

# MAGYAR FRONT



Vol. XXII, No. 4

FALL 2020

## UPDATING OUR 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION COMMEMORATIVE PUBLICATION

**Plus:**  
**Revisiting Imperial  
Yesterdays**

**And:**  
**A Little Treasure from the  
Frontline Fighters' Association**



CZINK  
COLLECTION

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## *A note from the Editor*

Since the pandemic has freed up more spare time for me, I have set about tackling a few projects that have been on the back burner. One of them was to make my 2006 publication *Rise Up! The 1956 Hungarian Revolution – A People's Sacrifice* available digitally online. The original hard copy was produced in black and white, so I thought it was about time to give it a little clean-up and present the material in colour.

A decade-and-a-half ago I spent a year going over it with a fine-toothed comb, and reading it again now, I still feel that it is a good publication with a unique and useful perspective, however, my main reason for carrying on with its digitalization is because I think it's still relevant. The nature of historical study, I believe, is that it is a science that is inherently incomplete – going over it regularly and viewing it from other angles can often yield more in-depth knowledge. I hope that readers will always find this publication worthy of discussion and criticism, and perhaps even note that it is a document that also contains something useful between the lines. The new version will be available for downloading on our website.

This issue of the *Magyar Front* contains two articles from that publication with some new material which I think will please the history buff and collector, and I thank Ágnes Makai again for her excellent article on the badge of the National Guard. IHMHPS members Tamás Baczoni and Gergely Sallay have helped me once more with new questions regarding some of the material presented here.

“A people's sacrifice” means a great deal to me personally. I chose that phrase to include everyone involved – pointing out the good and bad guys is job I am not qualified for. I would like to think that I remain a learner, with a beginner's mind, and when I look at history I'll never shy away from looking behind the curtain of popular convictions. On the other hand, philosophers have said that we can only truly experience ourselves - my personal 1956-related familiarity came to me through my parents and was a big part of my life during my formative years. My father was a logistics lieutenant in the Hungarian Army at the time of the revolution, stationed in Szombathely. Learning that there was a serious shortage of food and other necessities in Budapest, he joined with an acquaintance who was involved with a grocery wholesale company and volunteered to drive an army truck to the capitol. Once unloaded, he found that many people asked him to take them out of Budapest to the border – he repeated this round-trip many times, and once was detained overnight by Soviet forces.

In the year of the 50th anniversary of the Revolution, Hungarian Ambassador Dénes Tomaj contacted me to ask for information on people in Vancouver who had played key roles in the events of 1956, and my father's name and details of his participation were included in my report. I am grateful that Hungary rewarded him with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit, and that beautiful decoration is in my possession today, however, it's not my only revolutionary inheritance.



In July of 1968, at a time when violence was common at the local Hungarian Hall, an improvised explosive device destroyed our family car and part of our home – an event that filled my childhood with acute anxiety and a constant dread of imminent catastrophe. In the 1990s I learned that when my mother and father fled Hungary following the uprising, he left behind his pregnant wife and one year-old daughter - on the plus side, I had the good fortune to get to know my two half-sisters Zsuzsanna and Judit who open-mindedly embraced a Canadian citizen whose father had forsaken them while they struggled with their mother in post-revolution Hungary.

Today we naturally celebrate the positive and heroic aspects of past national events, but if we wish to keep them relevant we must seek to understand the bigger picture; and before we allow our peaceful protest to turn violent, I hope that we consider what far reaching consequences our actions may produce. Perhaps it is true that we can only experience ourselves – if that's the case, I have found that in order to understand history we must be as brave as those whom we glorify, if we wish to truly learn from the past.

*P.Cz.*



### **MAGYAR FRONT VOLUME XXII, ISSUE 4 FALL 2020**

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**Peter Czink, Editor-Designer**

**The New Front:**  
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*“To strive, to seek, to find,  
and not to yield.”*

**Peter Czink**  
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Vice-President, Austria

**Dr. Gergely Pál Sallay**  
Historical Consultant, Correspondent

PO Box 74527 Kitsilano PO  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6K 4P4 Canada

czink@shaw.ca  
www.NewFront.ca

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Fighter's Association, and was  
published from the early 1930s until  
the end of the Second World War.

# Hungarian-Canadian Cultural Confusion: Sifting Through the Microcosmic Fallout

by Peter Czink

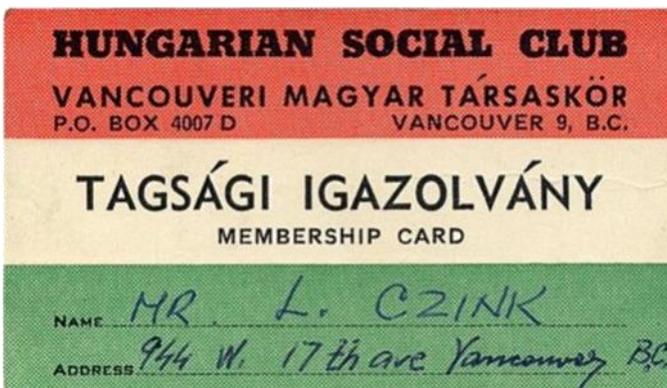
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One of my most vivid childhood impressions was my hatred for Russians. As a little boy, unaware of what a Russian was, and in fact quite ignorant of what emotions like hate meant, I aped what my mother had taught me. My parents escaped from their homeland following the 1956 Revolution and although my father took active part in the uprising, my mother, nineteen years-old at the time, went along hoping for a better future in a new country. While growing up I heard many stories about the revolution and of life in Hungary, and I learned that Russians were to be mercilessly loathed. By kindergarten other races were added to the mix, even “lazy Canadians,” until I had my own repertoire of hatred and misunderstanding. Hungarian culture was simply superior – its food, history, music – and by the first grade I was a first-class junior jingo.

My father, even more so than my mother, never really became Canadian. The hi-fi was always well-stocked with Hungarian records that my usually stoic dad would sadly sing along to. With each passing schoolyear and unimpressive report card came threats of “sending me back to Hungary” where I would be properly schooled. This was the place, my childish mind would recall, where people were dragged off in the middle of the night only to be beaten senseless by the secret police, and where my mother was terrorized by over-zealous nuns in the institution she was forced to stay at during the war years. I was reminded that Hungary was a place where oranges and bananas were considered luxury items and where people were sentenced to death for rising up against their oppressors. Cultural confusion had set in, but I was still unaware to what extent my parents were representative of the larger Hungarian-Canadian immigrant community.

I started to interact with school chums from all sorts of ethnic backgrounds and shared classrooms and playgrounds with an assortment of races and religions. I spent many of my childhood years in a silent quagmire of guilt and worry about my affection for people who were so different from me. My cultural identity and love for all things Hungarian remained intact, however, and by the time I was a teenager

**My father's Vancouver Hungarian  
Social Club membership card.**



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**Logistics Lieutenant Lajos Czink and his  
1956 keepsake, a commemorative stick-pin.**

I was ready to see myself and my world through Canadian-Hungarian eyes. In the meantime, the spectre of the 1956 Revolution swirled about in my mind, as the images of a grey, forsaken, communist Hungary filled the background of my imagination, unchanged from the time when my parents presented them to me.

Over the years, as the struggle most of us seem to go through in our teens and twenties gave way to a more stable lifestyle, I often thought of my heritage and how the many great Hungarians of the past had served “the Hungarian cause.” Volunteering in the community seemed to be a worthwhile endeavour, and I approached the local Hungarian Hall to offer whatever services of mine they might be in need of. Those few years were very memorable and great friendships were developed – despite the fact that my father, who spent many years volunteering there himself (and later repudiated for his troubles), warned me to stay well away from the place. My dad, I would remember, was the one who unselfishly brought dozens of families to the Austrian border during the revolution and who risked his life many times to bring food to the people of starving Budapest. I was curious as to why such a hero and Freedom Fighter wasn't

**My scratch-built 1:6 scale model of a T-34-85 tank, painted to represent a vehicle captured by Hungarian rebels.**



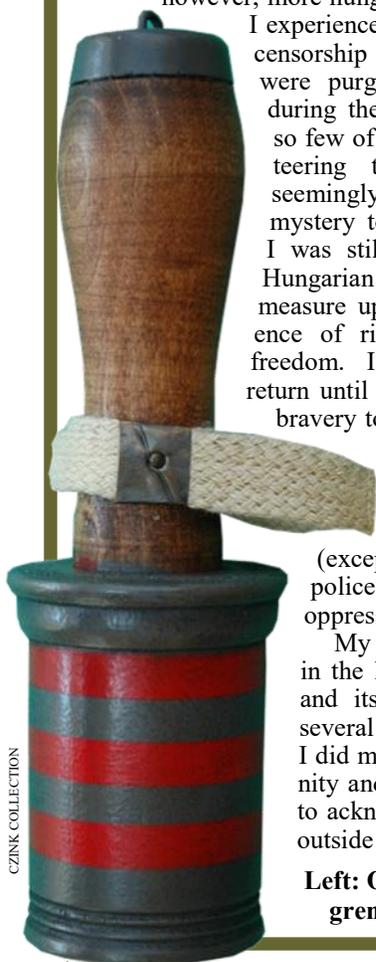
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admired and respected by what I assumed was a grateful and patriotic community.

The delicious aroma of *pörkölt* would often fill the Hungarian Hall, and I would take long breaks from my plate to observe the silver heads hovering affectionately over their ethnic cuisine while they savoured the sweet smell of their homeland. A sincere love for those people developed there, however, more hung in the air than pleasant aromas – I experienced discrimination, intolerance, and censorship there too – things that I assumed were purged from the Hungarian psyche during the uprising. I slowly realized why so few of the immigrants’ kids were volunteering there with me, although this seemingly obvious deduction remained a mystery to our parents. I was treated like I was still in diapers, not able to speak Hungarian well enough – perhaps unable to measure up without having had the experience of risking my life in the name of freedom. I eventually left, vowing never to return until our community mustered enough bravery to throw off its yoke of denial and intolerance and face our challenges like the revolutionary heirs we should be. Didn’t the history books say that all of us (except, of course the dirty secret police!) rose up and fought against the oppressors?

My own journey, intensely immersed in the local Hungarian-Canadian culture and its organizations, brought to light several important personal realizations. I did my best to do good for the community and found that many people refused to acknowledge others’ efforts who were outside of their immediate circle, and

**Left: One of the replica M1942 hand grenades I made for the display.**



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indeed were horrified when I dared to constructively criticize the community’s rather outdated methods. Our parents had brought with them a kind of freeze-dried Hungarian culture from the 1950s – complete with the fears and prejudices born in a country that fluctuated wildly from the extreme right to the extreme left during the last century. If you weren’t a fascist, you were a communist, and rumour had it that some people were both.

A wedge had been driven between the original immigrants and their children – a set of seemingly insurmountable problems festered in the Hungarian community that drove a great many people from the established Hungarian organizations. “Young people” were not trusted enough – they were simply too inexperienced. All of us, no matter what culture we are from, grow up hearing how much harder our parents had it when they were young – I’m sure it has always been thus. In our case, however, the revolution brought immigrants who faced extreme hardships, then were heralded as heroes – could their offspring ever appreciate their sacrifice or live up to their expectations?

A couple of years ago, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the revolution, I set my mind to doing something significant to commemorate the event. Since I’ve always been an avid collector of Hungarian artifacts, I thought my contribution could be a historical display. Being in the neighbourhood, I approached the Vancouver Museum with a detailed proposal for an extensive exhibition, complete with weapons, uniforms, photographs and other memorabilia from ’56. It was right on the heels of the museum’s “History of Skateboarding” show – I figured it would be a cinch. Although the director of the museum showed interest, it was turned down. My spirits were lifted, however, when I heard that the Vancouver Public Library often put on historical displays, so I contacted them with my ideas, and was immediately welcomed with open arms. My plans to feature the hundreds of artifacts that I had collected, along with models and other visual presentations, were encouraged, and space for them was generously provided.

My next step was to produce a companion publication – something that people could take with them not only as a souvenir of the event, but something more substantial that would help Hungarians and non-Hungarians alike absorb a deeper understanding of the uprising and of our culture. I figured that would be the easiest aspect – I had at least a half-a-dozen books on my shelf that were about the subject. I read them all years ago, but I dragged them down again to refresh my memory. I was dismayed to find that although they contained a great deal of patriotic poetry and subjective reminiscence, I could find little objective historical information in them. In fact, I came across a lot of material that was entirely inaccurate. My contact and senior administrator at the library also expressed concern that their institution was unable to acquire any current English language books on the Revolution – their vast network of suppliers had none. I went ahead full-time, accumulating books from university libraries, antiquarian booksellers and internet auction houses – added them to the mix of period literature and artifacts that I had collected, and spent a good year and a half immersing

myself in as much material as I could get my hands on. For the most part, commemoration of the 1956 Revolution among immigrant society has remained within our immediate ethnic community. Emotional reminiscence and patriotic tribute have been the norm, yet objective historical education is relatively rare. Most Hungarian community leaders believe that we need to commemorate the Uprising to honour the dead - a kind of spiritual debt that all Hungarians must share. Wouldn't it even be better for us to take it a step further and develop ourselves into a particularly sensitive nation of advocates for tolerance and justice? To use our collective cultural experience to help people who are oppressed today?

The unsolved problems of my dysfunctional family still haunt me, and the same issues eat away at the local Hungarian-Canadian community. In Hungary today, the people are polarized and neither the political right nor the left can find any use for one another. Does the problem (and hopefully the solution) lie within us? Our secret policemen, the spies and informers – our torturers and executioners of each past regime's fallen leaders were all Hungarians – and in their victims coursed the same kindred blood that we consider so sacred.

Fifty years of Western anti-communist rhetoric has made many of us forget the most important lessons of the revolution. Oppression, and the forcing of a foreign ideology on a sovereign nation is as unacceptable today as it was a half-century ago. But we also must realize that a self-absorbed people, devoid of empathy for others will not attract desirable attention and favour from their neighbours, and a person who is unwilling to embrace diversity and change, who misuses patriotism in combination with intolerance or self-pity, will have a hard time preserving their beloved culture.

Objective education that includes the unpleasant aspects as well as the proud ones - tempered with self-criticism and a desire to understand complex historical and political issues will work wonders in teaching history rather than hate. Bravery is needed, not only on the battlefield, but when we combat our own shortcomings and challenges. When a person, a family, a community or a nation recognizes that everything we face has more than one aspect – a right and a left and perhaps even more – that is when we will all be able to look forward to a brighter tomorrow.

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**Left:**  
The commemorative medal that I designed and minted for local 1956 Uprising participants and volunteers who worked on our 50th anniversary projects.

**Original**  
Hungarian Army uniform, identical to the one my father wore - the result of years of searching auction houses and militaria shows.



a Magyar Köztársaság Elnöke

Czink Lajosnak

az 1956-os forradalom és szabadságharcban tanúsított kiemelkedő magatartásáért, a kanadai magyarság érdekében végzett tevékenysége elismeréseként

a Magyar Köztársasági Érdemrend  
Lovagkeresztje

kitüntetést adományozom.

Kelt Budapesten, 2006. évi október hó 05. napján.



Award document and medal for the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary awarded to Lajos Czink following the 50th anniversary commemorative celebrations.

# The Insignia of the National Guard

by Dr. Ágnes Makai



MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM COLLECTION 0690/E

Proposed insignia of the 1956 Hungarian National Guard (Nemzetőrség).

The 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution has provided a new impetus for the collection of little-known memorabilia from the period. Because of the short, thirteen day span of the Uprising, there are few documented items in the Military History Institute and Museum's collection that were produced during the actual Revolution. One item of significant value is the Nemzetőr jelvény, or Insignia of the National Guard that was designed and manufactured during the thirteen days of the revolt.

The original museum record describes the badge as "A red, white and green enamelled, bronze-coloured rectangle, standing in its corner. On it is the Kossuth emblem, under it, the serial number 00002 and the slogan "With the people through fire and water." <sup>1</sup> On its reverse is a safety pin for attaching to clothing. Designed by Iván István. <sup>2</sup> Manufactured by the National Mint, end of October, 1956."

In the Historical Data column it is stated that this item is the emblem of the Hungarian National Guard that was designed following the October 23rd, 1956 events, and that the National Mint made three examples. The description of the item needs to be modified, however, as it is not finished with fired enamel but rather with enamel paint, which is now worn. The description should also be updated - the rectangle has rounded corners, and its main motif, the Kossuth emblem, is of the baroque style. This quickly designed badge must have been inspired by the award initiated by Lajos Kossuth - the Hungarian Order of Military Merit, Second and Third classes. Also apparent is the choice of Sándor

Petőfi's words that remind us of the revolutionary tradition of the 1848-49 War of Independence - themes that were also revived during the post-war communist regime of Mátyás Rákosi.

The badge is rather large (78mm by 51mm), and is stamped from tombak, a copper alloy. It was obtained by the museum in January 1957 (file number 13/1957).

Details about the formation of the National Guard are available in the Hungarian National Archives, among the Imre Nagy files that were recorded during the formative Revolutionary Council meeting in the Kilián Barracks on October 31st, 1956. Present were the delegates of various revolutionary groups, the military, police and intellectual organizations. The event was opened by the new Minister of Defence Pál Maléter, <sup>3</sup> who asked for the report of his colleague, Béla Király. <sup>4</sup> The program of the Revolutionary Councils included provisions to help with the formation of the armed National Guard, composed of people who took part in the fighting - the workers, youth groups and the worker's guards. The intent was, stated Király, that all armed groups that did not belong to the military or the police should become part of a unified, armed organization. He emphasized that this newly formed National Guard would inherit the glorious and heroic traditions of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49, as well as the responsibility for recent victories recognized around the world.

The discussions included, among many other subjects, the regulations of the organization, its leadership and other issues, and its symbols of recognition, which included a unit flag and the insignia to be worn. It was declared that all members of the National Guard must wear the emblem, and that it would be made by "revolutionary industrial artists". It



George Eckschmiedt's National Guard identification document.

COURTESY OF GEORGE ECKSCHMIEDT

also would include the Kossuth emblem. The Committee urged that the insignia be made and distributed as soon as possible. Béla Király promised to those present that:

“Within days, the insignia carrying the Kossuth emblem shall decorate your chests... and soon a National Guard identification certificate shall prove your authorization to wear the emblem and to carry weapons.”

The minutes of the meeting also mentioned that the National Guard shall operate under written criteria, and that all members shall carry the National Guard Identification. This identification would include the serial number of the emblem issued and would enable its holder to legally carry weapons. The Military History Institute and Museum recently obtained a rare example of the National Guard Identification - it does not belong to the emblem in the museum’s possession, but its data does substantiate the above information.<sup>5</sup>

These measures were designed to distinguish members of the National Guard from irresponsible trouble makers and people who carried illegal weapons, very much a necessity in those troubled times. During the meeting in Kilián Barracks, mention of uniforms for the National Guard was made, with a specific location for the new emblem. The minutes describe that the uniform could be a form of a work coverall.

The story of the emblem could end here, but luckily more research allowed us to slightly expand our knowledge. The interrogation minutes of Sándor Kopácsi<sup>6</sup> revealed that the manufacture of the emblem was assigned to Mr. Attila Földvári, an employee of the Ganz Works, during the above

mentioned Council meeting. According to the interrogation minutes Földvári stated that he met with Kopácsi every day between October 31st and November 4th, and in the absence of Béla Király, he was subordinate to Kopácsi. According to the minutes, he reported on two occasions about the status of the manufacture of the emblems, and he was ordered to carry on.

Accordingly, the design of the emblem and its prototypes were made speedily, as they were considered very important. Attila Földvári, the designer István Iván, and the other unknown participants had done a very good job considering the circumstances. They could not have imagined that the returning Soviet tanks would trample over the revolution, the National Guard, and its emblems.

The finished prototype was hidden for decades in the depths of the museum’s archives. Political changes in 1989 provided the opportunity for Béla Király to authenticate the unique insignia and to detangle its history.

We owe thanks to Dr. Miklós Horváth, military historian and the authority on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. So far we have not been able to find out what happened to the other two, supposedly finished examples of the National Guard emblems.

It is likely that the number 00001 was sent from the mint to those who ordered them and thus it could have been misplaced or even destroyed. Number 00002 is in the possession of the museum, and with its immediate cataloguing is guaranteed to always be accounted for. With the description and publication of the history of this unique item, perhaps we can discover the fate of the other two examples.



COURTESY OF  
GEORGE ECKSCHMIEDT

**The national Guard’s Badge was revived in 2006 at the initiative of General Béla Király, organiser and commander of the National Guard in 1956. He recalled the proposed badge project from that time, and the original die for the insignia was found at the Hungarian State Mint.**

**The new badge (800 were manufactured) was first awarded on October 23rd, 2006, by the Minister of Defence. They were bestowed upon National Guards who could provide evidence that they were members in 1956.**

**Left:  
George Eckschmiedt’s National Guard’s Badge.**

**Facing page:  
His award certificate.**

1. Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849). A line from one of the poet’s inspirational works.

2. István Iván (1905-1968), metal artist and an associate of the National Mint.

3. Pál Maléter (1917-1958). Military officer, the Minister of Defence on November 3rd, 1956. The commander of the Kilian barracks during the revolution. Imre Nagy requested for him to be involved with the forming of the National Guard. He was arrested by the Soviet authorities and was tried on June 15th, 1958 as the fifth accused in the Imre Nagy trials. He was executed the following day and was politically rehabilitated in 1989.

4. Béla Király (b.1912). Military officer and historian. President of the Revolutionary Council and the Commander of the National Guard. He left Hungary after the suppression and defeat of the Revolution. He resided in the USA and taught at several universities there. Following the regime change in 1989 he returned to live in Hungary.

5. We are very grateful that a former member of the National Guard, Mr. George Eckschmiedt, donated this document to our museum. We also thank Mr. Peter Czink who initially brought the document to our attention. The files in the museum were provided by Dr. Emese Szoleczky, Head Curator.

6. Sándor Kopácsi (1922-2001). Police Officer, member of the Revolutionary Military Council, and from November 3rd, the deputy commander of the National Guard. The sixth person accused during the Imre Nagy trial, he was sentenced to life in prison on June 15, 1958. He was released, and lived in Canada since 1975. In 1989 he was rehabilitated and he returned to Hungary.



# OKLEVÉL

**ECKSCHMIEDT GYÖRGY**

*bajtársnak*

*aki 1956-ban, a hazánk függetlenségéért és  
az emberi szabadságjogokért folyó harcok során*

**NEMZETŐRKÉNT,**

*élete kockáztatásával, önként, hősiesen harcolt*

*az 1956. november 3-án*

*Nagy Imre miniszterelnök*

*jóváhagyásával alapított*

**NEMZETŐR JELVÉNNYEL**

*tünteti ki.*

*Budapest, 2007. november 21.*

*Király Béla*  
**Prof. Dr. Király Béla**  
*a Nemzetőrség főparancsnoka*

*Bocskay T. József*  
**Bocskay T. József**  
*az 1956-os Nemzetőrség  
Hagyományápoló Tanács  
elnöke*



COURTESY OF  
GEORGE ECKSCHMIEDT



AZ 1956. ÉVI FORRADALOM ÉS SZABADSÁGHARC  
50. ÉVFORDULÓJA ÜNNEPÉN  
A MAGYAR KÖZTÁRSASÁG NEVÉBEN

## A SZABADSÁG HŐSE

EMLÉKÉRMET ADO MÁNYOZZUK

# ECKSCHMIEDT GYÖRGY úr

RÉSZÉRE,

AKI 1956 OKTÓBERÉBEN,  
MAJD A MEGTORLÁS SÖTÉT KORSZAKÁBAN  
A SZABADSÁG, AZ EMBERI MÉLTÓSÁG ÉS A NEMZETI ÖSSZEFOGÁS  
MELLETTI KIÁLLÁSÁVAL PÉLDÁT ADOTT  
HAZASZERETETBŐL.

GYURCSÁNY FERENC  
A MAGYAR KÖZTÁRSASÁG MINISZTERELNÖKE

SÓLYOM LÁSZLÓ

A MAGYAR KÖZTÁRSASÁG ELNÖKE

KOSÁRY DOMOKOS  
AZ '56-OS EMLÉKBIZOTTSÁG ELNÖKE

**RISE UP!**

**THE 1956  
HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION**

**A PEOPLE'S  
SACRIFICE**



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# Revisiting Imperial Yesterdays

with  
Jack  
Keir

*At the time of writing this most of the world is locked down and travel is impossible. But for the ravages of COVID-19 I would be enjoying the sunshine, culture and good food of Europe's, if not the world's, best buddies – Hungary and Poland. Instead I have been looking back on previous journeys which have taken me to a number of places where significant events have occurred and where the first shots were fired in what became two world wars.*

*In the first part of this article, or travelogue, I meander through Bosnia, Austria, Belgium and end surprisingly in Czechia on what cumulatively was my First World War tour. In the second part, which takes in the first shots of World War II, I have offered a list of museums I have had the opportunity to visit which the traveller with an interest in military history might consider including in their itinerary if they found themselves in their vicinity. I have not included any Hungarian destinations as I have assumed anyone not a native would be making a beeline to the absolutely splendid Military Institute and Museum in Budapest and perhaps the Museum of Aviation in Szolnok.*

## PART I

As we are locked down and while going to the shops can present some risk of picking up this wretched virus, between 1992 and 1996 the citizens of Sarajevo risked a sniper's bullet if they ventured out in search of a loaf of bread. Readers may recall the regular news bulletins during the siege of the city showing terrifying images of civilians dodging those bullets. Sarajevo and the territory of which it is the capital has occasionally found itself in the centre of events its inhabitants might have preferred it not to have.

A bit ahead of the centenary of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand there on June 28th, 1914, I visited Sarajevo in October 2011 flying from Edinburgh via Amsterdam and Zagreb with Croatia Airlines. While these things are always subject to change, flights within Europe are available from Belgrade, Zagreb and Vienna as well as some German cities and Budapest. The airport is quite close to the city centre. Sarajevo is quite small and easily accessible on foot. There were at least two companies offering tours around the city and its environs which, for a short stay, is a great way to see many of the more outlying sights. There is no shortage of good eateries and interesting museums. To see what should be seen three days is probably sufficient.

I was not sure what to expect from a place where civil war raged less than twenty years before and which remains divided along ethnic and religious lines. What I found was a very attractive and very safe place. Notwithstanding chronic unemployment, it has a very low crime rate and the people I encountered were very friendly. Any danger there was came from the inordinate number of Mercedes Benz cars being driven by motorists sending text messages to one another. Within a couple of kilometres one can find the Old

Town with very narrow cobbled streets and low buildings, a little Vienna or Budapest with gorgeous public buildings in Secessionist style and ultra-modern shopping malls and cinema complexes reflecting the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and modern development of the city as it expanded largely westwards. Along the route which takes one to and from the airport there are some remaining shells of buildings destroyed during the civil war and no shortage of buildings bearing bullet holes. Reflecting the ethnic and religious makeup of the city as it was at the turn of the 20th century just as the KuK part of the city begins and within 500 metres of each other sit the Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic cathedrals, the Ferhadija Mosque and what was the central Synagogue, now a museum; and all worth visiting. The Jewish population of the city suffered badly at the hands of the brutal Ustasi regime which incorporated Bosnia into Croatia during WWII.

I took a couple of trips, one of which took me to a tunnel dug underneath the airport which was used by the defenders of Sarajevo to move out of the firing line of Serb tanks and snipers. Another took me up to the Winter Olympics centre and the lounge track which was used by Serb snipers as cover. The surrounding scenery was quite spectacular. This trip took us through part of Republica Srbsca where there were even more Mercedes than in Sarajevo.

For those of you who enjoy a good read in the historical fiction department can I recommend two novels which are set in Sarajevo during WWII. Philip Kerr completed thirteen Bernie Gunther novels before his untimely death in 2018 and he presents a rather convincing portrayal of life in Sarajevo during the war in *The Lady From Zagreb*. Luke McCallin's novel *The Pale House* is the second in a trilogy, but could

stand alone, and is set in the final days of the Ustasi regime's control of the city as Tito's partisans closed in.

For all that flowed from those fatal shots in 1914, the event is marked by a simple carved stone set in a wall of what is now The Museum of Sarajevo 1878-1918. The stone marks the spot where Gavrilo Princip stood when the shots were fired just across the road from the Latin Bridge. The monument erected on the north side of the bridge by the KuK authorities has been removed. It is an ordinary busy street.

The museum itself is little more than one large room. There are many photographs of Sarajevo as it was and how it developed during its time under Austro-Hungarian rule. The exhibits relating to the assassinations consist of photographs, hand guns of the types used by Gavrilo Princip and the other would-be assassins dotted along the route, some items of clothing, one of the indictments and two mannequins representing the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife as they were on the day. The medals on the Archduke's uniform are all wrong and even if they were correct are in the wrong order. As museums go it was the poorest of those I have visited.

Sarajevo is well worth visiting. It offers a fascinating glimpse of Ottoman Europe as it was. From Sarajevo I flew to Vienna, again via Zagreb and again with Croatia Airlines, where I made my way, as I have now done five times in total, to the Arsenal not far from the main railway station which houses the Austrian Museum of Military History. Even if this building contained no exhibits it would still be worth seeing. The interiors are most impressive and completed in a very grand style. Upon entering one is faced with a magnificent staircase leading up to the ornate Hall of Fame.

Between 2011 and my last visit in May 2019 a great deal has been done to this fine museum. The WWI exhibition is particularly splendid and a must see. In 2011 the exhibits I was most interested in seeing related to the Sarajevo assassinations. The Graf & Stift motor car in which the Archduke and his wife were passengers is on display, bullet holes and all. In addition the blood stained uniform worn by the Archduke is laid out on the chaise longue upon which he expired. The pistol used by Gavrilo Princip to carry out his vile deed rests in a nearby cabinet as are some other weapons held by co-conspirators. At a distance of give or take 100 years they are at once just exhibits in a museum casually glanced at by those passing through and a graphic and terrible reminder of a day when the relative peace of Europe since Waterloo began to crumble and the world by 1945 was turned on its head. The museum covers almost all aspects of Austrian military history from the 16th century. There is a separate armoured vehicle collection housed nearby.

No amount of time spent in Vienna is ever enough. It is a culture vulture's paradise. Vienna airport will connect you to almost anywhere in the world. Getting to and from the airport is very easy by way of the dedicated CAT train. Investing in a Vienna card is well worth it and they are available at the airport. Getting around Vienna could not be easier with an extensive underground and tram service the use of which is covered with the Vienna Card. Travelling within Austria and indeed within Europe by train is a most

enjoyable and civilised way of getting around and competitively priced. Depending on the route and where the ticket was purchased it can be cheaper to travel first class on an international train than the cost of a taxi to the airport.

In 2013 I ventured to Salzburg combining it with a visit to Prague. Around an hour or so, and two trains, south of Salzburg passing through beautiful scenery is the lovely spa town of Bad Ischl. Within its own extensive grounds of parkland and forest lies the Kaiservilla. By Habsburg standards the residence is tiny. It was a wedding gift by his mother to Francis Joseph I upon his marriage to Elisabeth of Bavaria as a summer retreat. The property is owned and lived in by a descendant of Francis Joseph but one wing and the grounds are open to the public.

I was particularly excited about visiting the villa suffering as I do from a mild obsession with the old Emperor and King. One is not allowed to wander at will and to visit the rooms on show one must take a guided tour. One of the most surprising things I learned was that there was no kitchen. All the food for lunches and dinners was prepared at a local restaurant or the kitchen in the staff accommodation nearby and brought to the villa. The tour is relatively short and takes you to the main entrance, a family room, the dining room, a drawing room and the private apartments of Francis Joseph comprising his study and bedroom. It is all very modest and unostentatious.

I hung back a little as my fellow paying guests made their way back and for a short time was alone in the room and next to the desk where the declaration of war on Serbia was signed, which absolutely set in train what was to become the First World War - such a small almost ordinary space for such a momentous event the full consequences of which were unimaginable at the time. A huge contrast to the Schonbrunn Palace in Vienna (which is a must see) where Francis Joseph died just over two years later and where with a couple of signatures the Empire was dissolved. Within the grounds is a small tea house built for the Empress and Queen to entertain friends. It now serves as an exhibition space for artists and there is nothing much of its original furnishings or anything relative to the Imperial and Royal couple.

Still on the subject of teahouses from Salzburg, I took an organised tour across the border to Berchtesgaden in Bavaria to visit the Eagle's Nest - the large mountaintop teahouse constructed for a German dictator with some features supplied by an Italian one. It now operates as a restaurant and affords the most breath-taking views for miles around. This was certainly a trip worth making. Another of Philip Kerr's Bernie Gunther novels, *Prussian Blue*, is set at the Berghof in 1939 and rather well sets out the absurdities of life there while telling another good story.

The following year I travelled to Belgium staying a few days each in Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp. Brussels is easy to get to and to get around. A rail service connects the airport to the city centre and public transport is affordable and easy to use.

The Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History in Brussels is just massive and is a must see. In order to take it all in I had to visit on successive days. The aviation hall houses exhibits from before and including WWI through

WWII to modern times – from a 1915 Farman to an F-16 Fighting Falcon, many types operated by the Belgian air force are present. The number of aircraft dating from WWI is impressive and the most I have ever seen in one collection. Of particular interest to me was the Fairey Battle, one of only two remaining in Europe. The very elegant Caravelle airliner in Sabena colours suspended from the ceiling is a joy to behold.

There is an extensive armour collection which includes tanks dating from WWI. The collections are quite comprehensive with some displayed pretty much as they were when the museum opened in 1923, while others are in a more contemporary setting. Just across the road from the military museum is Autoworld which is a museum dedicated to the motor car and displays hundreds of vehicles from Europe and the USA - well worth a visit.

While in Ghent I took the train to Ypres (or Ieper in Flemish). The Cloth Hall, rebuilt in its original style following its almost complete destruction in the war, houses the very interesting and highly informative In Flanders Fields museum. Uniforms, equipment and personal effects of soldiers of the armies which fought on the Western Front form its core. There are also plenty of maps and histories of the many bloody battles fought in the vicinity.

Just along the road from the Cloth Hall is the Menin Gate. Monuments to those who gave their lives in war are always moving. The small village with half a dozen names, often sharing a surname, speak of the individual loss to family and friends and the huge gap that death opened up in their lives and that of the community from where each soldier, sailor or airman set off to do his duty never to return. The Menin Gate has subscribed upon it the names of over 50,000 soldiers.

The names are of those killed in just one part of the Western Front and are only those from Commonwealth countries. But these names represent only those whose remains were never recovered: an army of lost souls from every corner of what was the British Commonwealth and Empire - it is quite overwhelming. Of all the monuments and memorials I have visited, this had the most profound and lasting effect.

In 2012, while in Prague I took an organized tour to Terezin better known in German as Theresienstadt. The name takes in both the town and the large fortifications which had been a military base and later a ghetto-cum-concentration camp.

The fortifications are quite grim and contain the prison house wherein Gavrilo Princip was incarcerated until his death in 1918 and his cell is open for inspection and commemorated by a plaque. Both the town and the fortifications felt haunted and although worth visiting I was more than glad to be on my way back to Prague. A far more pleasant fortification can be found at Vysehrad on the banks of the River Vltava immortalised by Smetana in the first part of Ma Vlast. I return to Prague in part two of this article.

Most of the cities I have visited have available organised trips or tours to historic sites. They very often represent the most practical way of getting to and from these places. With limited time available these tours offer a very economical way of seeing things and places which one might be disinclined to try to get to under one's own steam or which are not readily accessible by public transport. It is well worth scoping these out before setting off to make the most of your vacation.



*To be continued...*

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# A Little Treasure from the Frontline Fighters' Association



CZINK COLLECTION



COURTESY OF ZOLTÁN FÖLDES - PHOTO BY PÉTER v. LABORC

Péter v. Laborc recently sent me a scan of a photo shown to him by his old friend Zoltán Földes. Learning how delighted I was in seeing it, Zoli gave the original to Péter, to give to me. It's the only photograph I have ever seen of a Frontline Fighters' Association helmet being worn after World War II – the summer of 1947, to be exact.

Zoltán Földes, the four year-old boy in the photo, was born in the village of Iregszemcse in 1943 and moved to Budapest with his mother in 1950. He later earned a degree in electrical engineering at the Mihály Pollák Technical College and worked in Budapest in the coal mining industry, then in Tatabánya at the county electrical supply company.

The little picture was taken in the village of Kánya after the war – a time when such Horthy-era items were forbidden to be worn by adults, but made suitable playthings for children. It's very rare to see a uniformed member of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association armed, however, in this photo young Zoli wears his trusty sidearm (a pastry syringe), on his belt. After his picture was taken for the *Magyar Front*, and after examining the old one, Zoltán was quite sure that he really hasn't change much at all since it was taken, seventy-two years ago.

One tiny photograph, full of historical significance – as unique and as marvelous as the rarest royal decoration, can indeed be a prized treasure and a priceless collector's item.

The felt helmet belonged to infantry Corporal Lajos Földes, his grandfather, born in Táp, in Győr County in 1891. He enlisted in 1911 and took part in the Austro-Hungarian precautionary mobilization during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars. In 1914 he was sent to defend the Przemyśl Fortress, and when it was captured by the Russians in 1915 he was taken prisoner. He was sent to Ferghana, in Eastern Uzbekistan as a prisoner of war.

Lajos Földes, a locomotive driver, came upon an opportunity to escape in 1916 when he and a couple of his comrades stole a train and headed west – they went as far as the train could take them, then followed the tracks on foot for several months to the Hungarian border. He was recalled in the spring of 1917 and sent to the Italian Front, where he ended the war.

He was awarded the Emperor Charles' Troops' Cross, the 1912-1913 Mobilization Cross, the Hungarian WWI Commemorative Medal with Helmet and Swords, and the Austrian WWI Commemorative Medal with Swords.

P.Cz.



# MILITARY 100 TREASURES

Selected Artefacts  
from the Hungarian  
Military History Institute  
and Museum in  
Its Centenary Year

HADTÖRTÉNETI  
1918-2018

100

