

MAGYAR FRONT



Vol. XX, No. 2

Spring 2018

IHMHPS EXCLUSIVE

Presented in detail
for the first time:

RARE EXAMPLES OF PROTECTIVE MILITARY HEADGEAR FROM THE OTTENREITER

LEATHER GOODS
COMPANY OF
BUDAPEST



CZINK
COLLECTION

And a new discovery - the world's
only known example of the

ROYAL HUNGARIAN GENDARME MOTORCYCLE HELMET



www.NewFront.ca

A note from the Editor

I was very excited to add a rare piece to my collection last year – one of only a few examples of the Hungarian Model 1942 tank crew helmet - it's pictured on the cover of this issue. Inspired by the Soviet version, I find it more Buck Rogers than Bolshevik, and I have wanted to get my hands on one for ages. This helmet was produced by the Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company in Budapest, along with a few other pieces in my collection (I have a weakness for exotic Hungarian military headgear) so I thought it was about time I write a little article about them.

I intended to start off with “We know next to nothing about the Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company...” and that “...little is known about the prototype M1942 tanker helmet...” but in the meantime, with the help of some of our most knowledgeable and dedicated IHMHPS members, I have discovered a world of new information. I have always believed that treasure can usually be found directly under one’s nose, and in this case I have also had the good fortune to uncover a previously unknown gem in my own collection.

The M1942 helmet, up until now, has been considered a prototype and no picture of it actually being worn exists – a few mentions of it can be found along with regulations for the M1942 tank crew uniform. While searching for further information I came across a plastic model manufacturing company in Ukraine that produces a set of 1/35 scale Hungarian tank crewmen, one of which is wearing the M1942 uniform and illusive helmet. The illustrations of the figures by Andrey Karaschuk (who worked as an artist for the Defence Ministry of the USSR – a sculptor and painter whose illustrations feature in countless magazines and books) were incredibly detailed, so I immediately contacted MiniArt Models (www.miniart-models.com). I was very kindly allowed to use the artwork in this issue of the *Magyar Front*.

Idly browsing online one evening I happened upon the Budapest Kiscell Museum where their trade sign collection includes the original from Ottenreiter. They were a pleasure to deal with as well and let me use a photo of it. I was thrilled with these two finds, as Ottenreiter material seemed almost as rare as the M1942 helmet itself. Next, I stumbled across a gold-mine, which began as a listing on the Budapest City Archive’s website – 14 boxes of documents from the Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company! I scratched my head, thinking that this couldn’t be possible – collectors and historians in Hungary have been mystified about the company’s history. No one seemed to have noticed this.

IHMHPS member Péter v. Laborc phoned them, and was ready to go to the archives in person, however, he was recovering from recent surgery, so that wasn’t the best idea. I had been communicating with IHMHPS member Major Dr. Tamás Baczoni about this case all along, and he mentioned he might be able to help in a month or so. After brief consideration, I sent him a message, outlining my desire to strike while the iron is hot – he replied: “I guess I’m going to the archives tomorrow.”

In the meantime the three of us put together a case for the identification of another Ottenreiter piece in my collection - the Gendarme (Csendőő) motorcycle helmet, which was backed up with evidence from the Ottenreiter archive files. I think it’s possible for everyone to find treasures under their noses. Get to know some of the world’s top experts who also happen to be dedicated and kind people, and finding them is pretty much guaranteed.

P.Cz.



MAGYAR FRONT VOLUME XX, ISSUE 2 SPRING 2018

Published quarterly by
Peter Czink, Editor-Designer

The New Front:
(International Hungarian Military
History Preservation Society)

*“To strive, to seek, to find,
and not to yield.”*

Peter Czink
Founder/President

Lorraine Weldeman
Vice-President, Webmaster

Péter v. Laborc
Vice-President, Hungary

John Keir
Vice-President, United Kingdom

George Hennessy
Vice-President, Australia

Manfred Winter
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

©2018 All rights reserved

Membership in the
International Hungarian Military History
Preservation Society is \$40.00 annually,
and includes the *Magyar Front*.

The original *Magyar Front* was the
weekly newspaper of the Frontline
Fighter’s Association, and was
published from the early 1930s until
the end of the Second World War.

IHMHPS 2014-2018 COMMEMORATIVE BADGE

(Right) Available by donation* (any amount is appreciated).



Embroidered insignia
(Left) \$5.00* each



2008-2018 Badge
(Left) \$10.00* each

*Donations and payments can be made via Paypal (czink@shaw.ca). Postage not included.

The Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company

by Peter Czink

The Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company was established in 1863 and was primarily known for manufacturing gloves. They also produced other leather items, and by the Hungarian Millennium Exhibition of 1896 they were recognized as leaders in the industry and decorated by the government for their exemplary workmanship. Always a family business, among the Ottenreiter papers are an example of a postcard from Károly Ottenreiter and a calling card from Emil Ottenreiter who continued running the company at least until the 1950s - letters from that Cold War era include patents established in the United Kingdom. A type-written series of pages, perhaps part of a planned company history, entitled “Az Ottenreiter Cég 100-Éve Alatt Készült Cikkek 1863-1963” (“100 Years of Articles Produced by the Ottenreiter Company 1863-1963”) are also among the documents. Some of the items listed are: ladies’ and men’s gloves; sports and work gloves; leather and canvas motoring helmets; pilot’s helmets in leather and canvas; motorcycle helmets; pipe, cigarette and tobacco cases; backpacks; footballs; slippers; goggles; cases for playing cards, calling cards, knives, combs, keys, and cameras; watch straps; hernia trusses; suspenders; etc.

During the Second World War Ottenreiter also produced military items, primarily helmets for the Hungarian Defence Forces – for pilots, tank crews and motorcyclists. This was done on a large scale, and raw materials were imported from Germany and as far as Brazil to fill the orders of the Hungarian Defence Ministry.



BUDAPEST FŐVÁROS LEVÉLTÁRA - BUDAPEST CAPITOL ARCHIVES

Above: Calling card of master glover Emil Ottenreiter. He advertises that his company can “make gloves from your own material” and offers “glove restoration, repair, modification, patenting, etc.”

Right: The Ottenreiter trade sign, which now hangs in the Budapest Kiscell Museum.



BUDAPEST HISTORY MUSEUM - KISCELL MUSEUM, TRADE SIGN COLLECTION

Detail from an Ottenreiter working drawing for the “eight piece” flying helmet from 1935. It clearly illustrates the longitudinal sections of material which were sewn together and ended with a leather disk at the top.

The summer model made out of canvas was designated the X6113/A and the leather winter version was the X6113/B.

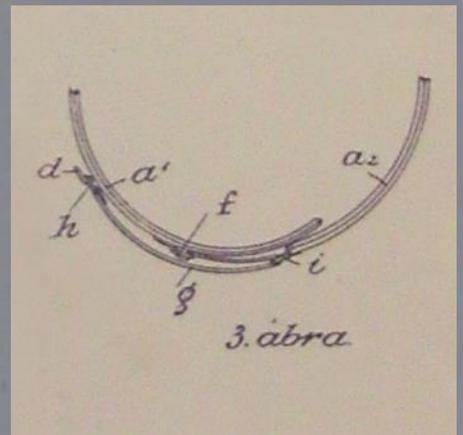
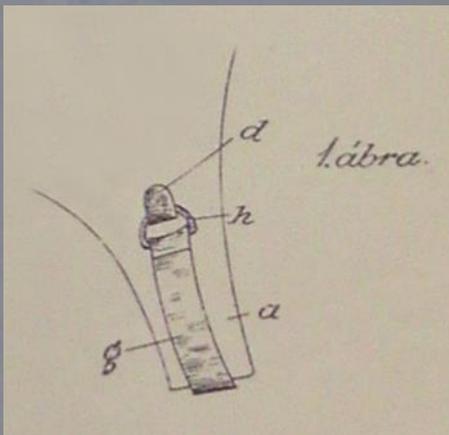
Some helmets were fitted with an adjustable rear strap that went from one ear cup to the other.

One small strap and buckle (located on the back) held the goggles with the helmet, and some models were fitted with an extra strap at each temple.

Below left: Detail from the February 15th, 1936 patent drawings for the unique chinstrap designed by Emil Ottenreiter, showing the right side of a leather helmet where the chinstrap ends attached to a flat metal hook.

Below right: Front view of the chinstrap system illustrating the way in which it (g) passes from the buckle on the wearer’s right side (f) through (i) and hooks onto (d).

(a1) and (a2) represent the two lower sides of the helmet itself.





Hungarian aviators: The sergeant on the left and the corporal on the right wear the “eight piece” leather winter flying helmet (also known as the X6113/B). The man in the centre wears the “four piece” type.

Flying Helmets

The most commonly encountered Ottenreiter products are the helmets for “drivers, pilots and sportsmen.” These are all based on the classic leather “flying helmet” used by every nation, originally worn by drivers and motorcyclists and later by aviators. Ottenreiter produced many types for civilian flying clubs and military pilots, at first with leather flaps which protected the ears which could be opened to improve hearing. Later, when radios became more common in aircraft, special leather ear cups were added to accommodate earphone receivers.

There were two main design varieties: the “eight piece” type which was made from eight sections of leather cut longitudinally with a small circular disk of leather at the top of the helmet; and the “four piece” type which was made from two side and two central pieces of leather. Both of these types were made with and without provisions for earphones and can be seen in period photographs. One document from the Ottenreiter papers details the costs of manufacturing the four-piece type – and states that only the two side pieces of leather need to be made differently for the various head sizes, while the two central pieces are of a universal size. The same document refers to the four-piece helmet (with ear

cups) as the “M1935” – the official military designation assigned by the Defence Ministry (a detail that was previously unknown). I theorize that the four-piece type was chosen because it may have been more economical to manufacture.

One unique feature found on most Ottenreiter helmets is their patented chin strap. A very clever design, it consists of a length of webbing, leather, or elastic that fits through a buckle fixed on the right side of the helmet and ends in a D-ring, which passes through a ring on the opposite side. The webbing is then brought back over itself and engages a flat hook back on the right side. One can imagine that this solution would be much easier for the wearer to engage than a conventional buckle. Some helmets also have an adjustable strap which passes around the back of the head. Goggles were kept in place by a small strap and buckle on the back of the helmet, and some models have two more located at each temple.

Flying helmets were produced in leather with sheepskin or silk linings, as well as in canvas for warm weather use. A 1936 document among the papers breaks down an order of flying helmet sizes as follows: size 56 - 30%, size 57 - 25%, size 58 - 35%, size 59 - 5%, size 60 - 3%, and size 62 - 2%.

**The “four piece”
flying helmet.**

**These simple goggles, padded
with sheepskin similar to the helmet
lining are made by an unknown
manufacturer.**



CZINK
COLLECTION

**Leather flaps can be fixed in an open or
closed position with snaps covered in celluloid,
which feature the Ottenreiter company logo.**

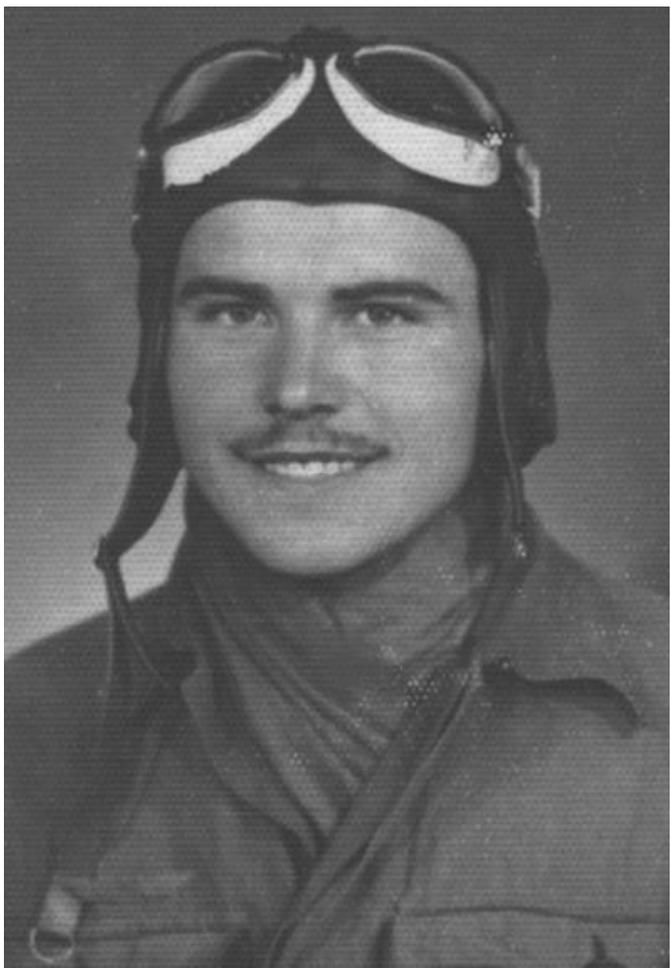
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



Above: A young aviator wearing the helmet without provision for earphones. Below: The leather ear flaps snapped in the open position. Right: Géza Soós also wears this type of helmet. On his right breast is an unidentified insignia, possibly for a civilian flying club.



Above: An 8cm leather strap (for keeping the goggles connected to the helmet), is sewn near the bottom edge of the back of the helmet and engages with a metal buckle. A small woven "57" size tag is stitched inside the strap. Below: The woven Ottenreiter company label stitched inside the sheepskin lining.





Close-up of the 1.26cm celluloid covered snap fastener featuring the Ottenreiter company logo.



The small woven size tag stitched to the inside left of the sheepskin lining on this particular helmet.



Typically, Ottenreiter used these 1.2cm wide flat hooks on the right side of their helmets to secure the chinstraps.



v. LABORC COLLECTION

Above:
Aviator László Almási wearing the flying helmet with provision made for earphones. His example has the extra goggle strap at each temple, however, in this photo he clearly isn't using them.

Below:
The woven Ottenreiter label stitched in the sheepskin lining at the back of the helmet.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN

**The “four piece”
Model 1935 flying
helmet.**

**It is not known which
company produced these
Hungarian goggles with
blue tinted lenses.**



CZINK
COLLECTION

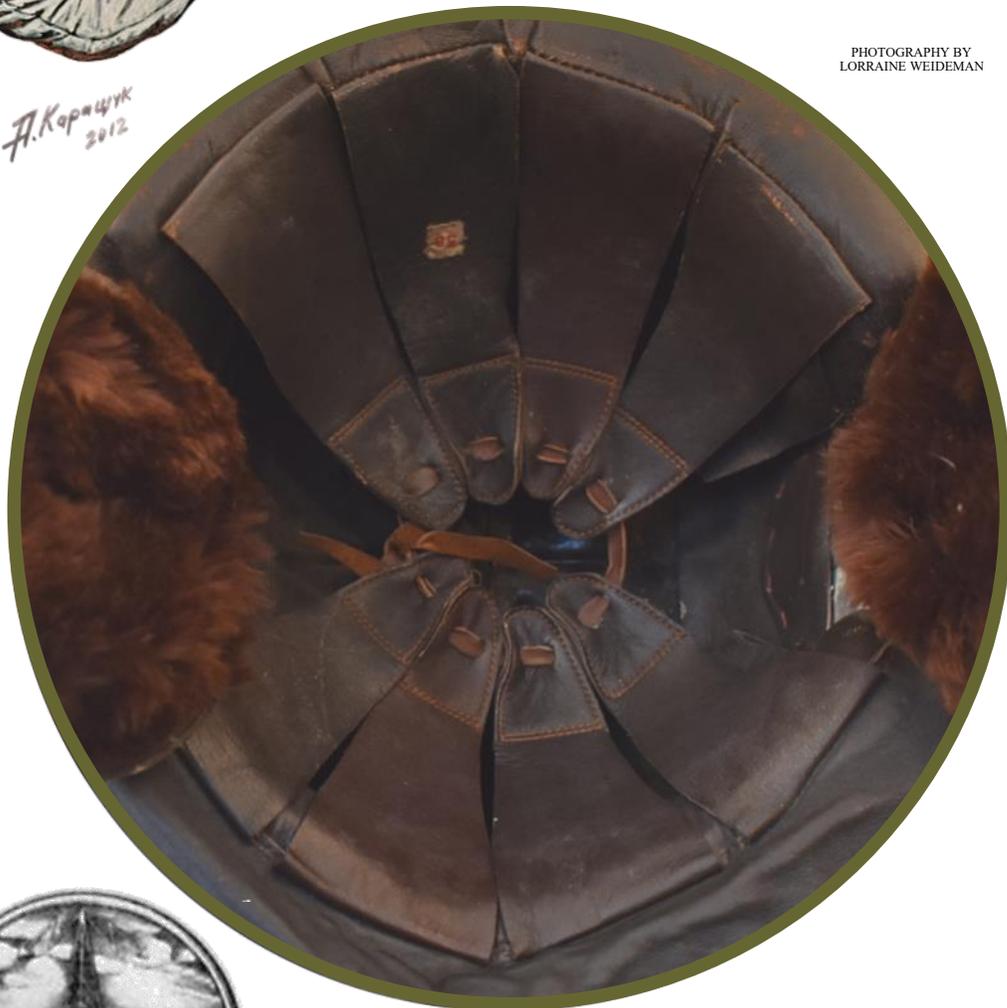
**The celluloid Ottenreiter snaps are located
under the leather ear cups to allow installation of
the radio headphones, which were manufactured
by the Standard Electrical Company.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN

The Model 1939 Tank Crew Helmet



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



Above:
Andrey Karaschuk's
painting of a tank
crew officer wearing
the Model 1939
leather helmet.

COURTESY OF MINIART MODELS
WWW.MINIART-MODELS.COM



BUDAPEST FŐVÁROS LEVÉLTÁRA
BUDAPEST CAPITOL ARCHIVES

Above: The interior of the Model 1939 Tank Crew Helmet. A small woven size tag (58) is stitched to one of the eight leather liner tongues. A little of the ribbed celluloid shell can be seen under the liner. **Left:** The logo of the Standard Electrical Company from the header of their business stationary.

The M1939 tank crew helmet was a co-production of the Ottenreiter Leather Goods Company and the Standard Electrical Company (Standard Villamossági Részvénytársaság). Standard, also a Hungarian firm, produced radios, telephones, amplifiers, speakers and other electrical items since the 1920s, and received the Defence Ministry contract for the production of a radio receiver equipped helmet for the Hungarian army. Teaming with Ottenreiter who produced the basic helmet, the model X6157/A became the Model 1939.

The leather-covered inner shell is made of celluloid, an early thermoplastic (supplied by the Ignác Redő Celluloid Factory) that is ribbed for extra strength. A band of horse-hair stuffed leather lines most of the interior edge, interrupt-

ed by space for the leather side flaps and ear cups. An eight-tongued leather liner is brought together in the centre with a cord, and a heavy leather neck flap fitted with a leather loop for hanging is on the rear.

The tops of the side flaps are attached to bolts which protrude through a slot in the helmet and connect to knurled knobs – tightening or loosening them allows the flaps to be adjusted up or down. The ear cups are made to accommodate the Standard earphone receivers. Unlike solely Ottenreiter helmets this type is fastened with a standard leather chinstrap and buckle. One document from 1939 breaks down how many of the various sizes were produced: size 56 - 15%, size 57 - 15%, size 58 - 40%, and size 60 - 30%.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



CZINK
COLLECTION

BUDAPEST FŐVÁROS LEVÉLTÁRA - BUDAPEST CAPITOL ARCHIVES



Above: Detail from the Ignác Redő Celluloid Factory letterhead.
Right: There are no Ottenreiter markings in the M1939 helmets, however, each leather ear cup bears a small, simple Hungarian crown stamp (shown enlarged).

The Model 1942 Tank Crew Helmet

Among the handful of known examples of the M1942 Tank Crew Helmet are two types – one of wool uniform cloth and the other made from “poppy-seed grey” canvas. Until now, this helmet was thought to be a prototype that was never actually put into use, and that the former was a winter version and the latter one for warm weather wear.

Much to the surprise of collectors and historians, the Ottenreiter papers reveal that more than a thousand of them were manufactured and accepted for use by the Defence Ministry. Throughout the documents, this helmet is referred to as the *nyári páncélos fejevédő* (summer tank crew helmet), *nyári harcoksisapka* (summer armoured vehicle hat), *vászon harcoksisapka* (canvas armoured vehicle hat) and the *nyári páncélos lóden fejevédő* (summer tank crew loden [wool] helmet).

My personal theory is that both versions of this helmet were for warm weather use, and that the “winter” tank crew helmet was simply the M1939.

Meant to go with the new M1942 “smoke grey” tank crew uniform which was modelled after the German design, this helmet was clearly inspired by the Soviet type. No pictures of it being worn exist (photographic evidence of the M1942 uniform is very rare as well), and it was thought that only a few prototypes were manufactured which were unpopular when tested by crews who complained about the fit of the earphones (which sat in pockets on each side of the helmet). Eventually crews just wore regular headphones over their field caps, however, in my opinion the helmets were abandoned because even the canvas version would have been incredibly hot in the summertime.

This padded helmet features the patented Ottenreiter chinstrap as well as an adjustable strap around the back, which was also something that the firm used for other types of headgear. Sheepskin rings are on the interior sides to cushion the earphones – another factor that would have contributed to the discomfort of the wearer in hot weather.



Karaschuk's painting of the M1942 helmet being worn.

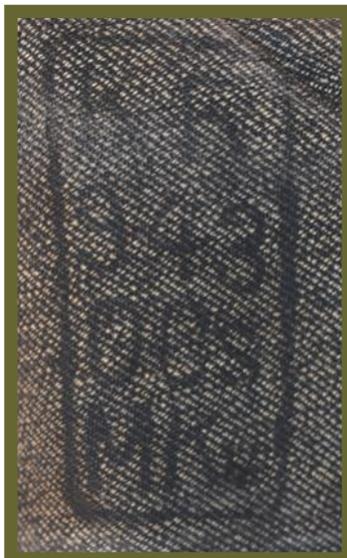
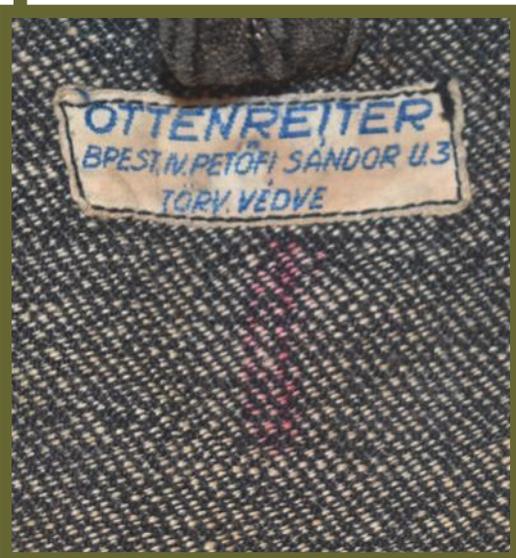
COURTESY OF MINIART MODELS
WWW.MINIART-MODELS.COM

Below left: The woven label located in the neck flap above a stamped “I.” According to one of the Ottenreiter documents, these helmets came in three sizes - 20% were produced in size I, 50% were made in size II, and 30% were manufactured in size III.

Below middle: The Central Military Clothing Depot (“KR” for Központi Ruhatár) acceptance stamp for 1943, located inside the neck flap.

Below right: Detail of the 3cm wide adjustment strap and buckle on the back of the helmet.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



Four large grommets are placed at the top for ventilation.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN

Padding reaches from the forehead almost to the neck flap and down the sides of the helmet.

Padding for the earphones are made of sheepskin.

The snaps used to secure the ear flaps (essentially pockets for the earphones) are enameled black.

CZINK
COLLECTION

The “poppy-seed grey” version of the M1942 Tank Crew Helmet. It features the typical Ottenreiter chinstrap assembly, and the location of the acceptance stamp can be seen inside the neck flap.

The Gendarme Motorcycle Helmet

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



The lower portion of the helmet is similar to the one on page 6, but lined in leather.

The Ottenreiter label is located on the lower right end of the helmet.

CZINK
COLLECTION



The innovative size adjustment solution is apparent in this photo - a leather strap that passes around the back of the wearer's head and emerges from either side of the helmet, buckled at the front.

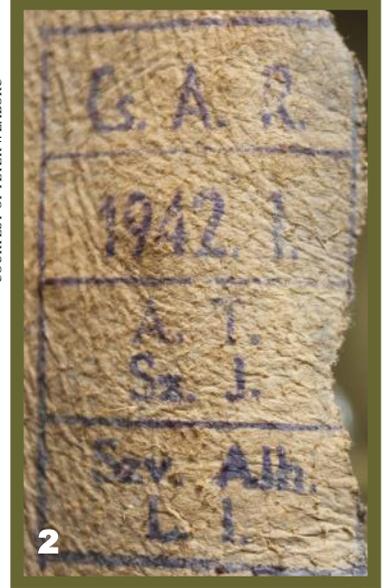
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
LORRAINE WEIDEMAN



The interior
of the Gendarme
Motorcycle Helmet.



1



2

COURTESY OF PETER V. LABORC

1. Purple ink stamp found in the helmet. 2. Standard Gendarmerie stamp from another piece of headgear. 3. Image number 1 with the more legible markings highlighted.

The Gendarme (Csendőr) Motorcycle Helmet is based on the same celluloid shell as the M1939 Tank Crew Helmet. It's also covered in leather and has a heavy horse-hair stuffed band inside it, however, the lower portion is manufactured in the same fashion as the “drivers, pilots and sportsmen” soft helmets of earlier days. The liner is made up of ten tongues, gathered in the middle by a cord. The unique feature of this helmet is the leather strap and buckle which is exposed on the outside front – the strap enters the helmet on either side and passes behind the wearer’s head allowing for tightening or loosening.

I bought this helmet almost twenty years ago along with other Hungarian militaria. At that time the seller thought it may be some kind of prototype tank crew helmet, however, upon re-examining it for this *Magyar Front* article, I found a very faded stamp inside one of the leather liner tongues. Although it's barely legible, after showing it to colleagues it became clear that the format of the stamp was exactly similar to those used for items belonging to the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie (Magyar Királyi Csendőrség). No photos exist of it being worn, and there are no other known examples of it – but it certainly made sense for the Gendarmes to have been issued with proper motorcycle helmets, and such a find would be exciting to say the least. Not long after the discovery and discussion of the stamp, the Ottenreiter papers were found, and in them there are two references to this helmet.



3

53 db. csendőrségi bukó 110-

BUDAPEST FŐVÁROS LEVÉLTÁRA - BUDAPEST CAPITOL ARCHIVES

2. bőrből / rendőrségi / marhabőrből, celloid béléssel, nyakvédővel, bőségállítással szab.zárral

Details from the Ottenreiter papers. Above: September 1944 order for 53 Gendarme Motorcycle Helmets. Below: From the 1963 list of leather helmets - note how the word *rendőrségi* (police) started out, most probably, as *csendőrségi* (gendarme).



INNOVATION IS EVERYTHING



KITS INCLUDE
HUNGARIAN
DECAL OPTIONS

HUNGARIAN TANK CREW
35157

WW II MILITARY MINIATURES SERIES



MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE

WWW.MINIART-MODELS.COM