

ARMS and UNIFORMS

THE SECOND WORLD WAR Part 1

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THE SECOND WORLD WAR

PART 1

France, Germany, Austria,
Russia, Czechoslovakia, Poland
and Belgium, 1933-41

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WARD LOCK LIMITED · LONDON

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Foreword

In this seventh volume, the first of four devoted to the Second World War, the reader will find illustrations and details of uniforms, arms and vehicles, derived both from published works and a great number of as yet unpublished documents.

We have not included the British army in this first volume, although chronologically it belongs beside the French army. But the reader leafing through the pages will see the richness of material in the chapter on France, in which we have tried to bring to life again the almost forgotten uniforms of the men who were struck down by the *Blitzkrieg*.

Germany, with its Nazi organisation and powerful Wehrmacht, must appear as the chief antagonist right from the start of this series. The armoured vehicles of France and Germany are also included in this present volume.

It would have been tantamount to treason to have tried to accommodate the magnificent British army in too small a space, and it will take pride of place in the second volume. The second volume also brings together the air forces of the main combatants and the armoured vehicles, and shows the development of the German army from 1941 to 1943.

Volume three introduces the opponents in the wider theatre of war—China, the USA and Japan—and features the naval forces of the European nations, the Norwegian and Finnish armies and the armies of the axis satellites.

In the final volume the changing face of the armies of the great nations in the last years of war is shown, and attention is focused on the unfamiliar uniforms of the lesser European countries, ending with a review

of the artillery, vehicles and machines (including submarines and aircraft carriers) developed up to 1945.

If it has not always been possible to take strict account of chronology, we hope that the reader will find enough to satisfy his curiosity about the performers in this great human drama that has now taken its place in the march of time.

The list of friends who have helped us has grown longer every year. We would like to offer special thanks to those named below, who have given us such tremendous assistance:

Monsieur Lecote, Conservateur en chef, Musée de l'Armée de Bruxelles,
Monsieur Lorette, Conservateur du Cabinet des estampes, Musée de l'Armée de Bruxelles,
Colonel Wemaer, Musée de l'Armée de Paris,
Colonel Martel, Direction centrale du matériel,
Colonel Monteil of the French Embassy,
Colonel Palmen of the Finnish Embassy,
Lieutenant-Colonel Chiroki and his colleagues of the Soviet army,
Major B.E.M. Van Boucke,
Commandant Verelst, Centre d'identification d'avions et missiles,
Commandant Servais, Service historique de l'Armée belge,
Dr E. Kroner, Austrian president of U.N.E.S.C.O.,
Captain Grimaldi, National Museum of Italian Cavalry,
and Messieurs Lion, Chayre, Simon, Dubois, Vanderpoorten, T'Sas, Moulin, Alazet, Tavart, Serlez de Leurs, de Partz, Carmigniani, Bragard, Thielemans, Guillaume, Locquet and Joris.

PART ONE

INFANTRY AND CAVALRY

The French Army from 1935 to 1940

In just two years of war the smart and colourful uniforms of the French army of 1914 had been transformed into an almost universal horizon blue.¹ But it was autumn 1935 before its uniforms had finally completed a further metamorphosis, once again in this very important area of colour.

Since 1921 khaki had been recognised as more practical, being much less visible in open country, and from this time horizon blue steadily lost ground to its less conspicuous rival. The manufacture of the horizon-blue material was discontinued, though as an economy measure existing stocks continued to be used by certain special corps, and uniforms already made up and issued continued in service until worn out.

By 1935, then, re-equipment in khaki had been completed; apart from this change in colour, however, the French soldier was still dressed like the *poilu* of 1918. Officers alone stood out from this somewhat drab uniformity, when the adoption of a special dress uniform was authorised by the regulation of 28 May 1931. The need for a uniform more appropriate to ceremonial occasions and civil receptions had begun to be felt immediately after the First World War, and several designs had been produced, with varying degrees of success, until the 1931 regulation defined the exact style.

¹ Khaki had also made its appearance. See vols 1 and 2 of *Arms and Uniforms of the First World War*.

FRENCH LINE INFANTRY, 1935-1940 I

1. Standard bearer — 2. Officer in full dress — 3. Alpine infantry — 4. Colour party — 5. Drummer in *prise d'armes* dress — 6. Walking-out dress with horizon-blue overcoat — 7. Walking-out dress with pea-jacket

OFFICERS' DRESS

An officer wore one of the following five uniforms according to the occasion:

1 Full-dress uniform: of similar cut for all the corps in a troop. Each corps was distinguished by the arm of service colours it had used before 1914, which were usually displayed on the collar and patches, and on the cuff facings. The kepi, the trousers and sometimes the tunic were all in this distinctive colour. The coloured tunic became more of a problem as the tendency spread to use one standard pattern for it. An overcoat in the form of a cape completed the full dress.

2 Walking-out dress: the same as full dress but without the epaulettes and sabre, except by special order.

3 Service dress: khaki apart from the kepi. Mounted officers could wear riding breeches and boots during the day but had to return to trousers for evening dress. This uniform was used for ceremonial occasions which did not require the wearing of uniforms 1 or 2 above.

4 Working dress (*tenue de travail*): this uniform was the same as No. 3 above, and was worn in the barracks and for moving about in town when on fatigues.

5 Battle dress (*tenue de campagne*): similar to No. 4 above, it included an extra khaki shirt and tie, and a khaki kepi or a khaki-painted steel helmet. In peacetime this uniform was worn on general manoeuvres and for inspections and parades under arms.

After 1936 there was a move to make uniforms 3, 4

NB: The *soutache* (braid) was sewn on to the collar patches to form an angle around the insignia; from 1940 it was sewn on in an arc. This also applies to the following three illustrations.





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