

## JUDICIAL TREASURE

AND

## A POIGNANT MEDAL FOR BRAVERY





## MAGYAR FRONT VOLUME XXVI, ISSUE 4 Fall 2024

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**Peter Czink, Editor-Designer**

**The New Front:**  
(International Hungarian Military  
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*"To strive, to seek, to find,  
and not to yield."*

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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.

## *A note from the Editor*

This is the last silver jubilee *Magyar Front* issue, and I'm excited to introduce some more great material from our members. The articles of Gergely Sallay and Krisztián Gröber perfectly illustrate the great depth to which our members go in researching and presenting historical artifacts, and I think everyone interested in Hungarian military history will learn something new from them.

Also featured are some images of Ferenc Varga's activities that are inspiring as well – we now have a representative in France who goes out of his way to include us all in his rich journey of historical preservation.

After we published our last issue, Joe Gyökéri shared with me his shock and excitement after reading about Andrew Helmecezy's pocket shrine: "...I have a very similar one that my grandfather József carried on him throughout WWII. He then gave it to my father Miklós who took it to Vietnam, and then my father gave it to me, to protect me. I carried the locket with me in my flight vest on all three of my deployments to the desert. It has kept three generations of Gyökéris protected in war zones."

I can't help but feel what a privilege it is to be allowed to see such intimate and personal mementoes of faith, and hear their stories so carefully preserved and honoured. I am very proud of how the *Magyar Front* has facilitated so much dialogue and has allowed such historically significant material to be shared by so many. *P.Cz.*



GYÖKERI PHOTOGRAPHS

**Above right:** Shown larger than actual size, Joe's shrine (shown closed and open) was carried by him while serving in Iraq from 2010-2011, Jordan from 2016-2017, and Jordan, Iraq, and Syria from 2023-2024; and by his father Miklós in Vietnam from 1968-1969, and by his grandfather József in Hungary from 1940-1945.

*A keepsake to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of our publication:*

### **THE MAGYAR FRONT MEDAL - CHALLENGE COIN**



**This commemorative medal - challenge coin has been made to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the publication of the Magyar Front.**

The medal, which is 51mm (2") across, is available for  
\$12.50\* on its own, or \$20.00\* with its custom, fitted case.  
\*USD, plus postage if applicable.



# Ferenc Varga IHMHPS

## *Vice-President, France*

We were all introduced to Ferenc Varga not long ago, and here are a few highlights of some of the places he has been as a representative of both the IHMHPs and the *Magyar Front*. Along with his dedicated work in the preservation and documentation of Hungarian war graves, Ferenc attends many official commemorative events in countries where Hungarian fallen heroes are interred.

On June 7th, 2024 he was at the Mont-de-Huisnes German War Cemetery and Mausoleum, located one kilometre north of Huisnes-sur-Mer and a few kilometres southwest of Avranches, France. On October 22nd he honoured war-dead at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, and on November 18th he made an official visit to the Fiume Road National Graveyard, in Budapest, one of the oldest cemeteries in Hungary.

He has met with many Hungarian dignitaries all while

**Below: At the Mont-de-Huisnes German War Cemetery and Mausoleum - Ferenc Varga's Hungarian flag and hand-crafted IHMHPs memorial wreath. June 7th, 2024**



VARGA PHOTOGRAPH



VARGA PHOTOGRAPH

**Above: The newly appointed IHMHPs French VP at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris. October 22nd, 2024.**

representing our organization – the reputation of IHMHPs will shine even brighter because of it, which is why he has been named our French IHMHPs Vice-President. One thing touched me particularly – Ferenc would place our challenge coin on monuments that honoured our Hungarian forefathers. I genuinely felt that we were all there with him. If any members are so inspired to leave their coin on such monuments, let me know, and I will replace it for you.

*Continued on page 14...*



VARGA PHOTOGRAPH

**Above: Monument at the Fiume Road National Graveyard, Budapest. November 18th, 2024**



# A Poignant Silver Bravery Medal

by Gergely Pál Sallay

International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society member since 2009



As head of the Numismatic Collection of the Hungarian Military History Museum, throughout the years I have had the privilege of meeting many Hungarian soldiers' descendants who had decided to entrust our institution with preserving the estates and the memories of some truly exceptional people – something I have always considered a personal mission, too. The lives and military careers of those men whose orders, decorations, and medals are my responsibility as long as I serve as a custodian in a public collection, have in many ways inspired and educated me.

One of the most poignant estates that I had the honour of acquiring for the collection was donated to the Museum in 2013, and was later featured at our centennial First World War exhibition. The estate consisted of few items, but I was overwhelmed when I took them from the elderly Hungarian lady who made her visit from England, by then her home, specifically to deposit her late father's military relics at our museum. One of the items was a fragment of an Italian shrapnel shell, which had been preserved as an eternal memento, as it led to the amputation of the left leg of Reserve Ensign Lajos Szóczy, as a result of him being wounded on October 18th, 1915 on the Doberdo Plateau, in the Third Battle of the Isonzo. The other was a 1st Class Silver Bravery Medal (missing its ring suspension and ribbon) awarded to Ensign Szóczy in November 1915 for his brave conduct in the same battle.

Lajos Szóczy (1894–1986), a teacher at the Calvinist school in Mocsá, joined the Royal Hungarian 30th (Budapest) Infantry Regiment as a one-year volunteer at the age of 20, in October 1914. After finishing reserve officer's school, he was assigned to the Royal Hungarian 17th (Székesfehérvár) Infantry Regiment with the rank of ensign. He was deployed to the battlefield with the marching battalion of that regiment on May 5th, 1915.

On October 18th, 1915, on the Italian front, west of San



Dr. Gergely Sallay

Martino del Carso near the River Isonzo, Szóczy's frontline cover was directly hit by a shrapnel shell, which seriously wounded him, crushing his left leg. The regimental history describes the Third Battle of the Isonzo, which began on that day and lasted until November 3rd, 1915, as follows:

“... the enemy's activity is intensifying along the entire frontline. At night, right after the shift, a patrol attacks our trenches. We repel them. However, in the morning, the brigade informs us that, according to an intercepted telephone conversation, the Italians would attack today or tomorrow at the latest. The accuracy of the intelligence is proved by the intensive artillery activity and our own observation – our observers report one after the other that the Italians, rather unusually, are fully equipped in their positions. At the right wing of the Damó battalion, a long-surveilled mine is detonated with a devastating explosion - part of the trench goes up into the air, but our machine gun raises a barrage of corpses from the Italians advancing through the explosion funnel, in front of the others.

On the entire Isonzo front-



HUNGARIAN MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM

Above: Reserve Ensign Lajos Szóczy's 1st Class Silver Bravery Medal - the ring and ribbon have been lost (shown twice actual size).



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line, the fight flares up again, the many advances deepen into a unified, bloody battle, from the snowy summit of the Krn, through the Tolmein bridgehead, Canale, Plava, the Görz bridgehead and the rim of the Doberdo plateau; all the way to the sea. New assault brigades attack everywhere, and it is as if the earth has split open; the rich valley of the silvery river is cratered, smouldering, smoky and hellishly burning; along with all its old neighbours, the barren heights along the riverbanks. The shelling is continuous from dawn to dusk, its sharp iron rain covers everything and not only crushes the cover of the squad line, but also tears up the reserves in the sinkholes behind the position. And in this constantly hissing, ghostly writhing, the front has to remain motionless, because wherever movement is noticed during the day, cannon fire directed with bitter precision immediately strikes, leaving no one alive. The young life of Ensign Lajos Szóczy, one of our dead here, was also taken by a grenade..."

However, the regimental history was wrong about the fate of Lajos Szóczy. The platoon commander, who held the rank of ensign at the time, was first taken to a first aid station, and then, as he needed surgery, he was transported to the reserve hospital in Cilli (today Celje, Slovenia). He was treated in the hospital for two months, and then transferred to a reserve hospital in Sopron, where he stayed until March 1916. First

his foot and later his leg below the knee had to be amputated. "Ever since then, every step in my life has been suffering" – he wrote in a CV in 1951. The 22-year-old young man's strength of will and life-affirmation, however, was shown by the fact that after his recovery, he immediately returned to his teaching profession, which he continued to practice for many decades, and in the interwar period, he also worked as a Levente Youth instructor.

He was awarded the 1st Class of the Silver Bravery Medal in November 1915 for his gallantry in the Third Battle of the Isonzo, where he took about fifty prisoners with his platoon during a counterattack that he led before his injury. He was promoted to lieutenant on August 1st, 1916. Notwithstanding his life-changing wound, in his period photos he is seen wearing his medal proudly.

I have always found Lajos Szóczy's story moving and

**2nd Lt Szóczy wears the 1st Class Silver Bravery Medal with a bar representing a second award of the same medal in the photo at left. Apparently the second award never happened in his case, although his one award was gazetted twice (once in 1916 and once in 1918) for some reason. He poses in his greatcoat and cap below.**

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inspiring, and I shared it with visitors whenever I guided groups in our museum's First World War exhibition. I did the same when presenting the exhibition in a television programme several years ago. Some months after the programme was broadcasted, I received a letter from a man who identified Lajos Szóczy as his beloved teacher at the elementary school of the village of Ászár, back in the 1960s. He also included a photo of his class with their old teacher – perhaps one of the last classes Lajos Szóczy taught before his retirement. I understood that Lajos Szóczy was a role model to many, and I felt deeply honoured that I could be instrumental in reviving his memory. That common and incomplete Silver Bravery Medal in the Museum's Numismatic Collection is one of the most poignant items I have ever taken into my hands.



**Ensign Szóczy (on the stretcher) after his surgery, wearing his 1st Class Silver Bravery Medal**



**The shrapnel (shown twice actual size) that was responsible for Szóczy's wound**

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**Lajos Szóczy (with cane) at the village of Ászár elementary school, among his students at their farewell ceremony, 1960s**

# Judicial Treasure

by Krisztián Gróber

International Hungarian Military History  
Preservation Society member since 2017



People sometimes ask me what my favourite object in my collection is. After seventeen years of collecting and acquiring thousands of objects (decorations, badges, photos, documents, uniforms, books, accessories, etc.), it is not an easy question to answer - there are items that I have been able to acquire after many years of waiting; there are ones of great value that required me to give up on many other things; and there are some that have a personal connection that makes them priceless to me. In the end, the answer to this

**Below: Three views of a unique  
example of a judicial general's greatcoat.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISZTIÁN GRÓBER



Dr. Krisztián Gróber



GRÓBER COLLECTION



question is that among all my objects, there is not one single item that is the most cherished.

When Peter Czink suggested that we could write articles about our favourite objects for the *Magyar Front*, I had to think again about which piece in my collection I should present to readers - I felt that it should be rare and special, unique and close to my heart at the same time.

I chose a uniform item - a Hungarian general's greatcoat. It is pre-1945, has no name tag, and we do not know who the owner was. I bought it at the beginning of my collecting career, with the valuable help of our fellow IHMHPS member Péter v. Laborc (to whom I am grateful to this day). Looking at the coat, I'm reminded of one line from the USMC's Rifleman's Creed: "There are many like it, but this one is mine."


Well, there aren't actually many like it - I think you could probably count existing examples on one hand. But what else is so special about this coat? First of all, it has survived

eighty years in excellent condition. It is clean, and has neither moisture, nor moth damage. Not many greatcoats have remained in such immaculate condition. When we have a closer look at it, we can also see that the fabric, tailoring, and embroidery are of exceptional quality.

Secondly, the coat belonged to a major-general of the justice branch, as can be seen from the fact that the fabric of the collar patch is not made from scarlet red (*skarlátvörös*) wool, but burgundy (*buzérvörös*) velvet. (I happen to be a judge myself, and have a particular fondness for judicial items, which is why most of the items in my collection are connected to the civilian or military judiciary.) The laurel and oak branches on the wide collar patches are beautifully embroidered - the velvet's edges show some signs of wear, but nothing significant. The collar itself is made from fine chocolate-brown velvet.

The body of the coat is made from the finest khaki

*Continued on page 11...*



**The fully closed collar.  
Regular army generals' collar insignia  
is embroidered on fine scarlet-red wool,  
however, the gold embroidery for generals  
of the justice branch is worked onto burgundy  
velvet. A khaki loop and toggle keeps  
the dark brown velvet collar fastened.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISZTIÁN GRÖBER

GRÖBER COLLECTION





PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
KRISZTIÁN GRÖBER

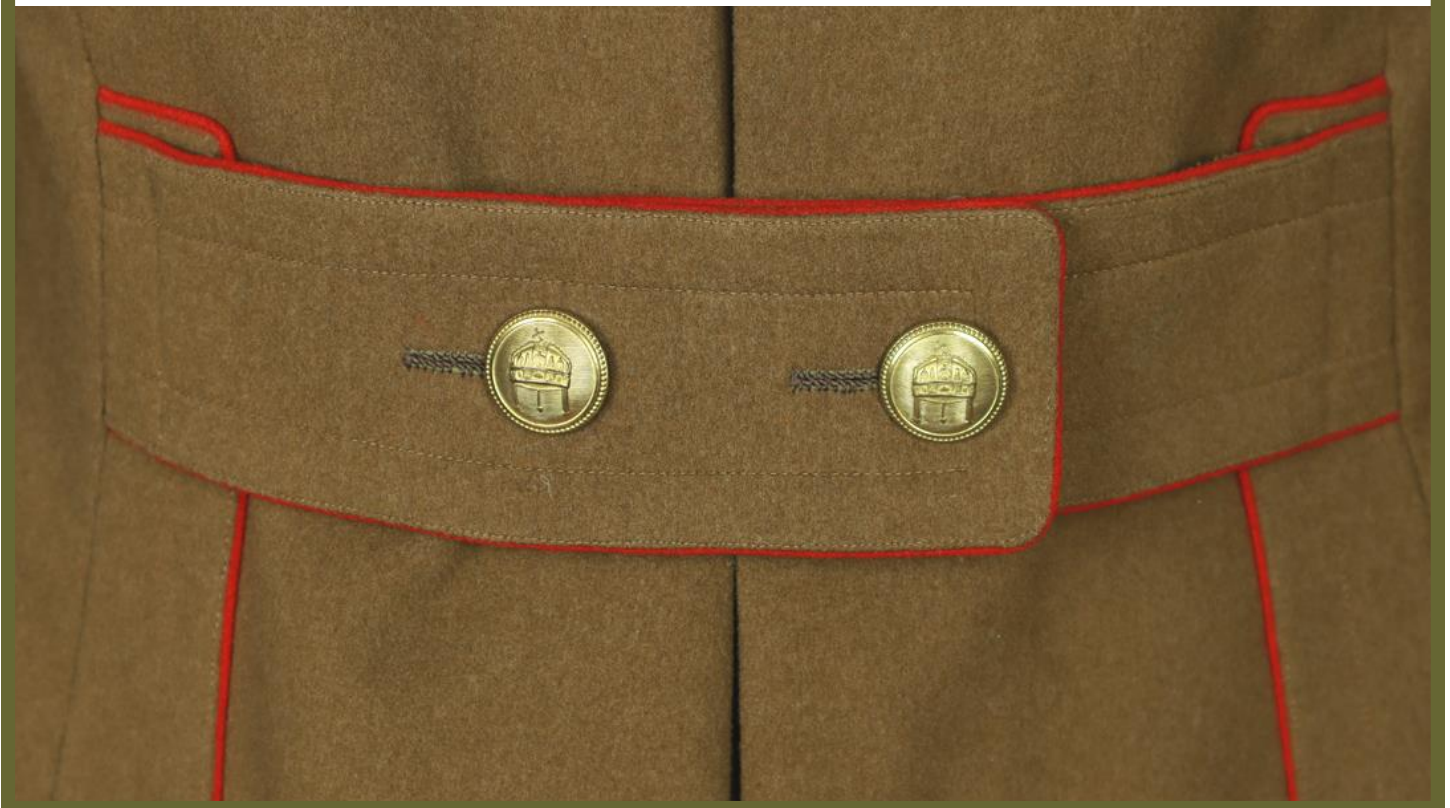
**A view of the garment's interior: The body of this well-tailored greatcoat is made from fine khaki wool, while the lining is of scarlet-red cotton with matching coloured wool lapels. The lower left pocket also features a slit for the sword to pass through, allowing access to the weapon while still wearing it underneath the greatcoat.**

GRÖBER  
COLLECTION





**Above left: An example of a standard general's cuff rank insignia - the crown and wreath are worked onto a khaki wool oval patch. Above right: This greatcoat's unique feature – the crown and wreath are embroidered directly onto the khaki material of the garment's cuff. Below: The decorative half-belt on the back of the greatcoat piped in scarlet red.**





...continued from page 8

(*táboribarna*) wool, while the entire lining of the coat is scarlet-red cloth with wool around the neck and edges. (Officers' greatcoats have khaki a lining.) All the openings and pockets are well tailored - the lower left one is divided into two parts: a fully functional pocket and an opening for the sword.

The most special part of the greatcoat are the cuffs. Both of them have the general's rank insignia - a wide and a narrower braid, and the embroidered Holy Crown between laurel branches, all of which signifies the rank of Major General. Usually the crown and laurel branches are embroidered onto a separate piece of wool and sewn onto the sleeves, however, this greatcoat is different - this insignia is embroidered directly onto the fabric of the sleeve of the coat itself.



**Right:**

**This view of the back of the greatcoat showcases its fine tailoring. Along with the lapels, the tops of the deep cuffs and other details are picked out with scarlet red wool piping.**

**The finely-made gold buttons on the half-belt, along with those fastening the front of the greatcoat are 26mm in diameter.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
KRISZTIÁN GRÖBER



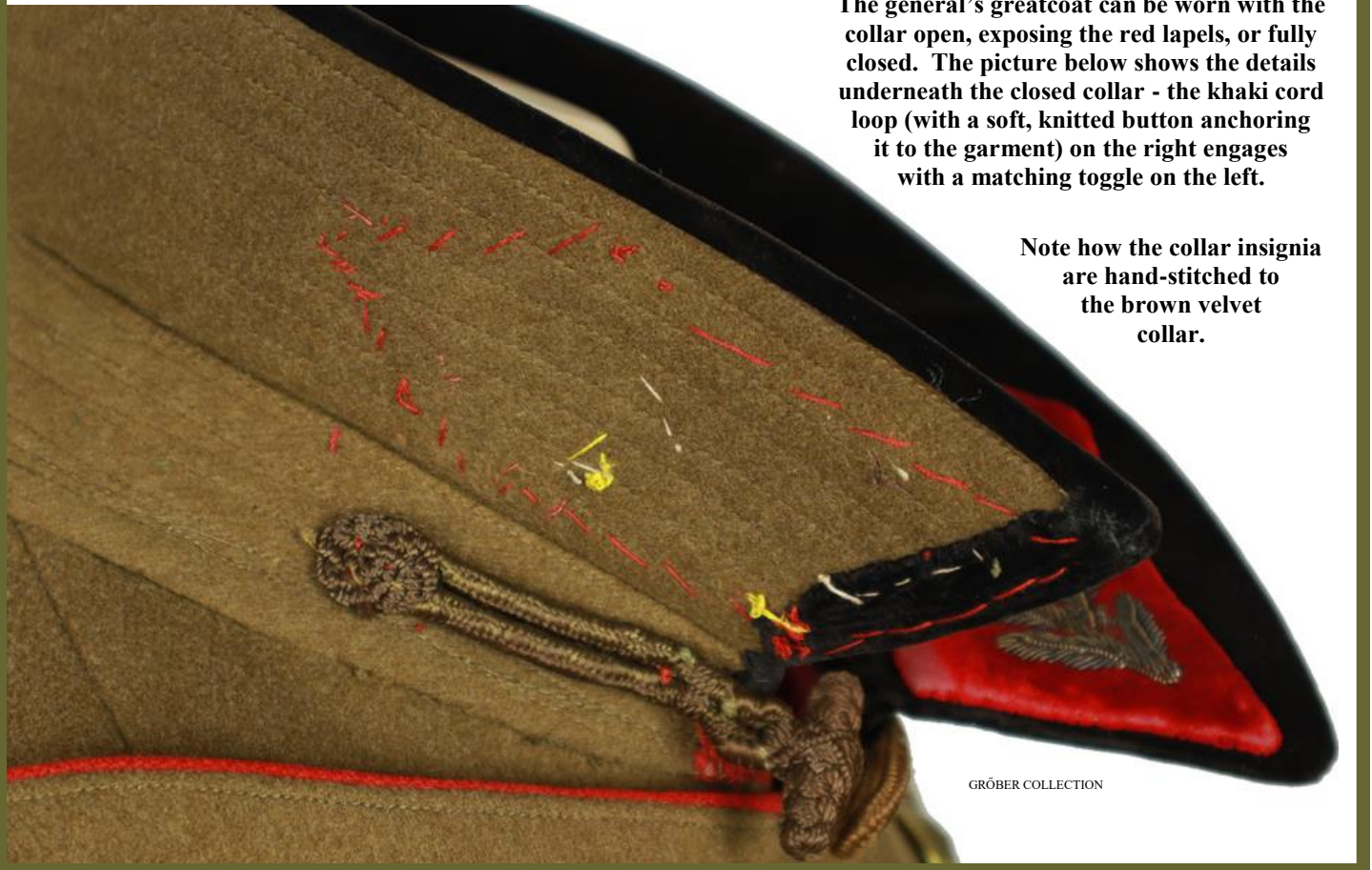




PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISZTIÁN GRÖBER

The general's greatcoat can be worn with the collar open, exposing the red lapels, or fully closed. The picture below shows the details underneath the closed collar - the khaki cord loop (with a soft, knitted button anchoring it to the garment) on the right engages with a matching toggle on the left.

Note how the collar insignia are hand-stitched to the brown velvet collar.



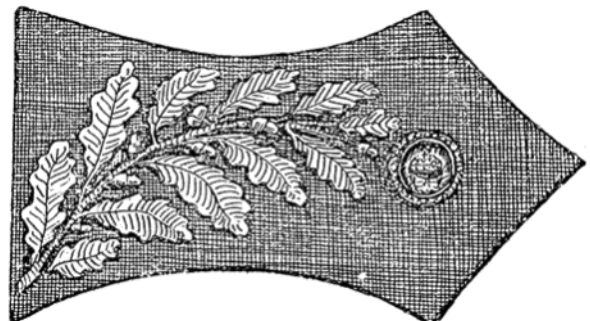
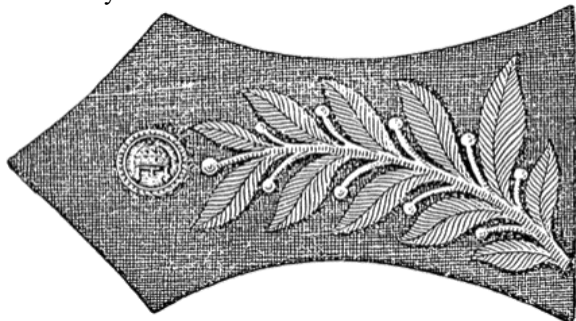




This special greatcoat is one of the most cherished items in my collection, however, the original owner of it is not known. Since there were so few judicial generals in the Hungarian army, it may have belonged to one particular individual: Dr. iur. Árpád Ambrózy (Balassagyarmat, 1882. I. 01. - Budapest, 1954. IV. 10.)

He studied law at the Kassa Law Academy, and during his studies he applied for a position as a military judge. He became a member of the justice branch in 1908, and after two years of experience he became a military judge in 1910 (with the rank of 1st Lieutenant). He served at various posts at the beginning of his career and during WWI, most of them connected to either the Navy or the Ministry of Defence. After a couple of years spent at the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie and some smaller judges' positions, he moved to Budapest, to the Highest Military Court of Justice. He became a Major General in 1937. From 1939, he was head of the judicial branch of the Royal Hungarian Army.

He was a decent person with great knowledge, always respected by members of his staff. He retired in August 1942, after forty-two years of service. He had been promoted to a Lieutenant General the same month. After WWII, communist authorities did not bother him for years, however, things later changed, his pension was revoked in 1950, and in 1951 he was displaced to a rural area. After two years of "domestic exile" he was allowed to return to Budapest. He died soon after, at the age of seventy-two.



**Original renderings of general's greatcoat insignia from period uniform regulations.**



VARGA PHOTOGRAPH

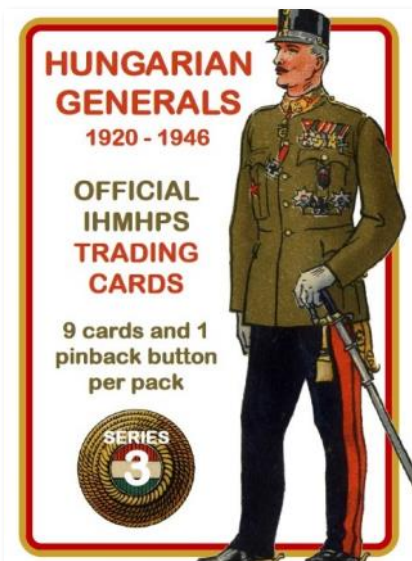


VARGA PHOTOGRAPH

Above:  
Monuments honouring Imre Nagy (Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic from 1953 to 1955 - in 1956 he became leader of the Hungarian Revolution), and other executed leaders and revolutionaries of the 1956 Uprising at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris.

These photos were taken by Ferenc Varga during his visit there on October 22nd, 2024.

Left and right:  
Our new IHMHPS/Magyar Front media ID card. This document will be issued to members who represent the International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society and the Magyar Front at official functions and events.



**NOW AVAILABLE!**

## Hungarian Generals (1920-1946) Official IHMHPS Trading Cards

Series 3 is now available:  
9 cards and 1 pinback button per pack

Another result of IHMHPS members' dedication to military history preservation and attention to detail, these collector's cards will bring together a great many images and stats of Hungary's military leadership from 1920 to 1946. Order the second series of 9 cards (plus a surprise sticker) today!

**\$5.00 per pack (plus postage)**





*Many Thanks to Our Members and Readers for making the Magyar Front a Joy to Produce!*

I am very grateful to our members who have shared stories of their favourite artifacts for our *Magyar Front* jubilee year. These pieces have not only broadened my knowledge and understanding of Hungarian military history, they have also treated me to the very personal insight of my friends. I believe that having access to this in-depth wisdom is what keeps up the interest in our past alive and relevant.

So much has changed since I began the publishing *Magyar Front* – I produced the first issue when the internet was in its infancy. Back then there was very little to be found, in English, about Hungarian military history and militaria, but today there seems to be countless social media groups and websites devoted to these subjects that are accessible even by non-Hungarian speakers (with a little help from

Google Translate). I have visited many of them and they are without a doubt extensive and full of visual content, however, I can't help feeling that a lot of it is still "show and tell" - with a lot more show and far too little tell.

Collecting (whether it's objects or information) is a wonderfully fulfilling thing, but I have always thought that there's a fine line between "collector" and "hoarder." The former can be very fulfilling, but the latter can become a morbid burden. I completely understand the excitement that comes with the acquisition of a new item, or the kudos from like-minded people regarding our latest expensive auction purchase, but that feeling is ephemeral.

I don't think that my desire to produce a journal about Hungarian military history came from a lofty source – if I think about it, it may have just been from frustration that the information I sought was so elusive - and my first efforts were green to say the least. As time went on the *Magyar Front*, and later the IHMHPS drew like-minded individuals together, and I came to have access to knowledge that I never imagined. As a bonus, my personal skills – writing, research, publishing, etc. became very much improved. Still more on the periphery, as much as I was delighted with my new friends and comrades, I found that society in general shied away from the study of military history and the Hungarian powers-that-be seem disinterested in the work of "foreigners." For those reasons I became determined to make recognition an important part of the IHMHPS that would be showcased in the *Magyar Front*.

I am absolutely delighted with what the *Magyar Front* (and the IHMHPS) has become. I often consult back issues of our publication when I am doing research, and the kindness and support from my fellow members – my friends – makes all the hard work a great joy for me.

*P.Cz.*

**Above:**

**IHMHPS founder/president - Magyar Front editor Peter Czink in his home office where the journal is created.**

**Right:**

**Storage solutions for Magyar Front records and Documents, and IHMHPS insignia, medals, etc.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LORRAINE WEIDEMAN





# Support and promote our cause!

IHMHPS membership pin  
(also miniature Badge of Honour) \$5.00



IHMHPS insignia in  
gold or silver \$7.00



IHMHPS  
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2008 - 2018  
Commemorative  
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All items  
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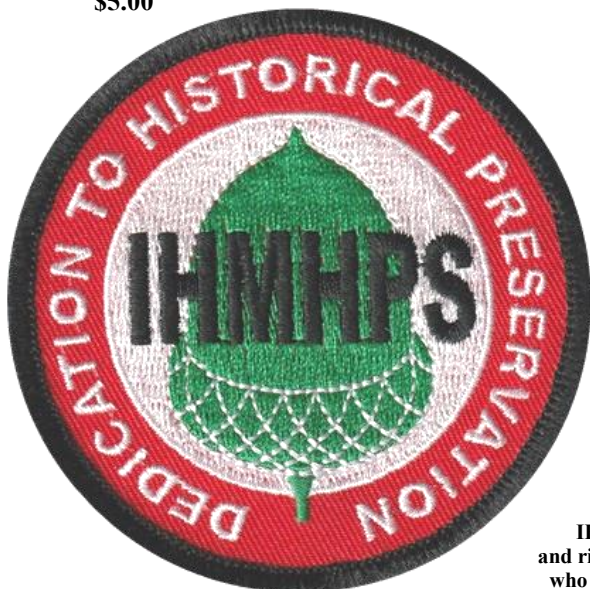
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Prices (USD)  
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25th anniversary Magyar Front  
commemorative medal/challenge  
coin - \$12.50 on its own, or \$20.00  
with its custom, fitted case  
(shown at right).



IHMHPS Awards (extras or replacements)  
and ribbon bars are available for purchase to those  
who have been awarded them. Prices on request.