

Estonian Army Uniforms and Insignia

1936-1944

**FRED LIMBERG
and
TED KOPPEL**

**ESTONIAN ARMY
UNIFORMS AND INSIGNIA
1936-1944**

**Fred Limberg
and
Ted Koppel**

MERRIAM PRESS

Bennington Vermont

1999

On the Cover

The usual appearance of a conscript on guard duty. The German M16/18 *stahlhelm* was standardized by the 1930s.

Note

The photographs and a few of the other illustrations used in this edition are not up to the usual standards of our other publications. This was caused by not being able to acquire the original prints that one of the authors, Fred Limberg, supplied us with back when the first edition was created in the mid-1980s. Unfortunately, because Fred passed away several years ago, we could not obtain the same photographs to scan in for this edition, and had to scan the original screened prints we had made for the first edition. The screened prints, some of which had to be made rather small due to budget limitations at the time (this was before we had a computer), do not allow us to produce the clean, sharp printed images we normally can achieve with this method.

Monograph Series
Editor: Ray Merriam

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Third Monograph Edition
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ISBN 1-57638-029-7 (softcover)
ISBN 1-57638-076-9 (hardcover)

This work was designed, produced, printed and published in the United States of America by the

Merriam Press
218 Beech Street
Bennington VT 05201

E-mail: ray@merriam-press.com

Web site: merriam-press.com
(secure online ordering)

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Introduction

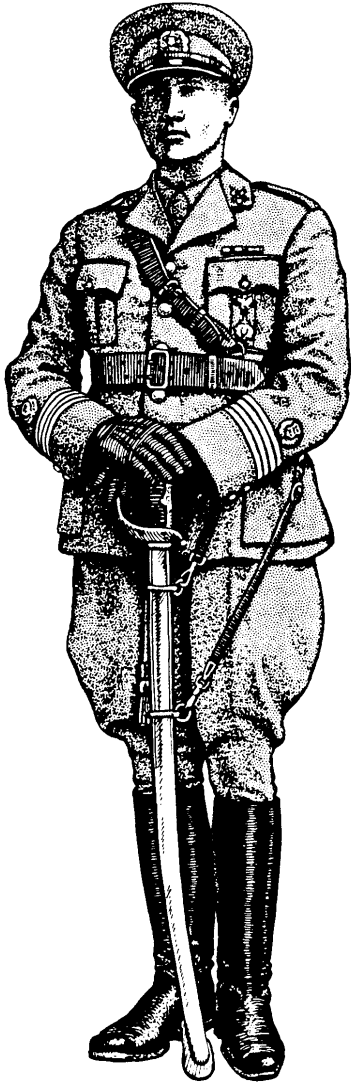


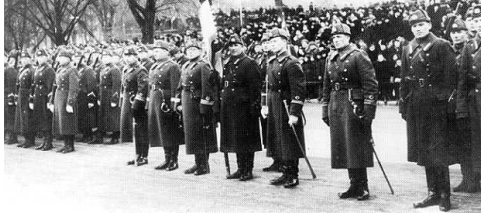
Figure I-A: Estonian Officer, 1936-44, Captain in the 3rd (Independent) Infantry Battalion, the unit badge for which is worn on the pocket. Below that could be badge of former unit (Armored Train Regiment), and the first ribbon most likely represented one of the War of Independence Medals.

This is an attempt to present, for the first time in English, comprehensive details of the appearance of Estonian troops during the end of that nation's period of independence, continuing in some cases through the occupations of the Second World War.

Although Estonia fell finally to the Soviets in 1944, there are indications that occasional Estonian military uniforms were still seen (for example, some higher ranking officers in Germany) to the end of the war in 1945.

As the three main types of Army uniforms existing (or instituted) in 1936 were the officer/career non-commissioned officer, the troops serving their compulsory military duty, and the most colorful cavalry, this monograph will be broken up into three parts, each one incorporating also rank insignia, badges and other aspects of this previously neglected topic of modern history.

Uniforms and Rank Insignia



The Kalev Independent Infantry Battalion in winter uniform on parade in 1937.

Photo via F. Limberg

The Estonian Army of the twentieth century, which began its life in Czarist Russian uniform in 1917, went through several more uniform changes during its existence as an independent republic.

The Model 1936 (M1936) uniform, put into effect 1 April 1936, marked a significant departure from the previous M1925 uniform style and, in particular, rank insignia. This regulation established a uniform that was similar in style for officers and cadre non-commissioned officers—with the one for enlisted men, conscripts and volunteers serving to fulfill their military obligation, having an entirely different cut. The color of the uniform remained “khaki,” of a somewhat greener shade than that of the British.

Ranks

The rank insignia, which earlier had been worn on the collar and/or epaulets/shoulder straps, was moved to the sleeve cuffs on almost all Army uniforms with the institution of the M1936 regulations.

Before going into detail on the individual sleeve ranks, a brief look at the overall Estonian rank structure might be helpful. The generals grade consisted of:

- ★ General (*Kindral*)
- ★ Lieutenant General (*Kindral-leitnant*)
- ★ Major General (*Kindral-major*)

Field officers were:

- ★ Colonel (*Kolonel*)
- ★ Lieutenant Colonel (*Kolonel-leitnant*)
- ★ Major (*Major*)
- ★ Captain (*Kapten*)
- ★ Lieutenant (*Leitnant*)
- ★ Junior Lieutenant (*Noorem-leitnant*)
- ★ Ensign (*Lipnik*)

A special non-commissioned officers rank was that of Deputy Officer (*ohvitseriasetaitjä*), which will be explained later.

The regular non-commissioned officers were:

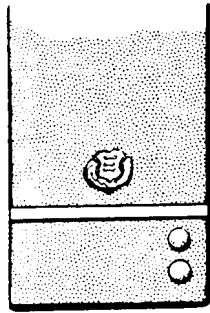


Figure I-3

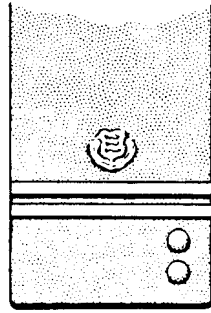


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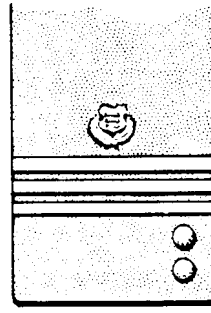


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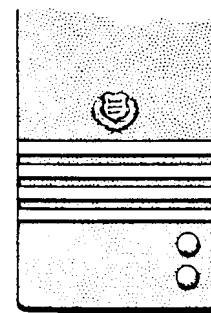


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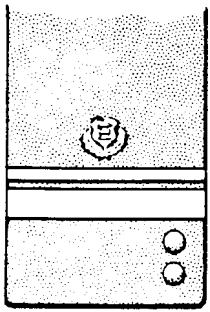


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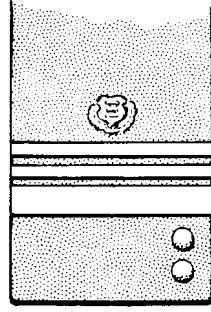


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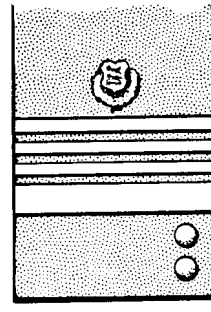


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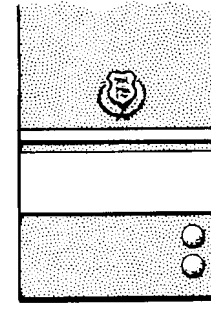


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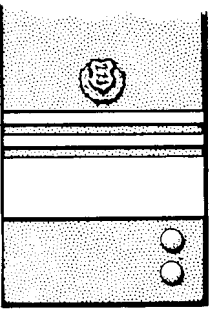


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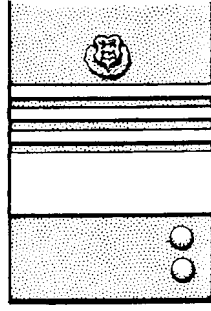


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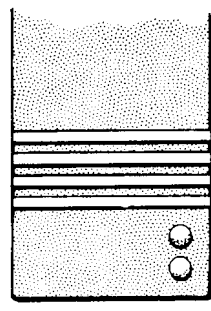


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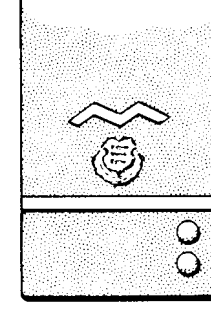


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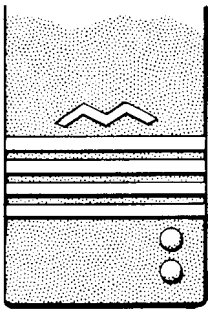


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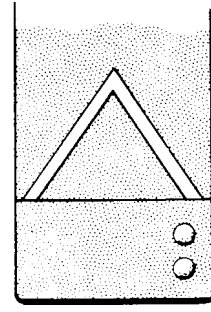


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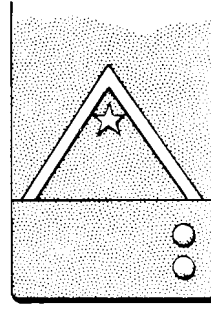


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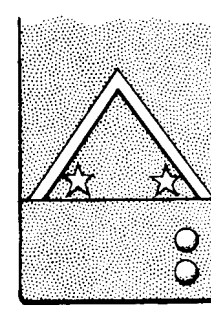


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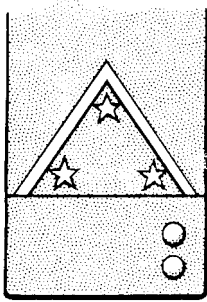


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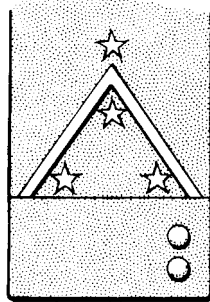


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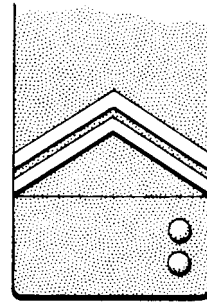


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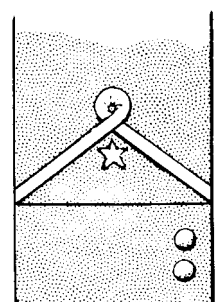


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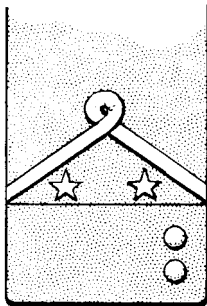


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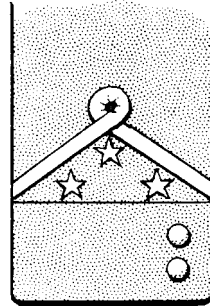


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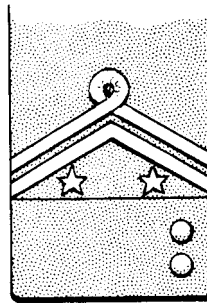


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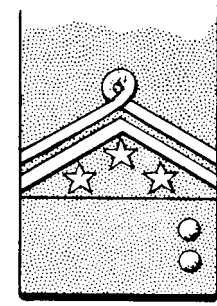


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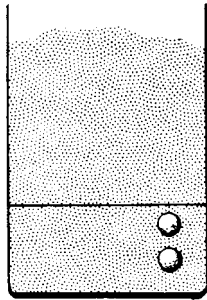


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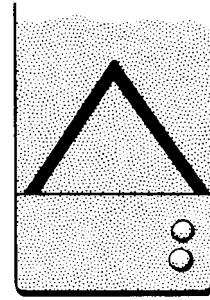


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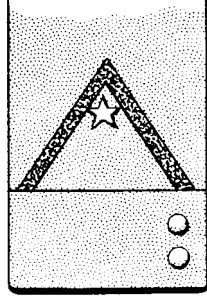


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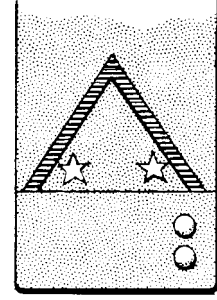


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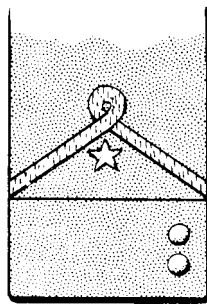


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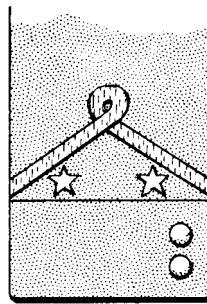


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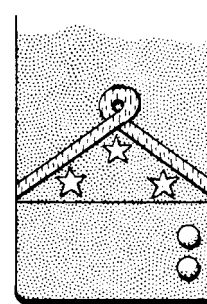


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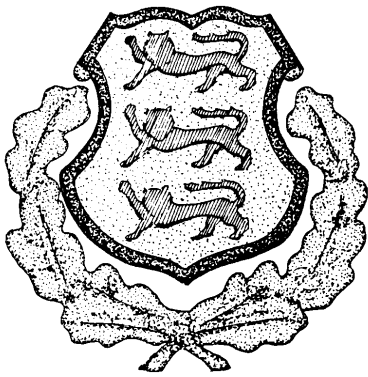


Figure I-1

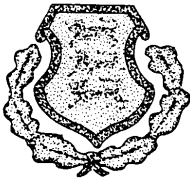


Figure I-2

- ★ Master Sergeant (*Veltveebel*)
- ★ Senior Sergeant (*Vanem allohvitser*)
- ★ Junior Sergeant (*Noorem allohvitser*)

The soldiers were:

- ★ Corporal (*Kapral*)
- ★ Private (*Reamees*, “line man”)
- ★ Recruit (*Noor*, “junior”)

[In 1939, the three non-commissioned officer ranks were expanded to six, although not all were instituted before the first Soviet occupation in the summer of 1940. This revised rank structure will be discussed later.]

The accompanying rank illustrations are more diagrammatic than realistic; proportions and dimensions will be indicated better in other drawings as well as the text. (Just as an example, the deeper cuff of the overcoat would place the rank stripes and chevrons higher on the sleeve than on the regular tunic.)

Officers

One of the distinctives of a regular officer was the Estonian coat-of-arms, approximately 40 × 45-mm, embroidered above the cuff stripes. This consisted of three blue lions on a gold shield enclosed by a gold wreath of oak leaves [Figure I-1]. A smaller, simpler version [Figure I-2] appeared with the appropriate ranks on the shirt, centered on the sleeve. (The two small buttons on the tunic cuffs, as all the uniform buttons, also displayed the three lions.)

The basic indicator of an officer’s rank is a 10-mm wide stripe of gold braid above the cuff, with various grades shown by wider bands below that.

Thus the sequence begins with a

- ★ single stripe for Ensign [Figure I-3], a student-officer at the Active Service Officer’s School;
- ★ two stripes for Junior Lieutenant [Figure I-4];
- ★ three for Lieutenant [Figure I-5],
- ★ four stripes for Captain [Figure I-6]

The field grade is shown by a 25-mm base stripe, topped again at 5-mm intervals by the standard 10-mm stripes:

- ★ one for Major [Figure I-7]
- ★ two for Lieutenant Colonel [Figure I-8]
- ★ three for Colonel [Figure I-9]

The base stripe for general officers is 45-mm wide, with a more elaborate pattern, and has the narrow stripes as for the others:

- ★ one for Major General [Figure I-10]
- ★ two for Lieutenant General [Figure I-11]
- ★ three for full General [Figure I-12]

Army Administrative Officials [an example in the position of a Captain is shown in Figure I-13] did not carry the national shield above the sleeve stripes. Their “plain” ranks ran from Second (“Junior”) Lieutenant through Colonel; and their positions were mostly connected with logistics, such as supply officers, payroll clerks, etc., which determined the rank held.

For example, the position of a supply officer in an independent infantry battalion was that of a Major. It might be held by a regular army Major, or a Captain who could be promoted to Major. So any Administrative Official in that position would automatically become a “Major,” too—without the officers’ shield emblem.

This practice was a remnant of the Imperial Russian Army of World War I, when there were not enough officers or regular army administrative officials and a great number of temporary assignments were made.

These men were first called “Wartime Officials” (*so-jaaegsed ametnikud*), then from 1929 to 1936, Defense Force Officials” (*kaitseväe-ametnikud* or *Ku. ametnikud*), and from 1936 to 1940, “Army (Administrative) Officials” (*sojaväe-ametnikud* or *sv.-ametnikud*).

After fifteen years of running discussions, these “Officials” were finally renamed Administrative Officers in the summer of 1940, although no one received a rank higher than Captain (Administrative).

Reserve status for officers was indicated by a zig-zag bar placed 10-mm above the sleeve insignia; thus, Figure I-14 shows an Ensign in the Reserves and Figure I-15 an Administrative Captain of the Reserve.

These horizontal stripes (as the chevrons of the non-commissioned officers/enlisted men ranks) began 80-mm from the bottom edge of the sleeve on the regular tunics, but they did not fully encircle the sleeve—only extending half of the way around.

Cadre Non-commissioned Officers (and Re-Enlisted Enlisted Men)

This professional category is characterized by gold chevrons (braid) and stars (metal). These chevrons, which form an angle of 60 degrees, are 6-mm wide and measure 120-mm on

each side.

While it is possible for a re-enlistee to retain the rank of Private [gold chevron without star, Figure I-16], mainly in the guard units or the Border Guard, or that of a Corporal [chevron with one star, Figure I-17], most would have attained the rank of Junior Sergeant [Figure I-18] by that time.

This sequence of added stars continues through Senior Sergeant [Figure I-19] to Master Sergeant with four stars [Figure I-20].

The highest, and rarest, non-commissioned officers rank is that of Deputy Officer or Acting Officer [two wide chevrons at an angle of 120 degrees with a thickness of 10-mm, as shown in Figure I-21]. This was a wartime rank immediately below that of Ensign.

During the War of Independence (1918-1920) a number of Sergeants were promoted to this rank for exceptional bravery. As there was no such special promotion in peacetime, by 1939 there were only about six or seven non-commissioned officers of this rank still in active service.

This style of wide chevron, but with a 25-mm loop at the top, also characterized the Aspirant (or Officer Candidate) ranks. The Aspirant-Corporal with one star [Figure I-22], Aspirant-Junior Sergeant [two stars, Figure I-23], and Aspirant-Senior Sergeant [Figure I-24] have all completed the Reserve Officer (Candidate) Training School or course and are serving as cadre non-commissioned officers, called *Aspirant-üleajateenia* (“one serving beyond his time”).

The candidates for the Active Service Officers School (*Sojakooli ohvitseri klass*) wore a double chevron in the above style. As a Portupei-Aspirant, he could theoretically have the single star of Corporal, though more likely the two stars of a Portupei-Junior Sergeant [Figure I-25] due to promotions to reach that stage of candidacy. [Also Portupei-Senior Sergeant, Figure I-26.]

After completing the Reserve Officer training course and serving (as squad leader) for two years with a unit, he must have passed special physical and educational exams. Upon acceptance, he was promoted to Ensign and studied for one year in the Officer Training School (one and a half years for Artillery). He then served for six months with the troops to gain additional practical experience (as platoon commander) before finally becoming a Junior-Lieutenant.

Enlisted Men (and Non-commissioned Officers) in Compulsory Service

Even though the uniform of the conscripts or volunteers fulfilling their military obligation won't be discussed until Part II, their sleeve ranks follow the foregoing system. [The unadorned sleeve, Figure I-27, is the indication of a Recruit.]

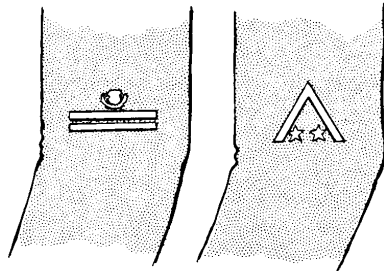


Figure I-34

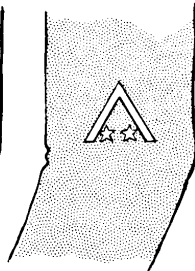


Figure I-35

Therefore, the insignia for Private and Corporal [Figures I-28 and I-29] are self-evident—but the prime difference is that, instead of gold braid, the chevrons are in the color of the branch of service (for example: steel gray for Infantry, red for Artillery, black for Engineers; there were other colors—for Cavalry, Air Force, etc.—but other factors differentiated the application).

As the length of time of compulsory service was reduced in 1928 for economic reasons (from eighteen months to one year, although it remained one and a half years in the Navy or other technical services), it was unlikely that the rank of Junior-Sergeant could be reached in that limited time—although an Estonian source does illustrate such a rank in the *ajateenia* category [Figure I-30]

Likewise, the *Ajateenia-aspirant* or Reserve Officer Candidate most likely was an Aspirant-Corporal [Figure I-31] but could reach the rank of Aspirant-Junior Sergeant [Figure I-32] more easily because of his special status and presumed abilities. [An Aspirant-Senior Sergeant has also been shown, Figure I-33.] These particular chevrons were in a silver color, to distinguish them from their “career” non-commissioned officer/officer candidate counterparts. That is, upon re-enlistment these Officer Candidates would be qualified to wear the gold chevrons discussed in the previous section. (And a new-style uniform, of course.)

It should be noted that although the colors of all these chevrons varied, the metal stars remained gold-colored.

Rank Insignia on Shirt

As indicated in discussion of the officers’ shield [above, Figure I-2], a variation in the representation of all the ranks existed for the shirt. Approximately half the size of the tunic cuff insignia, they were worn just above the elbow of the shirt sleeve. Examples of this style are shown for Junior-Lieutenant [Figure I-34] and cadre Junior-Sergeant [Figure I-35]

Uniforms

The basic cut of the revised M1936 uniform may be seen by the representative figure in the large illustration [Figure I-A, details as captioned]. The tunic has an open, laped collar (displaying branch and grade badges, described in Part II) and is fastened in the front by four buttons bearing the Estonian coat-of-arms. There are four pockets, the two on the breast box-pleated and fastened with a flap and small button, and large expanding pockets with buttoned flap at the waist.

The shirt and the necktie are greenish khaki of a somewhat lighter shade (although photos indicate great

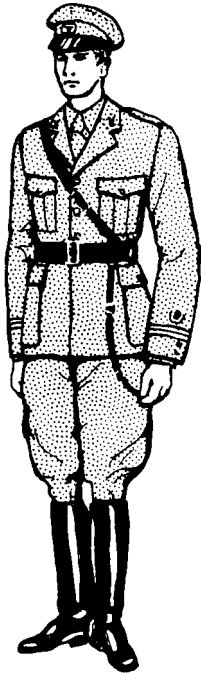


Figure I-B

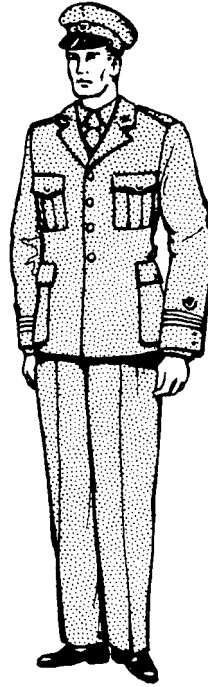


Figure I-C



Figure I-D

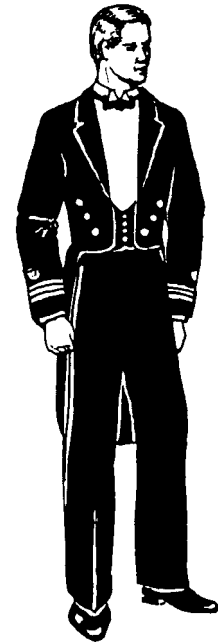


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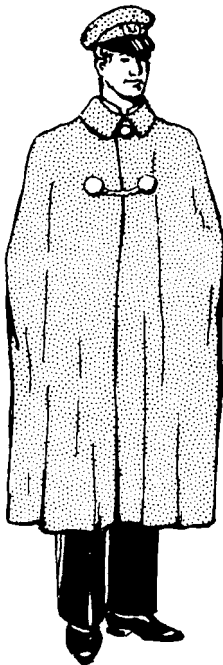


Figure I-F

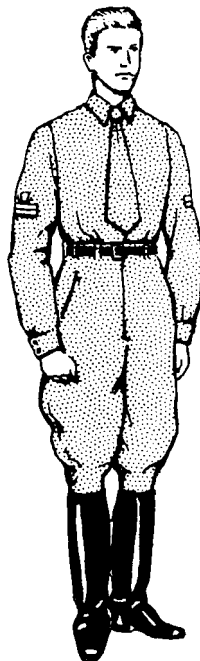


Figure I-G

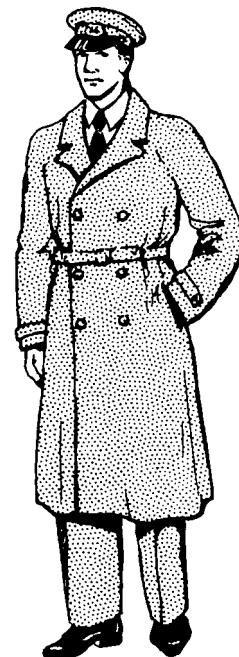


Figure I-H

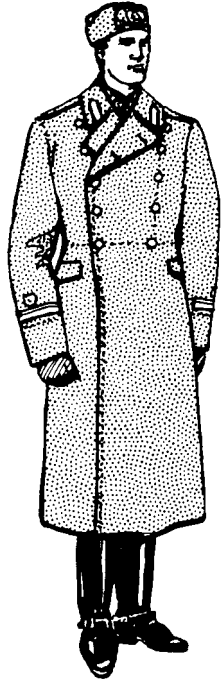


Figure I-I

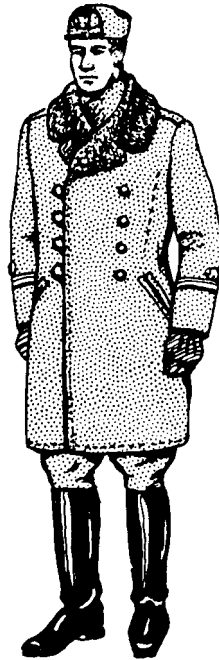


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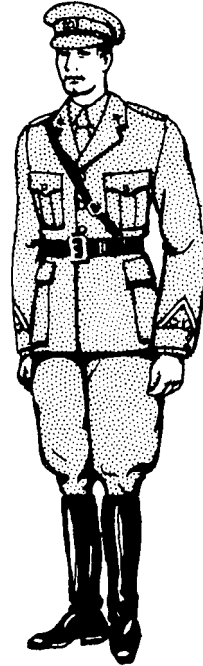


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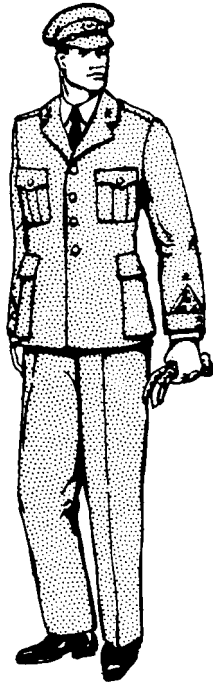


Figure I-M



Figure I-N

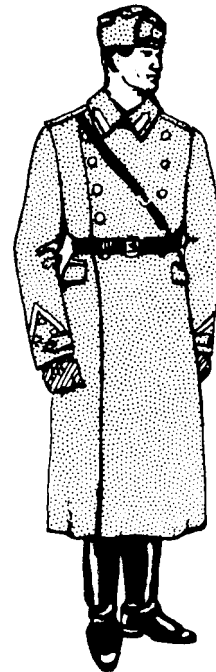


Figure I-O



Figure I-J: Estonian field-grade officers in early Spring 1940, wearing the winter overcoat with top flap both open and closed and showing different views of the winter cap. Note the greater distance from the bottom edge of the cuff to the rank stripes (from left: a major, two lieutenant colonels, a colonel) and that the stripes don't completely circle the sleeve. Gloves seem to be brown (leather) or black.

Photo via F. Limberg

variance in these). Breeches of a lighter shade than the tunic and black boots complete the service dress. This, the officers' Uniform Number 1, is also shown in the small Figure B, representing a Junior-Lieutenant.

Other Officer's Uniforms

The Uniform Number 2, or walking-out dress [Figure I-C], differs from the Number 1 in that the belts are omitted and long trousers with brown or black shoes are worn.

Uniform Number 3 [not illustrated] adds a white shirt and black necktie for slightly more formal occasions.

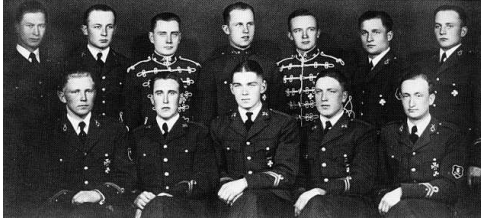
The festive evening dress, Uniform Number 4 [Figure I-D], has a white shirt with winged collar and black bow tie. In this case, the figure is a Colonel with Staff College training (as shown by the silver badge on right breast pocket and the golden agulettes). White gloves are worn. The dress belt is khaki with silver cording, a zig-zag pattern and golden buckle (details for this and the parade sword will be given later).

The gala dress Uniform Number 5 [Figure I-E], provided at the officer's own discretion and expense, consists of a black frock coat with standard insignia on cuffs and same shirt and bow tie as Uniform Number 4. The trousers have gold-braid striping, and a khaki cape with gold buttons and chain or cord [Figure I-F] may also be worn. (This uniform was owned only by about five or six officers, A.D.C., and the aides to the president.)

The standard khaki shirt, with the miniature ranks already described, is shown by Figure I-G. The tunic could be removed for work indoors or on field exercises or marches in the summer. However, whenever public areas were approached, the tunic had to be worn as part of the "summer" uniform.

The belted raincoat [Figure I-H] shown with Uniform Number 3 has no rank insignia.

The overcoat [or winter coat, Figure I-I] is double-breasted with two rows of five buttons each. It is made of heavy khaki cloth and reaches below the knee. In the back it is gathered at the waist by a strap and buttons. As part of the service dress, the Sam Browne belt would also be added. The collar may be worn open or closed [as in Figure I-J (photo), or non-commissioned officers drawing, Figure I-O], with scarf and gloves optional. Collar tabs in the branch color (piped in black, except for the Cavalry) bear the number or emblem of the unit. Standard sleeve ranks are carried, though somewhat higher on the sleeve due to the greater depth of the cuff. [A note about the spurs—indicated by the straps and buckles on the ankles of the boots—worn by this Major: Non-cavalry officers could wear spurs if they



Active service officer candidates of the Tartu garrison in 1937. They are all Portupei-Aspirants, as shown by the rank stripes above the cuffs. (Front row: A. Kann, P. Suurkivi, R. Fiskar, E. K lvet, P. K tt. Back row: E. Gabriel, P. Maitla, V. Potsep, V. Mihkur, A. Lehari, A. Tars, K. Kurs. It might be noted that while serving in the Estonian Legion in World War II, P. Maitla was awarded the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross. Also, the white cross badges in the photo indicate graduates of the Reserve Officers Training Course.)

Photo via F. Limberg

were assigned a horse—such as the commander of an infantry battalion—or were Generals, Staff College graduates or Adjutants.]

Figure I-K shows the fur [lined] coat which an officer provided at his own expense. Although double-breasted, it differs considerably in cut and details from the standard greatcoat just described. It was not worn in unit formation, only individually.

Cadre Non-commissioned Officers Uniforms

As already mentioned, these followed the officers' pattern almost exactly, with detail differences in insignia and accouterments. The non-commissioned officers had the Uniforms Number 1 through 4 only, these being illustrated by Figs. I-L, I-M, and I-N—skipping Uniform Number 2.

The khaki belt for Uniform Number 4 is not as elaborate as that of the officers.

The winter coat [Figure I-O] indicates a buttoned strap on the sleeve instead of the deep cuff.

Headgear

The three basic types of headgear employed by the Estonian Army in 1936 were the summer [peaked] cap, the winter cap, and the German-style helmet (a fact omitted by Floyd R. Tubbs in his otherwise comprehensive 1971 *Stahlhelm* book).

The cap badge, common to all ranks, consists of the national shield with three lions, superimposed on crossed swords and a wreath of oak leaves, all in a golden color [Figure I-P]. This measures approximately 40 × 50-mm. The metal badge is set upon a pad in the color of the branch of service, this colored material extending 1.5 to 2-mm beyond the edge of the badge for officers only. (The generals' cap badge is set upon a black pad.)

The summer cap [Figures I-Q and I-R] has a black patent leather peak for officers, while that of the non-commissioned officers and enlisted men is covered in khaki cloth. A black patent leather chin strap is attached by two small buttons.

Field grade officers have an embroidered oak leaf pattern added to the peak [Figure I-R], and the generals have this pattern in a double row [Figure I-S]. Furthermore, a general is distinguished by a red cap band, those with General Staff training having this band in a raspberry red color, both with black piping.

The winter cap [Figures I-T, I-U, and I-V] also has a black chin strap fastened by small buttons, but there the resemblance ends. The sides of this cap can be pulled down to be worn around the ears [Figure I-V]. Again, the generals

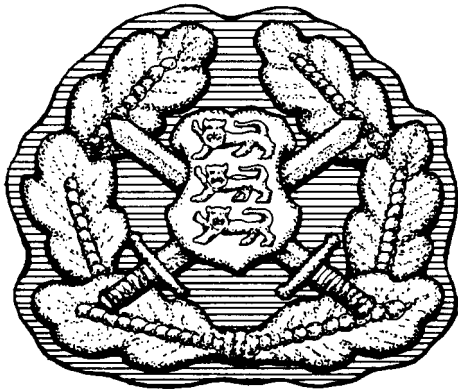


Figure I-P

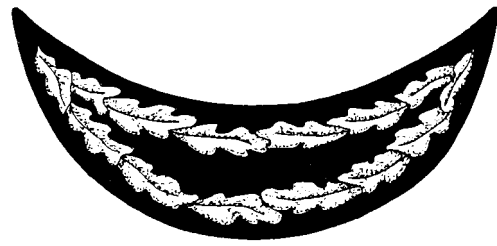


Figure I-S

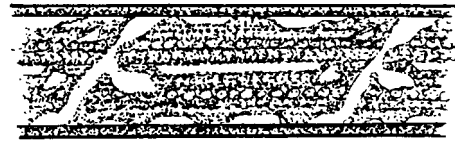


Figure I-W

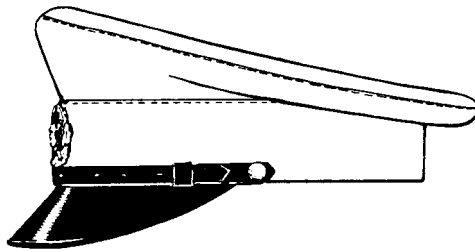


Figure I-Q

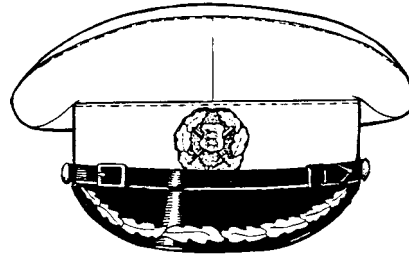


Figure I-R

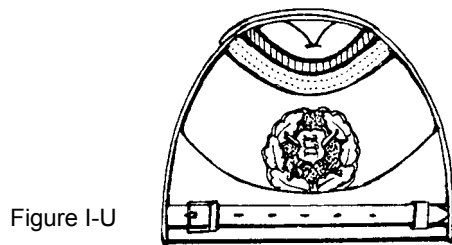


Figure I-U

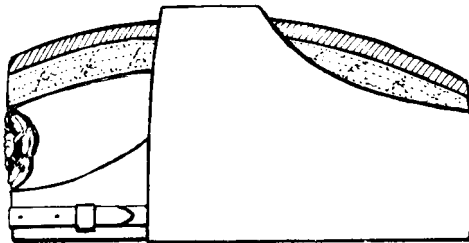


Figure I-T

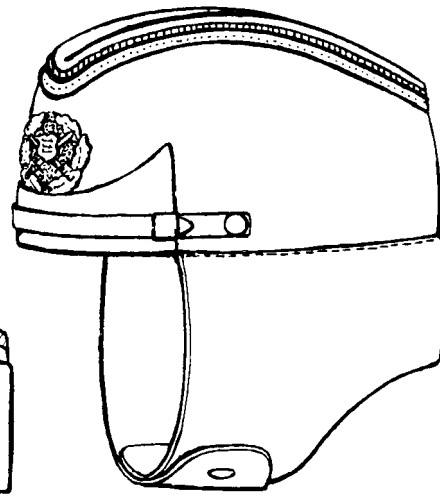
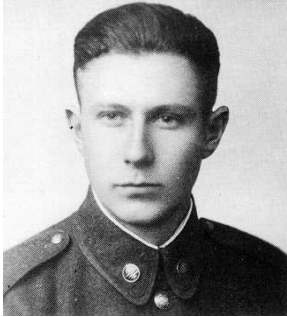


Figure I-V

have the red or raspberry red color, with black piping, but this time on the top of the cap—surrounded by a 10-mm wide strip of gold braid [the approximate pattern for which is shown in Figure I-W]. Field grade (or “Senior”) officers have a braid strip in 5-mm width, the “Junior” officers’ being 2.5-mm. Above this gold braid is piping in the branch color.

[The Cavalry had some additional caps, which will be shown in Part III.]

Collar Badges



Conscript Sergeant H. Ets with the large versions of the Signal Battalion collar badge and black branch of service decoration.

Photo via F. Limberg



Private R. Nurmela wearing the larger Armored Train Regiment badges on the Conscript uniform.

Photo via F. Limberg

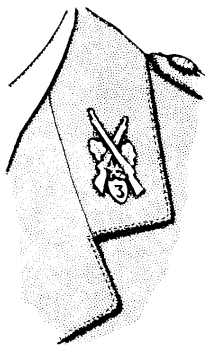


Figure II-1

The Estonian M1936 changes instituted a system of collar badges whose three main components identified the wearer's arm of service, individual unit, and rank grouping. These badges were worn on both sides of the upper lapels on the uniforms Number 1 through 4 of field- and company-grade officers and cadre non-commissioned officers. (General officers and conscripts utilized a different system.)

Usually it consisted of a more-or-less standard symbol above a simple shield bearing the unit number (if more than one unit existed), or the national shield with lions, or a distinctive unit emblem. Artillery units placed their number on a flaming grenade instead of a shield.

For junior officers, a pair of oak leaves (with stem and acorn) were centered behind the emblem, and for senior officers the entire emblem was superimposed on an arrangement of six oak leaves—the bottom acorn theoretically always pointing to the outer edge of the lapel on either side. The medical services wore olive leaves instead of oak leaves.

The basic badges in most cases appear to be stamped metal, designed to simulate embroidery, while the individual unit shields, grenades, etc., are attached separately, with enameled numbers or lions where necessary.

The officers' leaves (and often the emblem) are embroidered in gold thread directly onto the lapels [to avoid unauthorized impersonations, as happened with the earlier insignia during an attempted Communist takeover in 1924], although a few photos indicate the emblem(s) on a separate patch.

The traditional crossed rifles for Infantry in Figure II-1 illustrate the average size and placement on the lapel for these insignia. (This particular example is numbered for the 3rd Independent Infantry Battalion; see Appendix B for the organization of the Estonian Army in 1939.)

The basic system is demonstrated by Figure II-2 for the Cadre Non-Commissioned Officers, Figure II-3 for the Junior (or Company Grade) Officers, and Figure II-4 for the Senior (or Field Grade) Officers.

The position of the stem and acorn indicate these designs are for the wearer's left collar, while the numbers (in blue) stand for the 7th and 1st Infantry Regiments and the 10th Independent Infantry Battalion, respectively. In Figure



Cadre Senior Sergeant E. Sorgsepp in Uniform Number 3, wearing the technical troops collar emblem with the “n” shield of Narva Military District Headquarters.

Photo via F. Limberg



Cadre Sergeant E. Bach in Uniform Number 3, with the badges of the 2nd Division Artillery (Division Headquarters shield superimposed on crossed cannons).

Photo via F. Limberg

II-5 the regimental (or battalion) shield is replaced by that of the Instructional Establishments (or Training Center), using a stylized “OA” for *oppeasutised*, which covered the various military schools.

These same shields can also be replaced by the national shield with three blue lions for officers serving in the higher Staff positions, or by distinctive badges for special (unnumbered) infantry units. (The first and fifth figures are based on photos, while the middle three come from Estonian illustrations; so it is interesting to note slight differences such as the shape and placement of the rifles.)

The basic sequence (Non-commissioned Officer, Junior Officer, Senior Officer) is also shown for Artillery in Figures II-6 through II-8, representing the 4th, 2nd, and 3rd Artillery Groups (Battalions) by the red numbers on the gold flaming grenades. Figure II-7 shows a badge for the right side. [Coastal artillery/fortifications were part of the Naval command.]

Crossed cannons are also used by Armor (as well as by Anti-Aircraft Artillery, which is a part of the Air Defense, not included in this monograph), but without the grenade.

This branch is divided into two main units: the Armored Train Regiment (the winged skull with railroad axle/wheels; Figure II-9) and the Armored Car and Tank Regiment (knight’s helmet on wings and wheel; Figure II-10).

This latter is also represented by a somewhat different design (Figure II-11, not necessarily to the same scale) redrawn from a sketch by a former tank officer. The wheel, instead of the helmet, is winged—and perhaps the heavier armor (breastplate) could represent the tanks rather than the armored cars in the unit? Or perhaps the first was a proposed design and the second the one actually in use, or a later change-over. (In any case, neither version resembles the regiment’s dragon breast badge.) [The collar badges for Cavalry are discussed in Part III.]

Technical troops are represented by crossed ax and lightning bolt for the two main components: Engineers (Pioneers) and Signals. These two battalions are further distinguished by a castle tower [Figure II-12] for the former and a stylized electrical flash within a circle [Figure II-13] for the latter.

There is reason to believe that perhaps the Engineers’ tower was worn only by Senior Officers, while the Junior Officers and Non-commissioned Officers actually had a circular design with crossed ax and spade.

A Senior Officer of this branch on the General Staff at the Ministry of War is illustrated by Figure II-14, while Figure II-15 shows the right side emblem of a Junior Officer at the Training Center.

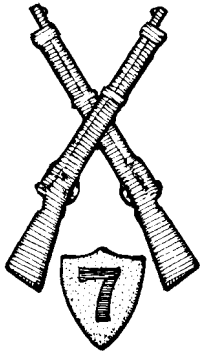


Figure II-2

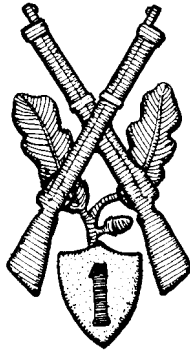


Figure II-3

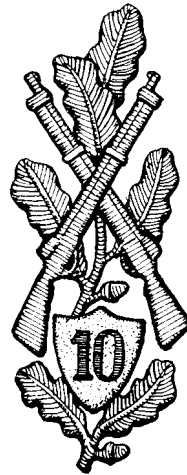


Figure II-4

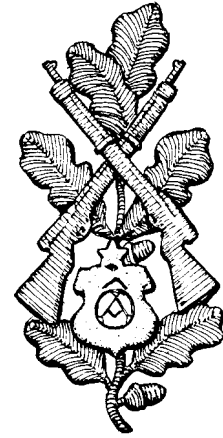


Figure II-5

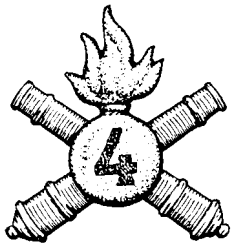


Figure II-6



Figure II-7



Figure II-8

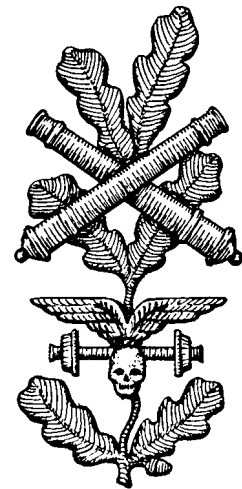


Figure II-9

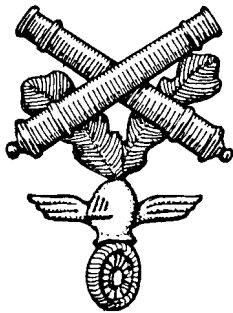


Figure II-10



Figure II-11



Figure II-13

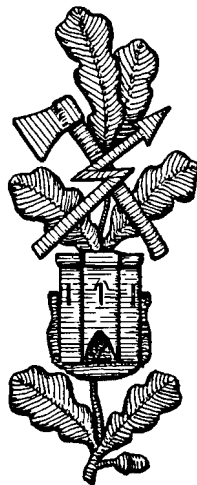


Figure II-12



Figure II-14



Figure II-15

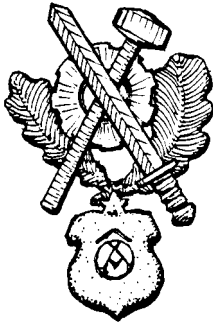


Figure II-16



Figure II-17

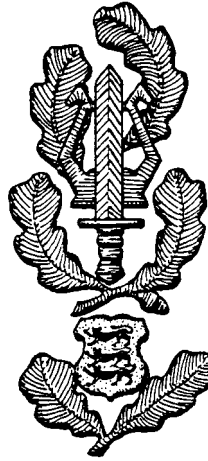


Figure II-18



Figure II-19



Figure II-20



Figure II-21



Figure II-22



Figure II-23



Figure II-24

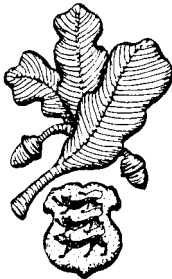


Figure II-25



Figure II-26

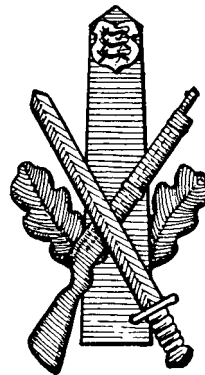


Figure II-27

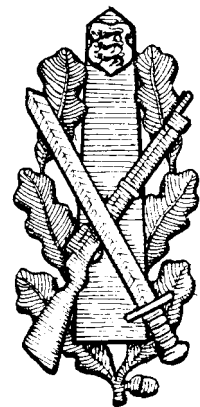


Figure II-28



Major V. Veske in Uniform Number 1 (service uniform) with the white/silver aiguillettes of an Adjutant (in this case of the 2nd Division Artillery Regiment).

Photo via F. Limberg

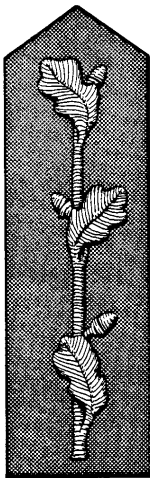


Figure II-29

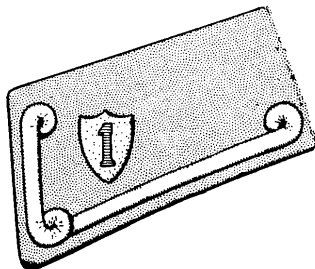


Figure II-30

As these last two are based on photographs, it is worth noting that on one the ax and lightning bolt seem intertwined, and on the second these two elements are transposed (and also intertwined?) for the opposite collar. Perhaps this method was used for other badges as well.

Also a part of the Training Center, the Junior Officer's badge in Figure II-16 is reportedly that of a student at the Military Technical School, depicted by the crossed sword and hammer and a gear-wheel.

The badge for the Military Orchestras [Figures II-17 and II-18] incorporates an Estonian version of the standard bandsman's lyre with the more typical sword.

The varying arrangement of olive leaves on the emblems of Junior and Senior Officers of the Medical branch are shown in Figures II-19 through II-24. The Veterinarians are distinguished by having only one snake on the staff and the Pharmacists by substituting a chalice for the traditional staff.

Army Administrative Officials (becoming "Officers" in 1940), described in Part I as having a slight variation in their sleeve rank insignia, also varied their collar insignia. The style of such an Official serving in the position of a Senior Officer is demonstrated in Figure II-25, while Figure II-26 shows one in the position of a Junior Officer, in this particular case with the 7th Infantry Regiment.

Although the Border Guards were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior rather than that of Defense, in wartime they would come under military command. Their badge [Figures II-27 and II-28] superimposed a crossed rifle and sword on a border marker bearing the Estonian national shield.

The three grades of General Officers wore on their lapels a vertical red tab or patch [Figure II-29, for non-Cavalry generals] with gold oak leaf embroidery, the same pattern for all three grades. (This vertical shape is similar to the lapel patches, in the arm-of-service color and piped in black, worn on the overcoats of all ranks; the individual unit emblem or number in brass could be placed thereon.)

Those troops undergoing their compulsory military service had, due to the differing shape of the collar, a system that presented an L-shaped strip of braid, twice as long as it was high, near the outer (that is, front and bottom) edges of the collar. This 5-mm wide braid had a loop at either end and one in the bend and was in the arm-of-service color.

For example, Figure II-30 shows one bearing the shield of the 1st Infantry Regiment, so the color of the braid would be steel gray. (Other illustrations show the national shield being used, for Guard units, etc.)

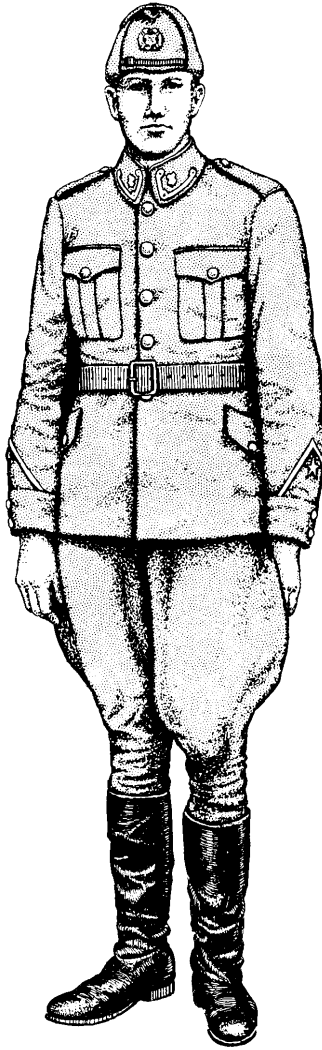


Figure II-A: Corporal in the tunic worn by conscripts (*ajateenia*, literally “one serving his time”). The winter cap, described in Part I, was authorized for use between 1 October and 1 April each year.



Figure II-B: Infantry Private in slightly different tunic, wearing the summer cap in 1939.

Photo via F. Limberg

There also existed other unit shields or emblems for the collar badges, besides the special named) Infantry battalions. Even Anti-Tank Companies wore their designation, “TT” above a number, on their collar shields. Military District Headquarters (Staff) were represented by letters or monograms for the Districts involved, for example “N” for Narva; while the Divisional Headquarters wore Roman numerals on their shields, “I”, “II” and “III” (and “IV” in 1940).

Gaps in available information, while occasionally still being gradually filled, demonstrate the piecemeal way these M1936 regulations are being reconstructed. While photocopies of some Estonian artwork for parts of this material are on hand, they are hardly clear, just as the photographs of actual subjects at times are rather difficult to make out.

In the case of many of these collar badges, certain details, such as the overlapping of objects, should be taken merely as interpretations by the current artist and/or authors. Most are just guides for identification rather than precise renderings; still, even within such limitations, they are perhaps more comprehensive than anything that has been heretofore published.

The Conscript Uniform

As has been indicated previously, those personnel (either conscripts or volunteers) who merely served their required time in the military, wore a uniform jacket entirely different in cut from that of those (either Enlisted Men or Officers) who extended their period of service to form the permanent military force.

The most noticeable difference in the enlisted men’s tunic is the stand-and-fall collar, with the distinctive decoration described above. The two breast pockets have a box pleat and a small button on the flap. The inside pockets at the waist are similarly flapped, but at an angle. Five large buttons fasten the front, and small buttons also appear on the cuff (two each) and shoulder strap.

The enlisted men’s sleeve chevrons, as explained in Part 1, are in the branch color instead of gold, most usually reaching the rank of Corporal [as in the large illustration, Figure II-A]. Of course, a Reserve Officer Candidate in this category could have the rank of Aspirant Junior Sergeant, with the special chevrons in silver. (The stars, in all cases, remained gold-colored.)

The trousers are similar to those of the higher ranks, but the black boots are slightly shorter and of not as fine quality leather. A brown leather belt completes the basic service uniform.

While Figure II-A shows the enlisted man in the winter



Figure II-C: Two Privates (guards) in summer blouse, in Tallinn. (Further details in text).



Lieutenant Colonel J. Reinola in Uniform Number 3 with dress belt. Chief of General Staff Training Section, with the Estonian Staff College graduate gold aiguillette and badge on his right side, along with the badge of the French Ecole Superior de Guerre de Paris. Left breast pocket appears to bear the badge of the Kuperjanov Partisans Battalion (although it's different from that seen in Figure III-18), while the collar badges are those of the Auto-Tank Regiment.

Photo via F. Limberg

cap, Figure II-B shows a photo of a Private in the likewise-standard summer cap (with cloth-covered peak for all non-officers). Detail differences in the tunic include a wider space between the front edge and the buttons, and the straight lower pockets.

The two soldiers in Figure II-C wear a lightweight summer blouse (with the abbreviated rank insignia, in this case the plain chevron for Private, worn above the elbow). Designed to be pulled over the head, it has four small buttons visible on the front, plus plain breast pockets, also flapped and buttoned. The stand-and-fall collar seems a bit more pointy than that of the heavier tunic; shoulder straps and cuffs are fastened by a single button each. Perhaps due to the different material, the blouse seems definitely lighter in tone than the trousers.

These two enlisted men are part of a guard detachment assigned to the government buildings in the capital (the oval breast badge of the nearest Private could be that of the Tallinn Garrison). It is possible they are just reporting for duty, for on actual guard they supposedly would wear the steel helmet, as in Figure II-D.

(No markings carried on helmets, although there is evidence that later in World War II some Estonians did apply the national tricolor in shield form on the side of their helmets. In Figure II-D, note again the use of national shield badge on the collar instead of a numbered infantry regiment shield, plus difference in the loops.)

A note about the weapons: That light machine gun in Figure II-C is unfortunately just an approximation, as the dark shape against a dark background revealed no details to match it up with any other illustrated reference. Until clearer information is available, it should simply be considered a Danish "Madsen type." The rifle, however, is a Russian M1891 Moisin-Nagant (7.62-mm), which was used alongside the British Ross-Enfield M1914.

[Field gear for the enlisted men included cartridge pouches and an ordinary rucksack. The overcoat could be rolled to wear diagonally across the shoulder, and in winter, white camouflage clothing was available.]

The Cavalry and Miscellaneous Details

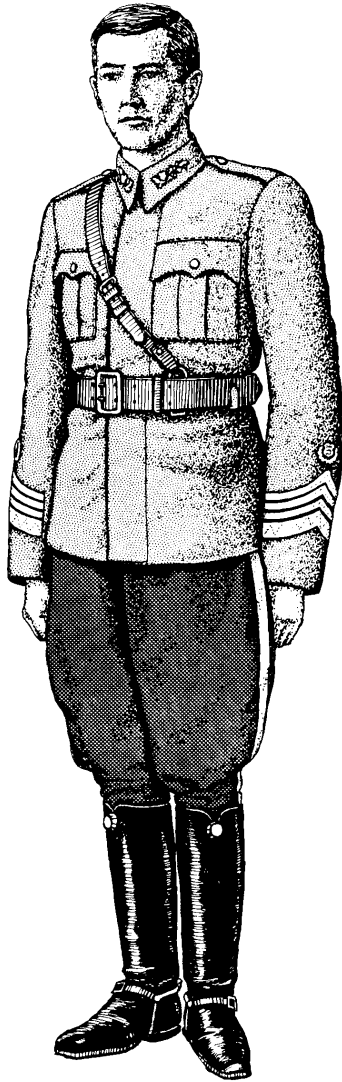


Figure III-1: Cavalry officer, a Colonel, in the M1936 Uniform Number 1. (Cadre non-commissioned officers wore the same uniform, but with standard army rank insignia.)

Cavalry Uniforms

The cut of the service (field) uniform for the Cavalry was drastically changed in 1936, although the color remained a greenish-khaki shade. A single-breasted tunic with two breast pockets only was introduced for officers and non-commissioned officers. Fastened in the front with five hidden buttons, the tunic had unadorned shoulder straps and a turn-down collar with the branch/grade badges.

The M1925 breeches were retained, these being a raspberry red color with a silver stripe down the outside seam for officers and a gray stripe for non-commissioned officers.

Black patent leather hussar boots (with upper edge indented in the front) were worn with silver rosettes bearing the Cavalry “R” monogram (for *Ratsavägi*)—and spurs, of course. A silver leather trim appeared along the top of generals’ boots.

This basic officer/non-commissioned officer service uniform for Cavalry (and Infantry mounted units) is best illustrated by the large drawing [Figure III-1], the sequence being continued by the smaller paintings, reproduced from pages of Army Dress Regulations, in Figures III-2 and III-3.

Thus the Uniform Number 1 is repeated by the first painting in Figure III-2, with the addition of a sword and pistol on the belt and the standard summer cap, followed by Uniform Number 2, the walking out dress, which substitutes long trousers in the same color(s) for the breeches and black shoes for the boots.

The next three uniforms in Figure III-2, representing the dress Uniform Number 3 in both breeches and long trousers and the parade Uniform Number 4 with extra accouterments, introduce the second distinctive cavalry tunic, the hussar-style dolman.

This dolman, still in the standard “khaki” color, is edged all around with silver cord. The five rows of gimp cord across the chest end in crowfoot knots and are fastened in the middle with silver olivets. Silver cord also forms the shoulder straps, the edging of the diagonal slash pockets at the waist, and the lacing on the collar, the sleeves and the back of the tunic. (The kepi and officers’ ranks with the dolman will be described below.)

With the festive dress Uniform Number 4 (also seen in photo of a Junior-Lieutenant, Figure III-4), a bandoleer and

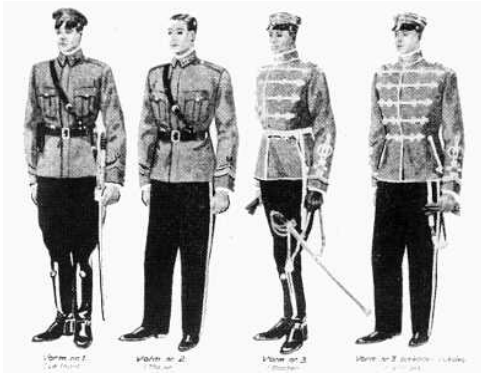


Figure III-2: From Estonian Army Dress Regulations, a series of illustrations of the uniforms for Cavalry (and Infantry mounted units) officers.

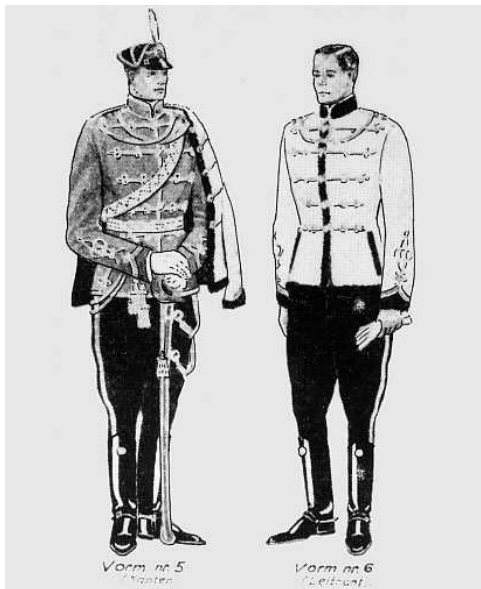


Figure III-3: As Figure III-2; Cavalry officers' Uniform Numbers 5 and 6, described in the text.
Photos via F. Limberg

sash are evident. The bandoleer across the left shoulder is actually a pouch-belt of 4-cm wide silver leather with a zig-zag pattern. The pouch itself is of black leather, with an oak leaf pattern trim on the silver plate flap, on which are centered the three Estonian lions in gold.

The sash, more clearly shown in the other large drawing [Figure III-5], is made of silver thread and has three groups of sliding knots. From the toggle-fastening at the back, two cords hang down and are looped up across the right side and through the front of the sash, the loose ends having a slide and tassel.

The gala dress Uniform Number 5, illustrated by the left-hand painting in Figure III-3, adds a pelisse, provided at the officers' own discretion and expense. Hanging from the left shoulder by two cords, the pelisse is made of white sheepskin, ornamented by black karakul fur on the collar, cuffs, pockets, down the front, and along the bottom edge. Silver cording, in the same pattern as on the dolman, appears on the front, back, cuffs, and shoulder straps.

This pelisse, when worn closed, becomes the Uniform Number 6, as seen on the right side of Figure III-3. White gloves, apparently leather, complete the festive and gala dress uniforms.

Returning to the last two uniforms in Figure III-2, we see the standard winter overcoat worn under parade conditions (over the dolman) with the bandoleer, sash, and plumed kepi. (The Figure III-6 photo shows the overcoat in ordinary use, with the winter cap. The vertical, white collar tabs are piped in red.)

And finally, a Cavalry officer or non-commissioned officer could purchase at his own expense a half-length fur coat of white sheepskin with black fur trimming at the front, collar, cuffs, and pockets, along with a special cap.

The cadre non-commissioned officers of this branch had their Uniforms Number 1 through 4 in the same style as the officers. The first two were distinguished by gray leather belts instead of brown (although the M1925 white ones were also still in evidence), and the last two by having all the cord lacing in gray wool instead of silver. The non-commissioned officers Uniform Number 4 features a sash in gray wool cord and no bandoleer.

The Cavalry enlisted men wore the same service tunic as the rest of the Army, described in Part II. They also had the light summer blouse that is pulled over the head. Besides the white branch-of-service color, they were distinguished by the raspberry red breeches with gray stripe and the black hussar boots with the silver rosettes, same as the Cadre non-commissioned officers.

The enlisted man's parade dress uniform and kepi were



Figure III-4: Photo, taken in 1939, of a Junior-Lieutenant (A. Lehari) in the Cavalry festive dress Uniform Number 4.

Photo via F. Limberg

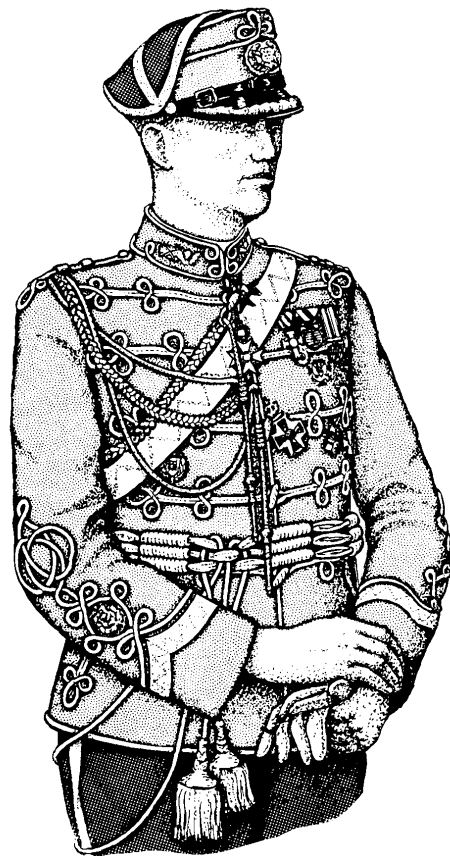


Figure III-5: Details of the dolman, with accouterments and decorations (and kepi), of a Lieutenant Colonel. Actually, the braids on this particular dolman is non-regulation; when Estonian stocks ran out, a narrower braid from Poland was substituted. There is also an extra loop above the sleeve shield, which itself is encircled by a rounded instead of squared shape. Note also variation in positioning of aiguillettes. (Among other decorations/awards may be seen the Staff College graduates' badge, the Estonian Eagle Order, Latvian Three-Star Order, Swedish Order of the Sword, Estonian Cross of Liberty, War of Independence Memorial Medal for wounded, 10-Year Commemorative Medal of Latvian Independence, the Estonian Cavalry Regiment badge, and the badge of the Polish 16th Lancer Regiment.)

also the same as the non-commissioned officers', but because of large stocks of the M1925 Cavalry enlisted man's uniforms still remaining, these continued to be widely worn by the enlisted men. Besides minor details, the prime difference in the earlier style was the six rows of cord lacing in the front instead of the five in the M1936 style.

Cavalry Headgear

Besides the standard winter and summer service caps already discussed, all ranks of the Cavalry wore their distinctive kepi with the dolman. The style, seen in various illustrations, is identical to the M1925. The color is the usual "khaki" with silver cord lacing (the three loops appearing on the sides as well as the front and back) and black patent leather peak and strap.

Attached to the top of the kepi is a triangular bag that



Figure III-6: Cavalry Major (F. Jänes, deputy commander, Cavalry Regiment) in overcoat [white collar, red piping] and winter cap [white and gold piping for branch and grade]. On the original photo a darker chevron, in the shape of the rank stripes and directly below them, can be discerned; this might possibly be merely a decoration/stitching to indicate a pointed cuff. The standard overcoat was worn buttoned at the top by non-commissioned officers and enlisted men of all branches, with the top button allowed open for officers only when no belt was worn with the coat.

Photo via F. Limberg

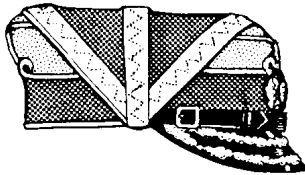


Figure III-7: Cavalry kepi, in this instance for general officers.

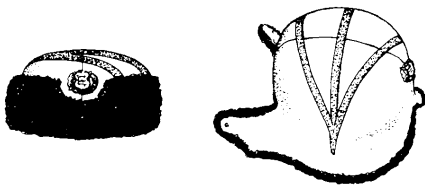


Figure III-8: Two views (left, front view; right, right side view) of special winter cap for Cavalry.

falls down on the right side; this is in a raspberry red color with silver trim and a central stripe. For non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, all the silver portions are in a gray color.

Senior officers had an oak leaf pattern along the edge of the peak (as seen in Figure III-5) and general officers a double row in this pattern [Figure III-7]. Generals also had the cap band in raspberry red, with the silver trim and stripe on the bag being 20-mm wide. For parade dress, a white plume could be attached to the front of the kepi.

The special fur cap, shown in two views in Figure III-8, that went with the half-length lambskin coat, was made of the same material. An unusual feature is the officers' silver lace in a triangular pattern across the top, in obvious imitation of the kepi bag.

Cavalry Ranks

While the form of the ranks for Cavalry non-commissioned officers and enlisted men (chevrons and stars) was the same as for the rest of the Army, those for Cavalry officers had a radically different appearance. Instead of the series of horizontal stripes at the cuffs of the service tunic and overcoat, the Cavalry officers' ranks became large, curved chevrons pointing at the national sleeve shield.

The material of these curved stripes, as well as the size and sequence, was the same as described in Part I. Thus, the rank of Colonel is shown in Figure III-1 (and also in the photo Figure III-9) and that of Major in Figure III-6. The first two indicate a somewhat rounded tip to the chevrons, while the last has a sharper point.

On the dolman, however, a different presentation was used. The basic grade-stripe (now chevron) in varying widths for junior, senior, and general officers was retained at the cuff, with the actual rank within that grade shown by one, two or three gold-colored beads on the silver cord shoulder straps (the sequence still the same as for the other forms).

Figure III-10, reproduced from the *Estonian Encyclopedia*, gives examples of these dolman ranks, illustrating the cuff, collar and shoulder strap. The first three represent a Major-General, a Lieutenant-Colonel (also in Figure III-5), and a Captain. The last two depict the style for a Master-Sergeant (*Veltveebel*) and a Corporal serving his military obligation (note white branch color).

Cavalry Collar Badges

Because of the shapes of the two Cavalry collars, their branch and grade emblems take on a horizontal format instead of the vertical style of the rest of the Army. The traditional crossed sabers are worn with a unit shield and sprigs of oak leaves to indicate grade, the style for senior officers



Figure III-9: Senior Cavalry officers on 1938 field exercises. (Colonel J. Kurvits, commander of the Cavalry Regiment at left and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel M. Bergmann.) Note that the Uniform Number 1 tunics are considerably shorter than shown on the other illustrations and made of a lighter material for summer wear. Note also the two buttons on the sleeve cuffs.

Photo via F. Limberg

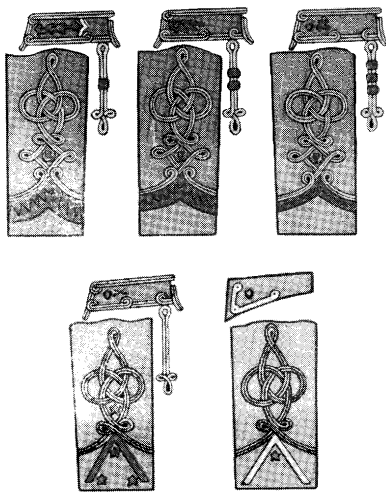


Figure III-10: Samples of Cavalry dolman ranks, as illustrated in an Estonian publication.

Reproduced from the collections of the Library of Congress photo via F. Limberg

junior officers, and Cadre non-commissioned officers being shown in Figures III-11, III-12, and III-13. It will be noted that two different shields appear, the first illustrated in Estonian sources and the second actually worn by Cavalry personnel.

Whether their “R” monogram (in gold on a blue shield with gold outline) was merely a proposed design for the M1936 regulations or was actually used before a change-over of designs, is not clear at the present moment. Perhaps the second shield, of a gold and blue lance tip on a silver background, had a somewhat different significance; in any case, it’s the one usually seen.

General officers of the Cavalry branch had two patterns of oak leaves (gold on red background with a white chevron at the rear). Figure III-14 shows the version worn on the service tunic, while Figure III-15 depicts the one worn on the dolman—surrounded, of course, by the looped silver cord.

Figure III-16 shows a photo of a Cavalry enlisted man wearing the collar decoration common to all branches, only in white. Note that no unit shield is worn, presumably because there was only one cavalry regiment in which he would be serving. [All foregoing badges depict the design for the left collar.]

Cavalry Accouterments

Officers wore the Sam Browne belt (in a brown color) with the Uniforms Number 1 and 2, just as the rest of the Army; but Cadre non-commissioned officers had this in white leather. Enlisted men and non-cadre non-commissioned officers wore an ordinary brown leather belt from the M1925 stocks, although a gray one had been projected for them.

At parade (with the dress uniform), Cavalry officers carried the Estonian M1925 dress sword, while non-commissioned officers and enlisted men had the Polish saber.

The English-type saddle was used; and all the saddlery, bridle, and harness was of brown leather.

We now leave the colorful Cavalry for a wrap-up of various details, pertaining to either the Infantry or all the branches combined.

Additional Sleeve Insignia

Most noteworthy are two sleeve “patches” or emblems, re-introduced in December 1934 from among the many worn during the War of Independence, to distinguish two units with a record of distinctive service and exceptional bravery in that war.

The Sakala Partisans Battalion [Figure III-17] and the Kuperjanov Partisans Battalion [photo, Figure III-18] again



Figure III-11

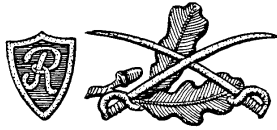


Figure III-12

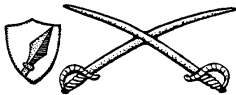


Figure III-13

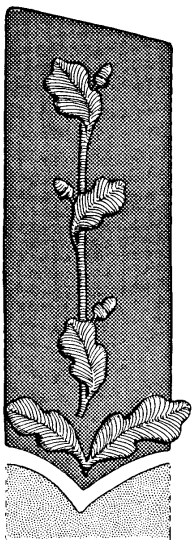


Figure III-14

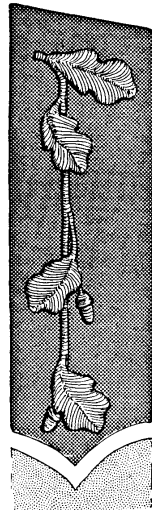


Figure III-15



Figure III-16: Cavalry enlisted man (conscript) in the lightweight summer blouse that is pulled over the head (note small buttons in front). The cap has stiffener removed from the crown.

Photo via F. Limberg

wore their original designs on the left sleeve, in addition to miniature unit badges under the crossed rifles on the collars. (Not clearly seen on the photo, taken of a Major in 1939, the collar version was different from the sleeve shield; the latter, however, was repeated as part of the “regimental” badge worn on the left breast pocket.) The basic designs of both the sleeve badges were stamped out of silver metal and attached to a background of black material with white borders. The Sakala emblem is about 5-cm square.

Also, there existed “wound stripes” that could be worn above the rank insignia on the sleeve. These small chevrons [Figure III-19] came in gold braid for wounds received in the War of Independence or silver for those wounded in World War I.

(Brassards or armbands were also worn, the most common one being that for Orderlies: blue with a narrow black stripe near either edge. During World War II a greater variety of armbands, both Estonian and German, were seen in action ... but that’s another story.)

Band Uniforms

In most cases the standard service uniform was used by these “Military Orchestras,” with the addition of the collar badges [Part II, Figures II-17 and II-18], aiguillettes, and belt, although it appears that the white shirt and black tie were worn even with the Uniform Number 1.

The main exception was the 3rd Infantry Division and Tallinn Garrison Band which, being stationed in the capital and taking part in special ceremonies, had their own uniform for evening wear. This was the Uniform Number 4 [Part I, Figures I-D and I-N], but in a dark blue color.

The Bandmaster (a Lieutenant) had a double stripe in gold on the outside of the long trousers, and the officers’ dress belt was in a light blue color with a darker blue zig-zag pattern. Besides the dress sword, he also wore a gold-colored aiguillette from the left shoulder to the front buttons (this in contrast to the General Staff or Adjutants’ aiguillette, which was worn on the right side; see below).

The non-commissioned officers had a simpler aiguillette hanging straight down from the left shoulder, the style also worn by the Enlisted Men/Conscripts in the various other Army unit bands. It is also believed these non-commissioned officers wore a single gold(?) stripe on the outer seam of the trousers, even with the breeches and boots of the Uniform Number 1—also in blue and with a white shirt and black tie. Furthermore, a decoration of three narrow gold stripes extended from the inside of the sleeve cuff, next to the rank chevron, diagonally out to the elbow on both sleeves.

The 2nd Division bandsmen were in Cavalry uniform because they were also the band for the Cavalry Regiment.



Figure III-18: Photo of a Major (V. Proosa, a company commander) in the Kuperjanov Partisans Battalion in 1939, showing that unit's distinctive skull-and-crossbones sleeve shield (repeated on the unit breast badge and, in a different form, as part of the Infantry collar badges; the order is the Eagle Cross).

Photo via F. Limberg



Figure III-17

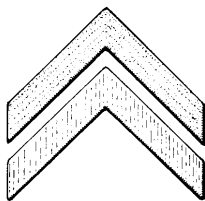


Figure III-19

Aiguillettes

The basic form of the officers' aiguillettes is illustrated by Figure III-20. The photo of Commander-in-Chief General Laidoner [Figure III-21] shows one method of wear; at other times the aiguillettes were seen attached to the front buttons (or buttonholes). Refer also to Figure III-5. While the Staff Officers' aiguillette was gold-colored, that of Adjutants was white.

Officers' Dress Belt

The dress belt mentioned in Part I is shown here in a provisional sketch [Figure III-22]. It was introduced in 1930 and retained through the 1936 changes. Except for the light blue belt worn with the special blue band uniform discussed above, the basic belt was in khaki silk braid (over leather) with a black pattern and a gold-colored buckle.

[On a semi-related note: The Sam Browne belt, which with the M1925 uniform was for wear only by officers, was with the M1936 regulations allowed for Cadre non-commissioned officers also—though in a slightly simpler form, having a narrower shoulder belt and lacking the stitched pattern of the officers' waist belt.]

The Dress Sword

Also evident in several other illustrations, a detail of the hilt of this sword is seen in Figure III-23. It is gold-colored (with a black and gold grip) and the scabbard is silver. A portion of the decorative engraving on the blade is shown in Figure III-24, while Figure III-25 is a close-up of the sword knot (in this case for senior and general officers, with two thin blue stripes on the strap).

Various Basic Details

Are further clarified by Figures III-26 through III-30, all drawn to approximately the same scale (figuring that the large button measures 20-mm and that the officers' rank stripe is 10-mm wide). The two sizes of buttons, common to the entire Armed Forces, are brass with a bright golden finish. In time of war it was foreseen that these would be dulled, along with the rank stripes. (However, in the chaotic conditions that ensued, this reflective gold braid did turn out to be a hazard in combat.)

The basic gold-colored rank star, stamped in metal to simulate embroidery, was sewn adjacent to the various chevrons, from Conscript Corporal to Officer Candidate Senior Sergeant. A sample of the officers' sleeve emblem, hand embroidered on a patch of uniform material, is shown by Figure III-26.

Representing the National Coat-of-Arms, blue lions are stitched onto a padded shield of golden (or orange) yellow



Figure III-21: General Johan Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Armed Forces, shown here still in his pre-1939 rank of Lt. General. (He was deported to the Soviet Union in July 1940, where he reportedly died in 1953, at the age of 69.) Most clearly evident are the General Staff aiguillettes and the general officers' collar tabs. Usually worn around the neck, the Estonian Cross of Liberty, First Class, is seen here attached to the left lapel.

Photo via F. Limberg

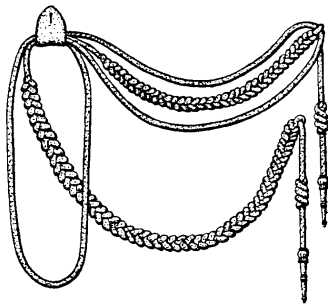


Figure III-20

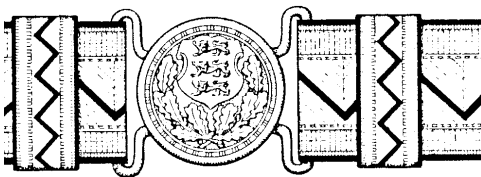


Figure III-22

material, surrounded by a border of gold metallic thread, as is the wreath. (This reflective metallic thread is of course brighter than the rest of the emblem; but, depending on the photograph, the lions and/or shield can also alternately appear lighter or darker due to the colors involved and their effect on different photographic films.)

Branch (and Other) Colors

	Previously	1936
Infantry	Blue	Steel Gray
Artillery	Red	Red
Cavalry	Steel Gray	White
Armor	Purple	Red
Technical:		
Signal	Green	
Engineer	Black	
Border Guard	Green with Yellow piping	Green

Medical personnel and Bands wore the color of the units to which they were attached.

Red was the color for general officers, raspberry red for those graduated from the General Staff College.

Staff officers or military personnel at the Ministry of War, General Staff, and Military Training Center Headquarters had been assigned orange-yellow as their color; but in 1936 they started wearing the color of the branch in which they'd received their training.

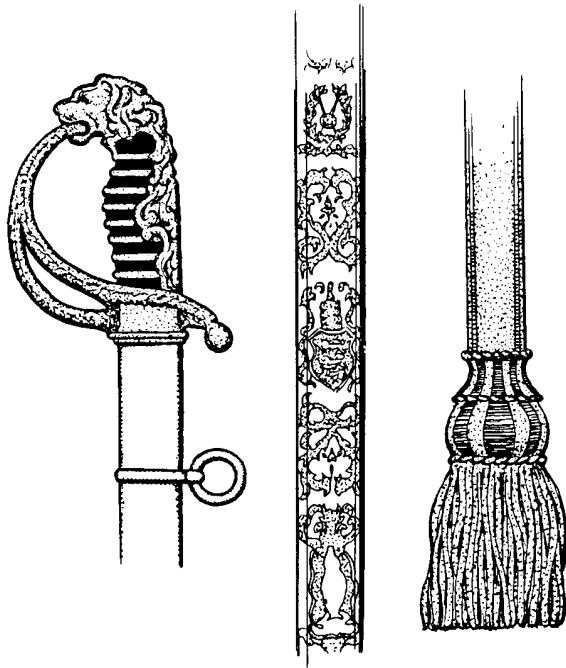
Those in administrative positions without branch training wore brown.

To reiterate, these colors appeared behind the cap badge of officers and Cadre non-commissioned officers, the piping of the winter cap, and in the collar tabs of the overcoat for all ranks. The two reds used by generals were presented on the cap band of the summer cap (and the Cavalry kepi), the top of the winter cap, and on the collar tabs of all uniforms. Furthermore, these various colors also appeared between the rank stripes on the cuffs of the officers' Number 5 gala uniform.

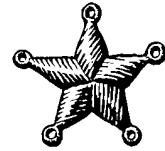
Because of the more elaborate uniforms of the Cavalry, their white color was used more extensively—most often as silver or gray.

The Enlisted Men/Conscripts wore the branch colors in their sleeve chevrons and on their distinctive collar decoration, as well as behind the cap badge.

It must be noted that, for the Estonian Army uniforms, the color "khaki" has been used in its British definition.



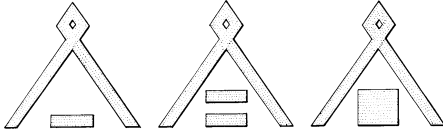
Details of the Dress Sword
Left to right: Figures III-23, -24, -25



Figures III-26 to III-30

Details of officers' sleeve shield, rank braid, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men's rank star, and standard button, all to approximately the same scale.

The 1939/1940 Rank Changes



New rank chevrons of 1 April 1939.

On 1 April 1939 a new rank structure for the non-commissioned officers of the Estonian Army was introduced. This expanded the three previous grades to six, changing the designations in the process (given here with approximate English equivalents):

Previously	1 April 1939
(none)	Vanem Veebel (Senior Master Sergeant)
(none)	Veebel (Master Sergeant)
Veltveebel (Master Sergeant)	Noorem Veebel (Junior Master Sergeant)
(none)	Vanem Seersant (Senior Sergeant)
Vanem Allohvitser (Senior Sergeant)	Seersant (Sergeant)
Noorem Allohvitser (Junior Sergeant)	Noorem Seersant (Junior Sergeant)

Initially it was merely a name-change, retaining the same insignia. On 24 February 1940 (Estonian Independence Day), a number of promotions to the new ranks of *Vanem Seersant* and *Veebel* finally took place. (The complete requirements for promotion to *Vanem Veebel* were still being worked out at that point.)

But because of the tense political situation of recently established Soviet bases on Estonian soil and the increasing threat of full Soviet occupation, the actual regulations for changes in the rank insignia were not distributed until late spring of 1940, and the new insignia was worn by only a few before the total Soviet takeover that summer.

As the above specifications or illustrations are not presently available, the memories of former members of the Estonian Armed Forces must be relied upon. It seems that the M1936 non-commissioned officers rank insignia were applied to the three lower (new) non-commissioned officer ranks, while the three higher ones were to receive entirely new insignia.

These chevrons, still in gold braid, were “somewhat” wider than the original ones and added a squared loop at the top, the three ascending grades indicated by one and

two horizontal gold braid stripes within the chevron and, for the uninstituted third, a square in the same material and position. The drawings below are, of course, only provisional.

The Estonian Army Organization in 1939



Troops from the Armored Train Regiment in 1939 (the artillery battery of Armored Train Number 3) with the commanding officer, Ensign A. Kukk, flanked by two Cadre non-commissioned officers. All the rest are Conscripts or short-term volunteers, wearing the lightweight summer blouse with the small rank chevrons high on the sleeves.

Photo via F. Limberg

In the twenty years that followed the Estonian War of Independence, the Estonian Army was basically a cadre service, in constant training for possible mobilization. The “big powers,” however, would not permit Estonian neutrality, and the country was taken over by the Soviet Union in June 1940, being forcibly incorporated into the USSR about a month later. By September of that year, the Estonian Army was reorganized as a Soviet Territorial Rifle Corps of two divisions, although the Estonian uniforms were retained (but with Soviet insignia).

With the German invasion of the Soviet Union the following summer, the purges, arrests and executions increased dramatically in Estonia—as did the desertions/escapes amid the mobilizations and mass deportations. Subsequently, there existed Estonian guerrilla groups and later units, either within the German armed forces (or Finnish) or semi-independent, throughout the German occupation. Estonian units fought through the second (or actually third) Soviet invasion, in September 1944; and guerrilla activity in Estonia was reported into the early 1950s.

Below is that army’s organization at the beginning of World War II.

President of the Republic: K. Pats

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces: General J. Laidoner

Chief of Armed Forces Staff: Lieutenant General N. Reek

Commander of the Combined Training Center: Colonel A. Kasekamp

Army:

1st Division

(Headquarters in Rakvere): Major General A. Pulk

Military District Headquarters: two

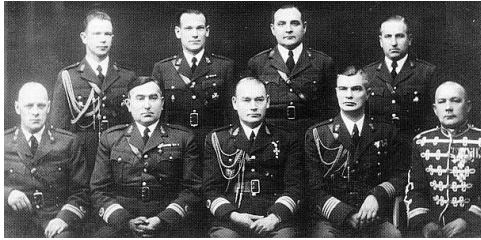
Infantry Regiment: 1st

Independent Infantry Battalions: 4th and 5th

Artillery Groups (Battalions): 1st and 2nd

Armored Train Regiment

2nd Division



Chief of Staff of the 2nd Division, Lieutenant Colonel J. Lukas (front center), and his section leaders: [front left] Major F. Jakobson, Major V. Jakobson, [front right] Captain O. Pollisinski, Major E. Kramm, [rear] Captain E. Bauming, Major K. Raamat, Captain M. Niinepuu, and Lieutenant H. Saarnit. On special occasions the service uniform (Number 1) could be worn with a white shirt and black tie.

Photo via F. Limberg

(Headquarters in Tartu): Major General J. Kruus
 Military District Headquarters: three
 Infantry Regiment: 7th
 Independent Infantry Battalions: 2nd, 3rd, 8th, and
 Kuperjanov Partisans
 Artillery Groups (Battalions): 3rd and 4th Cavalry
 Regiment
 3rd Division
 (Headquarters in Tallinn): Major General H. Brede
 Military District Headquarters: three
 Independent Infantry Battalions: 6th, 9th, 10th,
 Kalev, Scouts, and Sakala Partisans
 Guard Battalion
 Artillery Group (Battalion): 5th
 Armored Car/Tank Regiment
 Engineer Battalion
 Signal Battalion
 (These last three had some units attached to 1st and
 2nd Divisions.)

The above organization was a scaled-down version of the proposed wartime one. All the twelve independent Infantry battalions would become regiments upon mobilization; meanwhile, they were actually cadre units that trained soldiers. After four months' training, the soldiers were sent to the two full-strength regiments (1st and 7th) of three battalions each, as these would become the "front-line" units at the time of mobilization. Likewise, the 1st and 3rd Artillery Groups were the full-strength units, being resupplied by personnel by all the other cadre/training Artillery groups.

The Cavalry, Armored, and Technical units were full-strength, training their own recruits, but would also expand as part of the eight brigades formed by the Military Districts (Headquarters).

[A 4th Division was being formed in 1940, with headquarters in Viljandi.]

Army strength:

1,480 officers
 2,700 cadre non-commissioned officers
 10,200 soldiers
 1,100 civilian employees
 (Mobilization strength: 100,000)

Home Guard strength:

32,000 men
 10,500 women auxiliaries
 (70 Army Cadre Officers assigned to Home Guard;

commander, Major General J. Orasmaa.)

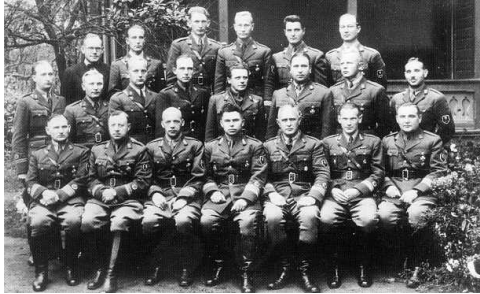
Border Guard strength:

Total 1,200

(officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers)

[Total population in 1939 was 1,133,000 of which eighty-eight per cent were Estonians, the minorities being made up of Russians, Germans, and Swedes.]

Addendum



Officers of the Kuperjanov Partisans Battalion in 1940, wearing the Uniform Number 1. In the front row is the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel E. Marguste.

Photo via F. Limberg

In the two years since the material for this booklet was completed, new information has come to light. A few revisions to the text (and art) have already been made, but this section on the unit badge portion of the collar emblems must stand separately.

These new drawings are based on official Estonian artwork from March 1936. Again, not all details are completely clear; but it is obvious that there are discrepancies between some of these designs and those shown earlier, which had been completed from a variety of sources. A few of these will be discussed in the notes below.

1. Ministry of War—The lesser coat-of-arms of Estonia (that is, without the oak wreath), consisting of three blue lions on a gold shield.
2. Armed Forces Headquarters—Same design as above, but blue lions on a white (silver?) shield.
3. Divisional Headquarters—Black Roman numerals on gold; these were “I” through “III,” with “IV” not added until 1940.
4. Military Districts—Black letters on gold, “LS” representing Lääne-Saare, and the other seven being “H” (Harju), “N” (Narva), “T” (Tartu), “PV” (Pärnu-Viljandi), “V” (Valga), “VJ” (Viru-Järve), and “VP” (Voru-Petseri).
5. Military Training Center—Superimposed on a gold torch, a white shield with gold border and the “OA” monogram in blue. (As the earlier drawings, Figs. II-5, II-15, and II-16, were taken from blurry photographs, the flames of the torch were misinterpreted as representing a star.)
6. Infantry Regiments and Independent (Numbered) Battalions—Black numbers (“1” through “10”) on a gold shield, the 7th Regiment being shown.
7. Same as above, showing the 2nd Independent Infantry Battalion, but on the larger shield for conscripts and short-term volunteers, who wore these without the crossed rifles used by cadre non-commissioned officers and officers.
8. Artillery Groups—Red numbers (“1” through “5”) on a golden flaming grenade.
9. Same as above, larger grenade with smaller flame, worn by conscripts without the crossed cannons of

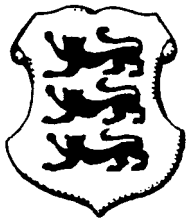


Figure 1/Figure 2

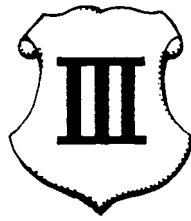


Figure 3

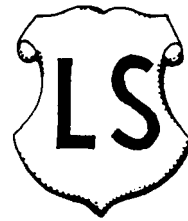


Figure 4

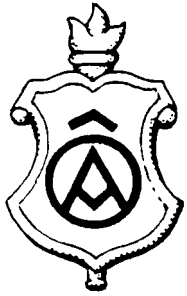


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

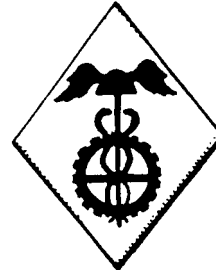


Figure 10



Figure 11

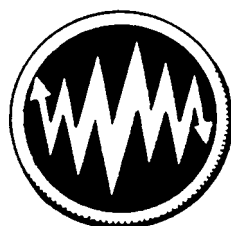


Figure 12

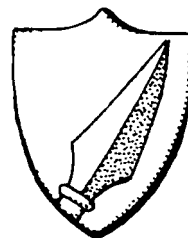


Figure 13

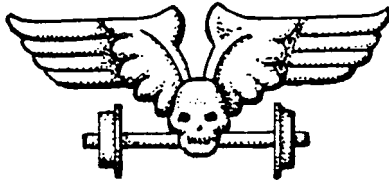


Figure 14

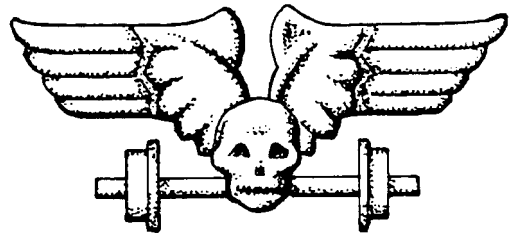


Figure 15



Figure 16

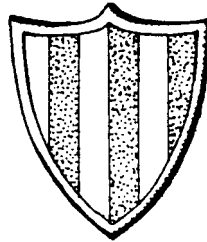


Figure 17

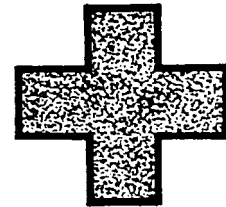


Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

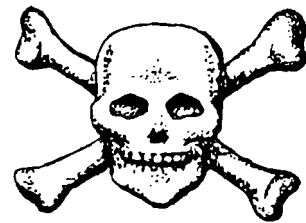


Figure 21



Figure 22

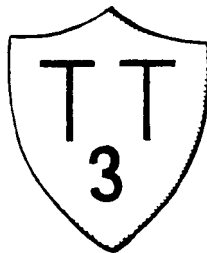


Figure 24



Figure 23

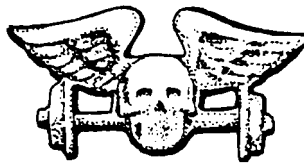


Figure 25

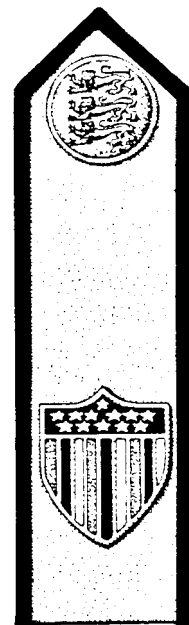


Figure 26



Troopers of the Cavalry Regiment Ski Squadron in winter camouflage suits.

Photo via F. Limberg

- the higher ranks.
10. Army Department of Supplies (warehouses and shops)—Black design, incorporating the winged cap and staff of Mercury, on a gold diamond.
 11. Engineer (Pioneer) Battalion—Gold design and border on black disc. (Note that there is no castle tower featured in this series, although it has appeared in other official illustrations.)
 12. Signal Battalion—Gold design and border on black disc.
 13. Cavalry Regiment—Yellow (gold?) and blue lance tip on a white (silver?) shield; previous variation discussed in main text.
 14. Armored Train Regiment—Gold badge (see also Number 25).
 15. Same as above, but again larger version for the conscript collar.
 16. Auto-Tank Regiment—Gold badge (possible variations discussed in the main text).
 17. Tallinn Guard Battalion—A gold-bordered shield with the white and blue stripes from the City flag of Tallinn.
 18. Military Central Hospital and Central Pharmacy—Red cross.

The next four are the named Infantry units that retained versions of their War of Independence insignia:

19. Scouts Battalion—Gold design on a black shield (with the U.S. motto black on gold).
20. Kalev Battalion—Black top with twelve gold stars, and stripes in the Estonian flag colors of blue, black and white.
21. Kuperjanov Partisans Battalion—Gold emblem.
22. Sakala Partisans Battalion—Gold emblem.
23. Home Guard—Gold emblem with blue lions on the smaller shield. While the Kaitseliit (literally “Defense League”) wore different uniforms than the regular Army and therefore is not covered in this booklet, those Army officers assigned to the Home Guard retained theirs, using the above badge as part of the collar emblem(s).

All of the foregoing, with the exceptions of Numbers 7, 9, and 15, show the relative size and style of the unit collar emblems used by officers, cadre non-commissioned officers, and military officials. The three exceptions represent the conscript/short-term volunteer versions, apparently larger for all these applicable badges, as called for in the 1936



Artillerymen (in winter overcoats and helmets) on parade.

Photo via F. Limberg

regulations.

The following two, not necessarily to the same scale as above but in proportion to each other, are taken from photos of actual badges:

24. Anti-tank Companies—Unit “TT” designation and numbers (“1”-“3”) in steel gray on gold shield. These were formed between 1938 and 1940, one company being assigned to each division. Perhaps these gray letters/numbers (note different style of latter) were actually supposed to be black—or perhaps the previous Infantry emblems’ numbers should have been gray to match the branch color—although other sources have illustrated them in blue! Likewise:
25. An actual badge for the Armored Train Regiment—demonstrating the difference in shape between the manufactured badge and the earlier proposed design. It could be that variations in others existed also, and the mystery of the various discrepancies may never be fully solved.

If the multi-colored badges were indeed enameled, they would have the golden brass showing between each of the applied colors. This was suggested by another illustration, adapted as Number 26, which shows the Kalev Independent Infantry Battalion shield on an overcoat collar tab (steel gray with black piping and gold button); note also the different arrangement of the stars.

It should be clarified that these unit collar badges bore very little resemblance (in most cases) to the more elaborate unit breast badges also worn during this period. These breast badges (along with unit flags) will be featured in Fred Limberg’s book *The Armed Forces of the Estonian Republic, 1918-1940*, to be published (someday?!) by Boreas in the United Kingdom.

Sources

Eesti Entsüklopeedia.

Fragments of *Kaitseväe Vormikirjeldus—1936* (Army Dress Regulations).

Official magazine *Sodur* (Soldier).

Correspondence with Estonian Army veterans.

Personal archive and data (Fred Limberg).

The Authors

Fred Limberg

was born in the Vorumaa district in southeast Estonia in 1910, later being engaged in the legal profession during the period of Independence. Emigrated to the U.S. in 1949.

Interest in Estonian military history led to extensive research resulting in some articles and finally a reference book in 1980, *Isamaa Eest* (“For the Fatherland”).

A second book on the Estonian armed forces has been in preparation for many years.

Resided in Minneapolis, Minnesota, until his death a few years ago.

Ted Koppel

was born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1940 during the Soviet occupation. Escaped to Germany with his mother in 1944 and came to the U.S. in 1950.

Served with a U.S. Army Advisory Team in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. Later worked as a freelance illustrator and in graphics production.

Amateur military historian and collector, with articles and/or artwork appearing in over half a dozen enthusiasts' publications.

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