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Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovak Republic,

0000-0002-8406-9480

The Establishment and Formation of the Slovak Military Elite after the Breakdown of the Czechoslovak Federation and the Establishment of Independent Slovakia

The presented article offers a brief sociological overview of the emergence and formation of the Slovak military elite after the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993. The examined topic is based on the current understanding of the military elite, which focuses on generality. The topic is examined in the context of the development of the Slovak armed forces and the military-organizational changes that the Ministry of Defense went through at the end of the last century and in the two decades of the new millennium. The generals of the Slovak armed forces in the period under review are classified into four groups based on the year and conditions of their appointment to the rank. The data is analyzed based on indicators: age of appointment as a general, completion of military schools (academies), promotion to the rank of general, length of service in the rank of the general, total length of military service and retirement age.

Key words: Military elite, Slovak general officers, the Army of the Slovak Republic, the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, military organisation

Introduction

The military elite is the subject of theoretical and practical interest from all points of view from the past to the present. We want to present a picture of the Slovak military elite – general officers – which is related to recent military-political history after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic.

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief description and overview on selected characteristics of the military elite – the general officers of the Army of the Slovak Republic and the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, who were promoted during their active duty during the period between 1 January 1993 (when the Slovak Republic became an independent state) and 31 De-

ember 2017. We will analyse six selected characteristics of the military elite, including the age of promotion to general officer ranks, higher education at military schools and academies, promotion to higher general officer grades, length of service in general officer ranks, overall length of service and the retirement age.

Besides the description of the military elite during the aforementioned period, we will offer an insight into the Slovak Armed Forces development, their organizational changes and the system of military academies where the elite studied. We use two expressions as far as the armed forces (army) in Slovakia are concerned. In general characteristics, we use the term the Slovak Armed Forces. The expression the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic is used as an official name for the state military organization established on 1 July 2002.¹

In our paper, we do not focus on the development of the military elite in the context of political events given the changes in government bodies and their impact on the formation of military elites.

In the article, we use the method of data analysis, which is conditioned by the fact that it draws only from open sources on the appointment and promotion of Slovak general officers. They provide basic professional information about them, such as their education, including career courses, positions in active service and its length.

Briefly about the Military Elite Theory and its Reflections in Slovakia

There are two basic approaches to military elites. The first approach is theoretical. It is based on the general theory of elites in the social sciences. It has an interdisciplinary character and is mostly developed in political science and sociology. In general, elite is a group of people who are the highest in society (in the various elements and areas of its life, including the armed forces) and have the most power and influence (Murray 2015, p. 7; Bottomore 1993). The second approach considers special forces to be the military elite (Quarrie 2004; Schott 1994), especially special operations units (airborne forces, reconnaissance units, diversionary forces, etc.) that undergo special training. It is a professional eventually journalistic view of the activities of these units and soldiers, their training, weapons, markings and is usually supplemented by rich pictorial material.

This topic is historically but only briefly factually dealt with in the publication titled *Generáli – slovenská vojenská generalita 1918–2012* (Štaigl 2012).

An important part of the military elite research is its historical dimension. It often links the military elite with selected social and political phenomena. The military elite is also the leading object of military-historical research (Gahlen – Winkel 2010, p. 7).

¹ The Slovak Armed Forces were referred to as the Army of the Slovak Republic between 1 January 1993 and 30 June 2002. The Army of the SR also comprised the railway corps and the corps of the Ministry of Interior. On 1 July 2002, the Army of the SR was renamed the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. The Protocol on the Accession of the Slovak Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty was signed by NATO member countries on March 26, 2003. The Armed Forces of the SR transformed into a fully professional organisation on 1 January 2006.

The topic of the military elite is considered to be part of the problems of civil-military relations (Burk 2002, p. 7). Despite the fact that the military elite is an important issue examined by traditional military sociology (Demeter 1930; Janowitz 1957), there are only few publications solely concerned with the military elite or some of its significant elements.

The military elite is a part of the power elite (Mills 2000, p. 198 – 224). Specifically, it is defined on the basis of two criteria, which are intertwined with each other. The first criterion regards a military rank and the second is related to a position within a military organisation. Both criteria apply to personnel holding higher ranks and higher positions in a military hierarchy.

In this regard, we go along with the concept formulated by G. Gahlen and C. Winkel, who consider military leaders, general officers and officer corps to be the military elite (Gahlen–Winkel 2010, p. 7; Kilian 2015). A. Maskalík also considered the general officers to be the Czechoslovak military elite. He claims that “state authorities seek (or should seek) to employ the most capable leaders who meet the strictest criteria regarding morality and professionalism” (Maskalík 2015, p. 5).

M. Hartmann, who also includes general officers and admirals among the military elite, considers it to be one of the numerous professional elites of modern society (Hartmann 2004, p. 10 – 11). In addition, I. A. Brodtkin points to the quality of the military elite and describes it as “a class of military leaders who have high moral and professional qualities and abilities to influence political authorities as far as national security is concerned” (Brodtkin 2007, p. 38).

The military elite is usually studied at a national level (Obraztsov 2012). Only few publications characterize the military elite in international contexts (Mérand – Barrette 2013).

The research into the military elite conducted in Slovakia is marginalised within social sciences, including sociology, security theory and others. Since 1993, there has not been any sociological research in Slovakia solely focused on officers (including general officers). Sociological studies that have been published examine officers’ opinions, motivation and values, but not their careers. In addition, these studies are normally regarded as confidential. Since their results are published after non-systematic selection, they cannot be used for the military elite research purposes.

The theoretical perception of general officers – the Slovak military elite – is affected by the fact that Slovakia is a relatively young and small country, which also influences the strength and the structure of its armed forces. In a short period of time, the Slovak Armed Forces have undergone a lot of changes driven by political, legal and socio-economic factors. The Slovak Armed Forces were referred to as the Army of the Slovak Republic between 1 January 1993 and 30 June 2002. Until 31 December 2002 the Army of the SR also comprised the Railway Troops and the Troops of the Ministry of Interior. On 1 July 2002, the Army of the SR was renamed the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. On 26 March 2003, Slovakia joined NATO. The Armed Forces of the SR transformed into a fully professional organization on 1 January 2006. The year 2009 saw the disbandment of the military courts and the military prosecutor’s office. These transformations had also military aspects, which had an impact on the military elite development.

Since the 1980s, there have been two fundamental tendencies in military sociology that have weakened the interest of sociologists in the issue of the military elite. The first one was the emergence of a new, broader understanding of security, in which non-military aspects gained

prominence. The roles and tasks of soldiers and armed forces in ensuring security significantly narrowed down. The second tendency was the development of the theory of “small” professional armies, where a soldier becomes an “employee” and ceases to be an exceptional profession with a distinct mission in society (Moskos – Wood 1988, p. 324).

Later, the concept of a military professional in postmodern warfare after the Cold War was developed (Moskos – Williams – Sedal 1999, p. 304). However, it is important to emphasize that the latest approaches to studying the military elite highlight the influence of the American “Western” (Euro-Atlantic) prototype of the military professional, being trained to operate in the conditions of the so-called “new world order” (Sarkesian – Connor 2006, p. 248).

In recent times, the European military elite has often been the subject of historical research (Baker 2003; Gahlen – Winkel 2010), but it remains relatively unknown in political and media circles. It lacks the media and political image the elites of NATO have. Currently, the EU military elite is considered one of the many positional elites in society (Hartmann 2004).

From the perspective of sociological research, researchers are faced with the task of finding answers to the question of whether there are identities beyond national military identity, such as the “European” (EU) or “NATO” (Euro-Atlantic) identity. This research issue also fully applies to the Slovak military elite. The formation and current state of the Slovak military elite are influenced by the fact that after the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic, there was a relatively extensive discussion about its security orientation, especially before joining NATO. Research in the field of elites is lacking, and the theory of elites is struggling to find its place amidst the conflicting models of globalization and postmodernity in the contemporary world.

Before defining the military elite, it is essential to highlight the fact that the aforementioned transformations also resulted in the changes regarding designations of the highest ranks. First, the Army of the Slovak Republic adopted the Soviet names used by the Czechoslovak Army from 1961, which were replaced by “western” NATO designations that came into force on 1 January 2003.

Regarding the change in the system of general officer ranks, a paradoxical phenomenon occurred. With the introduction of the new rank of brigadier general, the “old” major generals and lieutenant generals automatically advanced one step higher in the hierarchy (gained an additional star), while the rank of lieutenant general ceased to exist.²

Additionally, a formal terminological problem in Slovak arises from the use of the term “generál” (general) without an attribute as the highest rank of general officers, especially when referring to several generals. Slovak terminology follows the example of the USA in this regard. A similar situation can be observed in Poland, where there are two distinct general ranks - “general dywizji” (divisional general) and “general broni” (general of the weapon), but the highest general rank is also without an attribute. In the Czech Republic, the tradition kept the rank of “armádný generál” (army general) as the highest rank. In Hungary, the traditional designation “vezérezredes” (in translation, “generálplukovnik” or “general colonel”) was also retained.

² Back then, there were only two colonel generals in Slovakia, both of whom were retired.

Table 1 Changes in general officer rank names after the creation of the Armed Forces of the SR

Army of the Slovak Republic	Number of stars	Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic	Number of stars	NATO code
–		brigadier general	1	OF-6
major general	1	major general	2	OF-7
lieutenant general	2	lieutenant general	3	OF-8
colonel general	3	–		
general of the army	4	general	4	OF-9

In accordance with STANAG 2116–NATO Codes for Grades of Military Personnel (STANAG, 2014)

Source: own processing

About History of the Slovak Armed Forces and their Organizational Changes

The Slovak Armed Forces were officially established on 1 January 1993 and they were formed from a part of the Czechoslovak army stationed on the territory of the Slovak Republic. “The plans for the creation of the Army of the Slovak Republic were devised in late September 1992, when the Security Council of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic adopted a resolution on the division of the Czechoslovak Federal Army” (Purdek 2008, p. 14).

Since the establishment of the Slovak Republic, the President of the Slovak Republic has been the Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces. The political control center of the armed forces is the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic,³ which serves as the central authority responsible for defense matters within the state administration. Among its responsibilities, as defined in the competence law, is the construction, management, and oversight of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, as well as military intelligence. In the beginning (from 1 January 1993 until 31 August 1994), the Slovak Army headquarters in Trenčín⁴ was at the highest level of command. The Army of the Slovak Republic was then led by Major General J. Humaj (promoted to lieutenant general on 1 May 1993). The General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic was formed on 1 September 1994. It was moved to Bratislava and became part of the Ministry of Defence on 1 January 2000. When the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic were created, it was renamed the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. The Chief of the General

³ According to unwritten rules of liberal democracies, the post of the defence minister is held by a politician who has not served as a professional soldier. However, there were three exceptions in the period between 1993 and 2017 (two of them were general officers). Imrich Andrejčák (*1941) was the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic from 16 March 1993 to 14 March 1994. He was a professional soldier from 1961 to 1992 and reached the rank of lieutenant general. František Kašický (*1968) was the minister of defence from 4 July 2006 to 30 January 2008. He served in the military from 1988 to 2004 and retired as colonel. The third exception involves Peter Gajdoš (*1959), who was the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic from 23 March 2016 to 20 March 2020. He was a professional soldier from 1982 to 2016 and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. He joined the reserves just before he became the minister.

⁴ The Army of the Slovak Republic was then led by Major General J. Humaj (promoted to lieutenant general on 1 May 1993).

Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces (hereinafter referred to as CGS) is the head and the highest commanding officer in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.⁵

They were Chiefs of General Staff until 31 December 2017: Colonel General J. Tuchyňa from 1 September 1994 to 9 September 1998, Major General M. Mikluš from 10 September 1998 to 4 December 1998, Major General M. Cerovský (the first CGS who did not graduate from the K. E. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces; he was promoted to lieutenant general on 30 December 1998 and to the rank of general on 28 August 2003) from 4 December 1998 to 20 December 2004, Major General L. Bulík from 20 December 2004 to 15 December 2011 (promoted to lieutenant general on 8 May 2005 and to the rank of general on 1 January 2007), Major General P. Vojtek from 15 December 2011 to 6 May 2014 (promoted to lieutenant general on 7 May 2012) and lieutenant general M. Maxim from 6 May 2014 to 7 May 2018 (promoted to the rank of general on 26 November 2015).

One of the problems of the contemporary Slovak military elite is continuity and discontinuity caused by two reasons. Firstly, it is the fact that general officers belonging to the Slovak military elite were promoted in the former Czechoslovak Army. All the general officers, with one exception,⁶ who were promoted to general officer ranks in the Slovak Republic by 31 December 2017 began their military careers in the Czechoslovak Army. This regards one brigadier general – doctor – who joined the Army of the SR on 1 May 1994 as lieutenant colonel. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on 1 January 2007 and retired on 30 June 2013. The second factor related to the activities of the military elite in the changing structure of the military organization, management and command in it. During the military-organizational changes, the functions and their occupation by the generals also changed.

The history of the Slovak Armed Forces can be divided into three stages. The first stage lasted until 1998 and it was characterized by the continuing post-socialist transformation. The second stage involved preparations for the NATO membership and it ended in 2004, when Slovakia joined NATO. The third key stage led to the creation of small fully professional armed forces on 1 January 2006. It has continued up to the present day.

We will begin the overview of changes that had a huge impact on the military elite with the General Staff. We can divide these changes into two categories.

The first category involves the changes regarding the deputy chiefs of the General Staff. Their number varied between one and three. The Slovak Armed Forces also had their first deputy CGS from October 2011 until January 2017. Another new title Deputy CGS – Chief of Staff was introduced in 2017. As of 31 December 2017, there were one deputy CGS and one deputy CGS

⁵ Chiefs of the General Staff: Colonel General J. Tuchyňa from 1 September 1994 to 9 September 1998, Major General M. Mikluš from 10 September 1998 to 4 December 1998, Major General M. Cerovský (the first CGS who did not graduate from the K. E. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces; he was promoted to lieutenant general on 30 December 1998 and to the rank of general on 28 August 2003) from 4 December 1998 to 20 December 2004, Major General L. Bulík from 20 December 2004 to 15 December 2011 (promoted to lieutenant general on 8 May 2005 and to the rank of general on 1 January 2007), Major General P. Vojtek from 15 December 2011 to 6 May 2014 (promoted to lieutenant general on 7 May 2012) and lieutenant general M. Maxim from 6 May 2014 to 7 May 2018 (promoted to the rank of general on 26 November 2015).

⁶ This regards one brigadier general – doctor – who joined the Army of the SR on 1 May 1994 as lieutenant colonel. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on 1 January 2007 and retired on 30 June 2013.

– chief of staff. Deputy chiefs of the General Staff hold the ranks of major general and lieutenant general.

The second category of changes regards the organizational structure of the General Staff. In 1994, when the General Staff was formed, it was divided into two staffs (the ground troops staff and the aviation and air defence staff, which were defined as basic army branches by the Act on the Establishment of the Army of the Slovak Republic) and seven administrative bodies, the number of which rose to nine by 1998. In 1999, the General Staff underwent several transformations. When it was moved to Bratislava, the Ground Troops Staff stayed in Trenčín and the Aviation and Air Defence Staff moved to Zvolen. In 2000, the General Staff consisted of 5 staffs and 4 administrative bodies.

The qualitative changes of the General Staff took place in 2003, when the number of staffs was reduced to four: the personnel management staff, the operations and training staff, the logistics staff and the demands and long-term planning staff. The same year saw the changes in terminology, which has been used with slight modifications until the present day. In 2011, the number of staffs dropped to three: the operations staff, the operational support staff and the strategic planning and capability development staff. In 2014, there were only two staffs left: the strategic planning staff and the operational support staff. The qualitative changes included also the establishment of the Strategic Crisis Management Centre at staff level. This structure was still operative as of 31 December 2017. Individual staffs were headed by brigadier generals and major generals.

We would like to highlight also the numerous changes in the main elements of the military organization structure that occurred at lower levels. Sometimes these were just slight formal modifications, such as the renaming of some groups and sections. As we have already mentioned, the ground forces and air force are the basic elements of the Slovak Armed Forces structure, which also contains other support units and combat support units we will not analyse.

In 1993, the Ground Troops Staff (later on the Ground Troops Headquarters), which was transformed into the Ground Forces in 2002, and the Aviation and Air Defence Staff (later on the Aviation and Air Defence Headquarters), which was transformed into the Air Force in 2000, were subordinate to the Headquarters of the Army of the Slovak Republic. These forces were headed by brigadier general and major generals.

The main cornerstones of the land troops in 1993 were the armored and mechanized divisions as well as the artillery brigade. The aviation and air defence comprised one division.

In November 1994, the divisions were transformed into corps. The ground troops were made up of two corps. In the beginning, however, they consisted of regiments, which was a real curiosity. In October 1995, the regiment system was transformed into a brigade system. The same year saw the formation of the second artillery brigade. The aviation and air defence force comprised one corp. The corps in Army of the Slovak Republic were abolished in March 2000.

In 2000, the Ground troops (the Ground forces since 2002) were made up of two brigades, which were later reorganized several times, and the Slovak Army Militia. July 2001 saw the disbanding of one artillery brigade. The Slovak Army Militia was dissolved in October 2002 and the second artillery brigade was disbanded in March 2005. The year 2014 saw the formation of the combat support brigade after the support and training forces were dissolved.

As of 31 December 2017, the Ground Forces comprised two mechanized brigades and one combat support brigade.

When the Air Force was formed in 2000, it was made up of four air bases, two anti-aircraft rocket brigades and one signal brigade. September 2001 saw the disbanding of one anti-aircraft rocket brigade and one air base. The signal brigade was dissolved in 2005. The command, control and reconnaissance brigade was formed in 2007. The main units of the air force were gradually transformed into the wings (the command, control and reconnaissance wing, the mixed wing, the helicopter wing and the transport wing).

As of 31 December 2017, the Air Force was made up of the command, control and reconnaissance wing, the tactical wing, the helicopter wing, the transport wing and the anti-aircraft rocket brigade.

July 2002 saw the formation of the third basic element of the Slovak Armed Forces – Training and Support Forces in Trenčín, which, however, did not comprise any brigades. They were mainly made up of training centres and logistics bases. Training and Support Forces were disbanded in November 2014.

A brief overview of education provided for military elites at Czechoslovak military colleges and academies from the mid-1960s

Since the promotion to general officer ranks requires higher education, we would like to provide a brief overview of the colleges and academies the military elite graduated from. The years 1972 and 1973 were the milestones because they saw a major reorganisation of higher education in the military. The new officer training programme, the development of which began in the mid-1960s, expected every officer to complete higher education.

There were two basic models of officer training. The older one expected officers to complete one of the numerous and diverse military schools that were established after World War II (there were several dozen military schools due to various reorganisations – their exact number has not been officially determined) and then receive higher education at military academies comparable to civilian universities. In addition, officers could complete their education at higher military schools comparable to civilian higher education facilities (usually to pedagogical faculties). Since 1967, men who did not have previous military experience (they were not graduates of military schools) could also become students of military academies in selected fields of study.

The second new model was based on the system of military colleges with a four-year programme (the system began in 1972 and the qualifications received at these academies were comparable with those obtained at civilian universities). After gaining some practical experience in their units, some selected officers completed postgraduate courses at military academies (usually three-year courses). Completion of these courses was a prerequisite for obtaining command positions at battalion and regiment levels and specialist jobs at higher headquarters.

There were three military academies in Czechoslovakia after 1972. The Military Academy in Brno was the first and the biggest academy. It underwent different reorganisations from 1951 and it closed in 2004 (it was named the Military Technical Academy between 1951 and 1954 and the

Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký from 1945 to 1990). At first, it was a technical military school, but very soon it transformed into a “classical” military academy for commanding officers. The second biggest academy was named the Klement Gottwald Military Political Academy in Bratislava, which existed from 1972 to 1989. The Jan Evangelista Purkyně Military Medical Academy in Hradec Králové was the smallest military academy. It was open from 1951 to 2004 (it was named the Jan Evangelista Purkyně Military Medical Research and Training Institute during the period between 1958 and 1988). In fact, it was a medical faculty. We use only basic names of military universities and colleges without mentioning important people or events that they were named after.

There were exceptions in both models. Firstly, the army recruited also officers who had not graduated from military academies or colleges, but from various civilian universities (for example, from faculties of law). Secondly, some officers, especially those appointed to junior officer jobs, did not have higher qualifications for various reasons.

All military colleges, except for Vyškov, were situated in Slovakia. The Military College of Ground Troops in Vyškov was the largest military college in Czechoslovakia. It was established in 1972, when the Command and Organising Faculty of the Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký, which was founded in 1967 after the transformation of the higher military school that was established in 1961, was transformed into the military college.

The year 1973 saw the establishment of the Air Force Colleges in Košice (it operated until 1993), the Command and Technical College in Martin (it closed down in 1979), the Military Technical College in Liptovský Mikuláš (it operated until 1993) and the Rear Area and Technical Support College in Žilina, which ceased to operate in 1983.

The Military Faculty of the University of Transport in Žilina (later on the University of Transport and Communications) was a specific educational facility. It operated from 1959 (it was established as the Faculty of Railway Engineering of the Military Technical Academy in Brno in 1952 and later, in 1953, it was renamed the Military Faculty of the University of Railway Engineering in Prague). As part of the railway corps, the Military Faculty was subordinate to the Ministry of National Defence as well as the Ministry of Transport and Communications. In 1996, it was renamed the Military Faculty of the University of Žilina and, in 1998, the Faculty of Special Engineering of the University of Žilina. In 2000, the faculty was taken under direct control of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

Commanders at division level and higher were required to graduate from military academies of the General Staff, mainly in the former USSR. In the late 1980s, the Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký in Brno introduced a new postgraduate programme, which was regarded as an equivalent to military academies of the General Staff.

The Army of the Slovak Republic adopted the Czechoslovak system of military higher education. The year 1993 saw the establishment of the Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš, which operated until 2004. In the same year, it was replaced by the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik and the newly established National Defence Academy of Andrej Hadík, which closed down on 31 August 2008. The Air Force Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Košice, which existed from 1993 to 2004, was merged with the Technical University of Košice as the civilian Faculty of Aeronautics.

Military secondary schools also played a significant role in officer training. There were two basic types of military high schools.

The first one was the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov (later renamed the military grammar school), which can be simply referred to as a “socialist cadet”. Military grammar schools entered the education system in 1949 and they were situated in various places across the country. The year 1970 saw the establishment of the Military Grammar School of the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Cadets at grammar schools began their studies at the age of 15 (the admission age was 12 in the 1950s). However, they could not enter employment relationships with the army before they reached the age of majority and became enlisted. The cadets completed their studies by taking the school leaving examination, which was compatible with final exams at civilian schools. If graduates of military grammar schools decided to pursue their studies, they initially held the rank of private.

The second group comprised several types of military secondary technical schools that were located all across the nation. Their existence started in 1967. Their students began the studies at the age of 15. However, they were legally allowed to complete their basic military service in the third and fourth grades (from the age of 17). They also completed their studies by taking the school leaving examination. After graduation, they were promoted to the rank of sergeant first class (in slovak rotmajster – OR-7 in STANAG 2116 – NATO Codes for Grades of Military Personnel /STANAG, 2014/).

We highlight the existence of these schools because 28 general officers graduated from the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov (and the Military Grammar School of the Slovak National Uprising) and 7 general officers completed their studies at secondary technical schools, which accounts for 40 percent of the total number of general officers. Military secondary education in Slovakia ceased to exist in 2003.

Czechoslovak General Officers who Continued their Service in the Army of the Slovak Republic

Out of the sixteen Czechoslovak general officers,⁷ who continued their service in the Army of the Slovak Republic, there were 2 lieutenant generals. The highest posts they held in the Czechoslovak Army were the Chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak People’s Army and the chief of the military district (renamed the military headquarters in 1990). This group also comprises 11 general officers, who had been division commanders during their previous careers.

The list of Czechoslovak general officers, who were promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic era and continued their service in the Army of the Slovak Republic:

⁷ We used the following publications to characterise the category of 16 Czechoslovak general officers who continued their active duty service in the Army of the Slovak Republic: *Elita armády Československá vojenská generalita 1918 – 1992* written by Maskalík, A. and the second edition of *Generáli – slovenská vojenská generalita 1918–2012* by Štaigl J. et al. The webpage of the Slovak Generals Club (www.kgsr.sk) was our additional source.

- Lieutenant General A. Slimák (*1941) promoted to general officer ranks on 1 May 1986. He was promoted to lieutenant general on 1 May 1990 and he served until 31 May 1995.
- Major General J. Váňa (*1940) - promoted on 1 October 1983. In 1993, he was assigned to the military intelligence. He was promoted to lieutenant general on 20 August 1998 and served in the military until 31 December 1998.
- Major General M. Hergovič (*1942), promoted on 1 October 1986, was appointed as the Chief of the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic from 18 March 1993 to 30 September 2004. He was promoted to lieutenant general on 1 May 1993 and he continued his service until 30 September 2004.
- Major General S. Naďovič (*1939), promoted on 1 May 1982, ended his military career on 31 August 1997.
- Major General A. Sabol (*1941), promoted on 1 October 1984, was appointed as the State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic from 1 October 1994 to 15 December 1994. He continued his active duty until 15 March 1995.
- Major General R. Jurica (*1940), promoted on 1 May 1985, served until 31 January 2001.
- Major General J. Egg (*1941), promoted on 1 October 1985, served until 31 December 1996.
- Major General O. Kubizniak (*1944) was promoted to general officer ranks on 1 May 1987. In 1993 he was assigned to the military intelligence service and he served until 31 December 2003.
- Major General J. Nahálka (*1933), promoted on 1 May 1988, joined the Army of the Slovak Republic on 22 February 1993. He was assigned to the military intelligence service and he continued his service until 30 January 1994.
- Lieutenant General J. Tuchyňa (*1941), who joined the Army of the Slovak Republic after reactivation on 1 May 1994, was appointed as a general officer on 1 October 1988. He was promoted to lieutenant general on 2 November 1990 and he served as the minister of the Interior from 24 June 1992 until 15 March 1994. He ended active duty service and joined the reserves on 30 September 1992. He was promoted to colonel general (the reserve grade) in May 1993. Holding this rank, he served as the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic and retired in September 1998.

The list of Czechoslovak general officers who were promoted to general officer ranks in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and continued their service in the Army of the Slovak Republic:

- Major General P. Honzek (*1947) was promoted to general officer ranks on 1 May 1990 and promoted to lieutenant general on 18 September 1998. He served until 30 December 1999.
- Major General Š. Gombík (*1951), promoted to general officer ranks on 8 May 1992, was promoted to lieutenant general on 20 August 1998. He continued his service until 15 December 2000.
- Major General J. Ešmír (*1945), promoted to general officer ranks on 8 May 1992, was promoted to lieutenant general on 20 August 1998. He completed his active duty on 30 November 1999.
- Major General M. Horský (*1945), promoted to general officer ranks on 1 October 1990, was assigned to the military intelligence service from 1998. He served until 31 October 2002.

- Major General J. Humaj (*1949), promoted to general officer ranks on 23 July 1992, was promoted to lieutenant general on 1 May 1993 and served until 31 December 1999.
- Major General J. Pančík (*1949) was promoted to general officer ranks on 1 November 1991 and ended his active duty on 31 December 2002.

As regards their education, 12 general officers in this group graduated from the Military Academy of Antonín Zápotocký in Brno and 4 general officers completed their higher education at the military academies in the USSR. Three of them were former pilots. Except for J. Nahálka, J. Humaj and J. Ešmír, all the general officers in this group graduated from the K. E. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces in Moscow.

None of the general officers who were promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic era was sent by the Army of the Slovak Republic to western countries in order to further their education. Three general officers, who were promoted to the general officer ranks in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic era, completed the courses at the NATO Defence College in Rome (P. Honzek, Š. Gombík and J. Pančík). As far as other general officers from this group are concerned, M. Hergovič, P. Honzek and A. Slimák completed their education at the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov and Š. Gombík graduated from a military secondary technical school.

The average age of promotion to general officer ranks was almost 44 years (the lowest age was 40 – J. Egg and Š. Gombík, and the highest age was 54 - J. Nahálka). The longest time after promotion to general officers was served by M. Hergovič (more than 18 years) and the shortest by J. Nahálka (less than 6 years). The average length of active duty service in the rank of general officers was approximately 11.5 years. The average retirement age was more than 55.5 years.

The Czechoslovak general officers served in the Army of the Slovak Republic for 6 and a half years on average (those who were promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic served less than 5 years and 8 months). When the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic were created, there were only four general officers from this group left. Three of them – Maj. Gen. O. Kubizniak, Maj. Gen. M. Horský and Maj. Gen. J. Pančík – retired in 2002. Lt. Gen. M. Hergovič served the longest – until 30 September 2004.

Six general officers (two of whom were promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) were promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. The promotion of Colonel General J. Tuchyňa was specific as he was promoted to this rank while being a reservist.

As far as the length of active duty service is concerned (including the mandatory basic military training the general officers completed at the beginning of their studies at military schools), 11 Czechoslovak general officers (including 5 promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) served from 31 to 40 years and 5 general officers promoted to general officer ranks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic served more than 40 years. Lt. Gen. M. Hergovič served the longest – 45 years. He studied at the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov for 6 years, so he actually wore a uniform for more than a half century.

General Officers Promoted to General Officer Ranks in the Slovak Republic after 1993

The first general was J. Ďurove, who was promoted to general officer ranks in the Slovak Republic on 1 May 1993. Three other general officers were promoted in 1994 and the year 1997 saw the promotion of eight more general officers.

The youngest major generals were Ľ. Bulík and O. Samaš (promoted at the age of 43) and the oldest ones were J. Kováčik and A. Siro (promoted at the age of 58). Brigadier General P. Macko, promoted at the age of 39, is the youngest general officer among the Slovak military elite. The oldest brigadier generals were J. Muriň and V. Šimko (54 years). It is interesting that they were both appointed as chiefs of the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic.

The average age of promotion to general officer ranks was more than 47.5 years (the differences were minimum – major generals were promoted at the age of 48 and brigadier generals at the age of 47 and a half years). The average retirement age in major generals was 54 years. However, the average retirement age in brigadier generals cannot be currently determined as eleven of them still serve in the armed forces.

Before they became professional soldiers, eight major generals graduated from the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov and two major generals from military technical schools. Four major generals studied at other types of military secondary schools. Fifteen brigadier generals graduated from the Military School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov and the Military Grammar School of the Slovak National Uprising and 4 brigadier generals graduated from other military secondary schools.

As regards the length of active duty service in general officer ranks, five brigadier generals and five major generals served up to 3 years (one of them was promoted one day before his retirement), fourteen major generals and ten brigadier generals served from 3 to 6 years, four major generals and eleven brigadier generals served from 6 to 9 years, five major generals and two brigadier generals from 9 to 12 years and four brigadier generals served for more than 12 years. Eleven brigadier generals are still on active duty.

As far as major generals are concerned, only three of them were promoted to higher ranks: L. Bilčík to the grade of lieutenant general and Ľ. Bulík and M. Cerovský to the rank of general.

As regards the promotion of brigadier generals by 31 December 2017 (we did not include the promotions after this date in our list), 12 generals were promoted to the rank of major general and 6 to lieutenant general. M. Maxim was the only one to be promoted to the rank of general.

As for the length of active duty service (including the mandatory basic military training the general officers completed at the beginning of their studies at military schools), two major generals promoted to general officer ranks in Slovakia served less than 30 years, 24 general officers served from 31 to 40 years and two of them for more than 40 years. Concerning the length of service in brigadier generals, two of them served less than 20 years, five brigadier generals served from 21 to 30 years, twenty-one of them from 31 to 40 years and four brigadier generals served for more than 40 years (11 brigadier generals are still on active duty in 2021).

Military education of major generals

As far as the “initial” military education is concerned, 13 major generals graduated from military colleges in Vyškov (8), Žilina (2), Bratislava (1), Košice (1) and Liptovský Mikuláš (1). One major general entered the military academy without previous military experience. Two of them graduated from the Military Faculty of the University of Transport in Žilina and one from the military faculty of medicine. Three major generals graduated from civilian faculties of law. Three other major generals studied at higher military schools, four of them at military schools and one graduated from an officer flight school.

Seven general officers studied full-time at the military academy in Brno and seven of them were postgraduate students at the same academy. Academic degrees and qualifications obtained at the Military Faculty of the University of Transport in Žilina, the military faculty of medicine and at civilian faculties of law were compatible with military academies. Four major generals were not graduates of the military academies established after 1972 and four of them graduated from military academies in the USSR.

Two major generals (M. Stráňava and E. Vestenický) were graduates of the K. E. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces in Moscow. Three major generals studied at the general-staff military academies in Czechoslovakia (M. Mikluš, who began his studies in Moscow but graduated in Brno, O. Nečas and M. Podhoráni). Seven major generals graduated from similar schools abroad (France, Germany, the USA and Great Britain).

Military education of brigadier generals

The “initial” military education of brigadier generals was not as diverse as in the previous categories. All members of this group became officers after they graduated from military colleges and academies (without previous military experience). The majority of them (eighteen) studied at the Military College of Ground Troops in Vyškov. Nine brigadier generals graduated from the Military Technical College in Liptovský Mikuláš and eight of them studied at the Air Force Academy in Košice. One brigadier general was a graduate of the Rear Area and Technical Support Military College in Žilina and four of them graduated from military academies without previous military experience (3 in Brno and 1 in Bratislava). One brigadier general was a graduate of a civilian faculty of medicine. There was just one brigadier general who did not have any military education or qualifications compatible with military academies. He graduated from the University of Agriculture and joined the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in 2003, when he moved from the police force to the military intelligence.

Twelve future brigadier generals were postgraduate students at military academies (six of them at the Military Academy in Brno and six brigadier generals studied abroad – five in the USSR and later in the Russian Federation and one in Poland).

Thirty-four brigadier generals graduated from military academies (schools) at the General Staff level – 11 of them completed the National Security Course at the National Defence Acad-

emy in Liptovský Mikuláš and 23 of them studied abroad, including 6 graduates of the General Staff College in Hamburg, 4 graduates of the Military Academy in Paris, 3 graduates of the Royal College of Defence Studies in London and one graduate of another military academy in Great Britain. Eight brigadier generals graduated from various military schools in the USA. One brigadier general studied at the K. E. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Five brigadier generals graduated from the NATO Defence College. Two of them also studied at general staff military academies, while six brigadier generals did not complete any of the aforementioned courses or schools.

Brief Overview of General Officer Ranks and Appointments in the Slovak Armed Forces

Within the first two decades of the new millennium, the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic employed 25 brigadier generals, 44 major generals (including 13 ranks granted according to the old rank system), 14 lieutenant generals (including 6 ranks granted according to the old rank system), 1 colonel general and 3 generals. The highest rank of general was conferred only on those general officers who held the post of the Chief of the General Staff.

Planned and real numbers of general officers were published in the media only occasionally. Open sources provided at least information on the number of general officers on active duty in a particular year. On 1 January 1993, the Army of the Slovak Republic employed 14 general officers, who were joined by two other general officers in the same year - one continued his service he had begun in the Czechoslovak Army and one was promoted to general officer ranks for the first time. This number (14 or 16) was the lowest number of general officers in the following 25 years. The year 2000 saw the highest number of general officers on active duty – 31. Their number, however, has been below 25 since 2010. There were 23 general officers in the Slovak Armed Forces as of 31 December 2017.

We would like to highlight the fact that the general officers of the Slovak Armed Forces can also hold posts at the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic. In the 1990s, two general officers were also appointed as state secretaries at the Ministry of Defence and two held the posts of directors at the Office of the Ministry of Defence. However, general officers were mostly appointed as chiefs of sections at the MoD. This post was held by 11 generals.

In addition, general officers can also run the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic (4 general officers) and the military intelligence. Military Intelligence was created on 1 January 2013. As part of the Ministry of Defence of the SR (not subordinate to the General Staff), it acquires and analyses information significant for securing national security and defence capabilities of the SR. It was formed by the merger of two military intelligence services. The Military Intelligence Service operated from 1 February 1995 after reorganization of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic and it was subordinate to the Ministry of Defence of the SR. The second service was named the Military

Defence Intelligence, which operated from 1 January 1993. Until the end of 2017, only one general officer was at the head of Military Intelligence.⁸

In the 1990s, two general officers held posts at the Security Council of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. General officers can usually become military attachés at the tail end of their careers. There were 19 general officers holding these posts, two of whom ran two attaché offices. Two general officers were also appointed as permanent representatives of Slovakia to the United Nations.

Two general officers led the railway corps until they were disbanded in 2002. Until 2009, three general officers had held the posts related to the military law and court – legal representation of the Ministry of Defence, the chief military prosecutor and the chairman of the Higher Military Court.

Conclusion

In our brief sociological analysis, we sought to highlight the fact that the military elite is made up of individuals who wield influence in society and the armed forces. These individuals, however, are not influential only thanks to their leading or otherwise significant position, but also due to their personal and professional qualities. This means that they have: *the qualities of a military professional* (expertise, responsibility, the ability to participate in joint efforts on behalf of the armed forces and social qualifications); *leadership traits* (personality, pedagogical, moral and social) and finally *the qualities of a leader* (formed by the factors such as recognition of the significance of subordinates, initiative, the emphasis placed on performance and social sensitivity).

This fact is very significant because it shows that elites are formed only from a group of individuals who have acquired the aforementioned qualities and traits. These qualities and traits are not inherited and the elites were not born with them. Indeed, they have to acquire them through a continuous process of shaping a military professional.

The Slovak military elite (general officers) has never been analysed as a specific part of the power elite from the military, security, political or any other perspective. In general, this social group can be perceived positively considering how the armed forces work.

After the general officers retired, they participated in political life only occasionally also due to traditional relations between the military and society in Slovakia. Even though we did not examine these issues, we can mention (based on media sources) some political posts held by former general officers. In 2020, for example, one former general officer became the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior of the SR. Another former general officer used to be the member of the Slovak National Council and at least two more former general officers were involved in activities conducted by the Slovak political parties. Several general officers worked at universities and various social organizations and institutions.

⁸ Military Intelligence was created on 1 January 2013. As part of the Ministry of Defence of the SR (not subordinate to the General Staff), it acquires and analyses information significant for securing national security and defence capabilities of the SR. It was formed by the merger of two military intelligence services. The Military Intelligence Service (secret service) operated from 1 February 1995 after reorganisation of the Intelligence Agency of the General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic and it was subordinate to the Ministry of Defence of the SR. The second service was named the Military Defence Intelligence (counterintelligence), which operated from 1 January 1993.

The Slovak Armed Forces were not implicated in many political or economic scandals in the given period, which is a positive finding. What is more, general officers were not involved in any of these scandals at all. In the end, we would like to draw a kind of a hypothetical conclusion. The Slovak military elite – the general officers – contributed by their acts and behaviour in public to the fact that the Army of the Slovak Republic and later the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic have belonged to the most trusted institutions in Slovakia for many years.

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