

# Hungarian units in Denmark 1944-45

## - Railway guarding etc

### 1. Introduction

In response to my post in the debate forum on Chakoten's website, Kurt Hansen (kurt@towle.dk) was kind enough to make a reference to a decision by Søllerød Municipality's Technical and Environmental Committee on 29 May 2001. The following is, among other things, the result of an investigation of this track.

### 2. Railway guarding

In the book [1](#)) *Søllerød in black and white* published by Søllerød Museum in collaboration with the 5th of May Committee, 1995, ISBN 87-88792-15-3, Jens Brun writes on pages 129 to 132, among other things, the following:

#### Guarding the section Lyngby - Birkerød

"Hungary took part in the war on the side of the Germans from 1941. That is why the 6th Hungarian battalion of approximately 900 men arrived at Høveltelejren in late summer 1944.



*Hungarian troops on the Nordbanen,  
north of Holte Station.*

Søllerød Museum (Journal no. 2000/27-106)

The crew mainly consisted of very young soldiers who had to be trained and then sent to the Eastern Front. Fortunately for the Hungarians, the Germans did not trust them. Therefore, they were instead ordered to guard the railway on the section between Lyngby and Birkerød to prevent sabotage.

When the Hungarian soldiers had to be on duty, they were only given a few cartridges per man and at night their quarter was guarded by German soldiers.

The population of the area was friendly towards the ever-hungry Hungarians. Pupils at Holte Gymnasium gave them their packed lunches.

Yes, there is also an example of a couple of nice young people getting "organized" a carbine in exchange for a sausage.

However, the Hungarians were not completely harmless. Thus, a young girl was killed on her way home from a visit to the cinema in Holte. She failed to obey orders when called upon by a Hungarian patrol.

It gradually became apparent that the Hungarians were not completely unwilling to take up the fight against the Germans when the "Third Reich" collapsed. Secret negotiations were conducted between the Hungarian commander and Birkerød District. The result was that the Hungarians had to place themselves under the command of the resistance movement with the special task of defeating the German forces in the Høvelte area, if fighting arose in connection with a German capitulation. Fortunately, that never came to pass.



*Hungarian troops on the Nordbanen,  
north of Holte Station.*  
Søllerød Museum (Journal no. 2000/27-107)

The Hungarians in Holte were the subject of a lot of attention in the illegal press in the run-up to the liberation. "Information" No. 454, on April 12, 1945, could thus announce that a "part of the Hungarians whom the Germans have put on guard at the railway tracks in North Zealand have no cartridges in their rifles."

The good Hungarians obviously got a little upset about that, because the following week "Information" no. 458, on 17 April 1945, could state that the Hungarian troops are causing the defense forces a lot of pain. Most recently, on a peaceful Saturday evening, the Hungarians organized "a huge drinking party" in their quarters in Holte. As a result, "they all laid down their arms as one and declared that now they wanted no more."

After that, reinforcements of German police troops had to be called in.

One understands that, despite the dream of a revival along the lines of the old Austria-Hungary from before the end of the world, these Hungarians were hardly particularly loyal to the German armed forces after the capitulation. Until the repatriation of the Hungarians on 18 May, however, they were of great help to the Birkerød command in cleaning up after the Germans."

### **Illustrations**

The book contains four photographs which are relevant to the account of the Hungarian soldiers in Søllerød. Three of the images are found at the City Historical Archive - Søllerød Municipality, while the fourth comes from the Museum for Denmark's Freedom Struggle.

The photographs at the City Historical Archive, which are reproduced here, may not be of the very best quality, but they are there nonetheless. The photographs can also be found on the archive's website, from which I downloaded them. It is possible to buy the photographs in contact prints or digital copies, but in view of the quality and motifs, I have chosen to settle for the low-resolution versions available on the archive's website.



*Hungarian troops on the Nordbanen, north of Holte Station at the viaduct over Dronninggårds Alle.*

Søllerød Museum (Journal no. 2000/27-108)

The soldiers are moving in the direction of Holte station, which can be seen in the background.

It is barely visible on the rendering, but the soldiers move in two columns - one on each side of the tracks. On the left side goes a force of about 30 soldiers; on the right side a smaller force of just over 15 men.

The fourth picture in the book (from the Freedom Museum), which is not reproduced here, shows two Hungarian soldiers on the westernmost platform at Holte Station.

The soldiers, wearing caps and cloaks, walk along the platform with their backs to the photographer. The left of the soldiers carries a rifle over his shoulder.

### 3. "Arms Theft"

The author Thorkild Hansen describes in the first volume of his diary entries *De sweete Piger - Dagbog 1943-47*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1974, how in April 1945 he comes into contact with one of the Hungarian soldiers guarding the railway line.

The two young men are unable to understand each other verbally, but with the help of signs and gestures a common understanding is reached that the soldier would like to part with his gun for the price of 100 cigarettes.

The cigarettes are provided by the Resistance Movement, which also arranges a suitable "hold-up" so that the Hungarian soldier has a credible explanation to give to his guardians.

It was thus not just sausages that could function as currency!

### 4. The Hungarian battalion

In the manuscript [2](#) *Garderkasernen in Høvelte - draft for domicile description* of 18 November 2002, Jesper Gram-Andersen, who is the head of Livgarden's Historical Collection, writes, among other things, the following:

#### 6th Hungarian Battalion 1945

"On 2 February 1945, the 6th Hungarian battalion came to Denmark and was quartered in Høveltelejren, where there was a German guard force.

The Hungarian battalion consisted of a staff and four companies, of which the 20th, 22nd and 23rd and the staff were located in Høvelte, while the 21st Company was stationed in the Jægersprislejren.

In 1945, the Hungarian units in German service were divided between Zealand and Funen.

A company quartered at the Lifeguard's Barracks in Copenhagen also committed a mutiny on Sunday 22 April 1945, when their German superiors announced that they were to depart for the Eastern Front 3).

The Hungarian soldiers were more or less volunteers in German service and were given the task of guarding the Lyngby - Birkerød railway line.

They came into contact early on with the resistance movement's Command Birkerød under the Zealand leadership and later with representatives of "Den lille Generalstab". It was agreed that, under certain conditions, the Hungarian battalion should seize Høveltelejren and then be ready, together with Danish resistance forces, to attack the German force in Sandholmlejren 4). The plan did not come to fruition due to the German military surrender 4-5. May 1945.

At the end of the war, the Hungarian soldiers with women and children were transferred to the Sandholm camp. A refugee camp was also established at Høveltegård after the war 5). On the east side of the track in Frederikslund Forest there are one or two trees with a religious-national inscription in Hungarian 6)."

## 5. The Hungarian tree

From the Agenda with resolutions from the Technical and Environmental Committee in Søllerød Municipality, Meeting No. 6, on 29 May 2001, the following appears:

7. Information sign by the "Hungarian" tree in Frederikslund Forest.

*On the slope towards the railway stands a beech of great cultural and historical value. In the bark, Hungarian soldiers have engraved their coat of arms, as well as a kind of creed. It happened in 1944, when they went on railway duty on the Nordbanen. Søllerød Municipality wants to convey this memory of the occupation to the citizens by putting up an information sign that tells the exciting story of how individual citizens of Holte had to give up their lives. There are old photographs of the Hungarian soldiers that can illustrate the history of the sign.*

*The forest has matr. no. 1aea, Dronninggård and is owned by the Municipality. Price approx. DKK 20,000*

A friendly gentleman named Mogens, who accompanied me on a visit to the City Historical Archive - Søllerød Municipality, showed me a photocopy of a picture of the inscriptions - the original picture was temporarily on loan to the Søllerød Museum.



Mogens went on to say that in connection with the municipality's plans to put up the sign there had been a lot of searching for the tree in question.

In the book *Søllerød in black and white*, an image of a tree with an engraved Hungarian coat of arms is reproduced and a text which, translated, reads "I believe in a god; I believe in a fatherland; I believe..." The text of the image continues: *On railway slope in Frederikslund Skov, there were, until a few years ago, a few trees on which some Hungarians had scratched national symbols and sentences.*

During a preliminary reconnaissance of the terrain, I did not manage to find the tree(s) in question. Although Frederikslund Forest may not belong to the largest forests in the country, there are many trees!

A subsequent contact with Jens Hallin at Søllerød Museum gave me precisely the precise information that enabled me to find the two Hungarian trees in Frederikslund Forest - because it turned out that there were not one, but two trees. Jens Hallin has been responsible for the museum's investigations in connection with the municipality's plan for the sign and provided the necessary images and explanations.

Thus equipped with the necessary information, it was an easy matter in the second round to find the trees.

### 5.1. The geography



The sketch map shows the location of the trees in the area.

The P marks a small car park; immediately north of this are two scout huts.

### Tree No. 1

Follow the forest path (dotted line) to the south, approximately 70 paces. Immediately before a small conifer plantation (larch) and before the ditch (thick black line), turn west in the direction of the railway tracks. Approximately 60 steps into the terrain stands Tree no. 1. I have named the tree that way because the carvings are the clearest and most beautiful.

The carvings are found on the north side of the tree.

### Tree No. 2

Follow the paved path west, approximately 60 paces. Where the path breaks, a ditch runs. 20 steps into the terrain, on the north side of the ditch stands Tree no. 2. The carvings are on the south side of the tree.

It is also possible to follow a small path that runs alongside the railway from Tree No. 1 to Tree No. 2.

### 5.2. Tree No. 1





The coats of arms used in the carvings are the Hungarian coat of arms with the characteristic St. Stephen's crown with the "crooked" cross. The national coat of arms is still used to this day.



The illustration is taken from <http://www.honvedelem.hu>, which is the website of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence.

The text on the right of the carvings originates - according to what Jens Hallin has informed me - from a Hungarian prayer from the time after the First World War.

The text reads "I believe in a god! I believe in a fatherland! I believe in the resurgence of Greater Hungary!"

Read more about Saint Stephen's crown here: <http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=262>.

### 5.3. Tree No. 2



The inscriptions on Tree No. 2 are immediately somewhat more indistinct, and I do not know the meaning. One does, however, recognize the crown of St. Stephen; it is also worth noting that a Roman numeral VI has been used, which may perhaps be attributed to the number of the battalion which was in charge of the railway guard. Whether the latter is out on the wild side of conjecture is difficult to say, perhaps the meaning is completely different?

#### 5.4 Finally about the "forest trip"

All that remains is to say thank you to Jens Hallin from Søllerød Museum for the help he has given me in the case, and not least to Kurt Hansen, who first drew my attention to the case.

Finally, it can be stated that Søllerød Municipality has not yet (as of 15 March 2003) put up the sign. When that happens, it will probably be easier to see the trees for the bare forest... ;-)

### 6. Concluding remarks

Apart from the fact that the sources do not completely agree on when the Hungarian battalion came to Denmark, the stories agree fairly well.

Kurt Hansen and others have also drawn my attention to the mutiny of the Hungarian company at the Lifeguard's Barracks. The situation developed into a shootout between German and Hungarian soldiers, during which some civilians were killed. The Hungarians were pushed away from the barracks to Ørstedsparken - or perhaps more likely the Botanical Gardens - where they eventually had to surrender. According to reports, there should still be traces of the shootout at the German Reformed Church in Gothersgade (opposite the Lifeguard's Barracks).





I am planning a contact and a visit to Livgarden's Historical Collection to investigate this part of history more closely.

The picture comes from *the book Fem aar - The obsession with pictures*, 2nd edition, Berlingske Forlag, Copenhagen 1955.

The caption reads:

*The merchant school at Nørrevold has been completely cordoned off with a barbed wire fence in recent days. Here one of the seized Tuborg wagons is parked in front of the school.*

The soldiers on the truck are Hungarian. Perhaps their somewhat dejected attitude may suggest that they must be interned at the Merchant School?

My previous information [7](#)) about [the](#) Hungarian units in Denmark shows that the following Hungarian compensation and training units per 8 April 1945 was in this country::

- a. 90., 91., 92. and 93. Regiment (of three battalions) and 3. Battalion/82. Regiment stayed in Denmark.
- b. 3. Battalion/82. Regiment [8](#)) and [1st](#) and 2nd Battalion/93. The regiment was garrisoned on Zealand, near Copenhagen, while the other units were garrisoned in Jutland.

It will be interesting to compare this information with the mentioned source reference to the Lifeguard's Historical Collection's overview of Hungarian forces in Denmark as of March 25, 1945.

Per Finsted

#### Notes

- 1) The book can be found, among other things, at Byhistorisk Arkiv, Søllerød Municipality.
- 2) The manuscript can be found at Byhistorisk Arkiv - Søllerød Municipality, under journal number 2002/85-1.
- 3) List of Hungarian units in Denmark 25.3.1945, Livgardens Historiske Samling (1985).
- 4) The intelligence service and the army's illegal transport service 1940-45 by Helge Klint, Copenhagen 1977.
- 5) Unutilized archives in the National Archives for Zealand. (Various papers from the Danish Civil Defense Agency.)
- 6) Provided by Søllerød Museum.
- 7) *The Royal Hungarian Army, 1920 – 1945* by Leo WG Niehorster, Axis Europa Books, New York 1998, ISBN 1-891227-19-X,  

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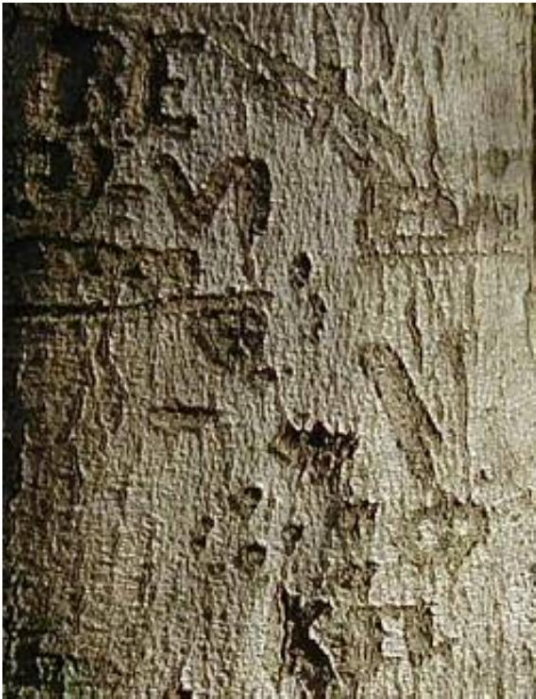
page 155.
- 8) 1st Battalion/82. The regiment was garrisoned at Plauen, near Dresden; it does not appear where the regiment's 2. Battalion stayed.



*The left cutout.*



*The right cutout.*



*Left side.*



*Right side.*