948) light operatic melodies are known worldwide.

Imre *Kálmán* (1882-1953) also specialized in light operatic music with a Hungarian melody to it.

Ernő *Dohnányi* (1877-1960) pianist, composer, conductor and music teacher.

Béla *Bartók* (1881-1945) composer, pianist, astute in the science of music. He diligently collected and researched Hungarian folk songs and music. Incidentally there are some 200 thousand of them.

Zoltán *Kodály* (1882-1967) composer, collector and researcher of folk music. His compositions based on Hungarian folk music. He is also known for the Kodály method to teach music.

Jenő *Ormandy* (1899-1985) violinist, world-renowned conductor.

György *Solti*, Sir (1912-?) pianist, world-renowned conductor.

Sport:

Hungarians excel in just about all sports. In the Olympic games they collected between 25-30 metals, which is respectable for a people of 10 million.

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