

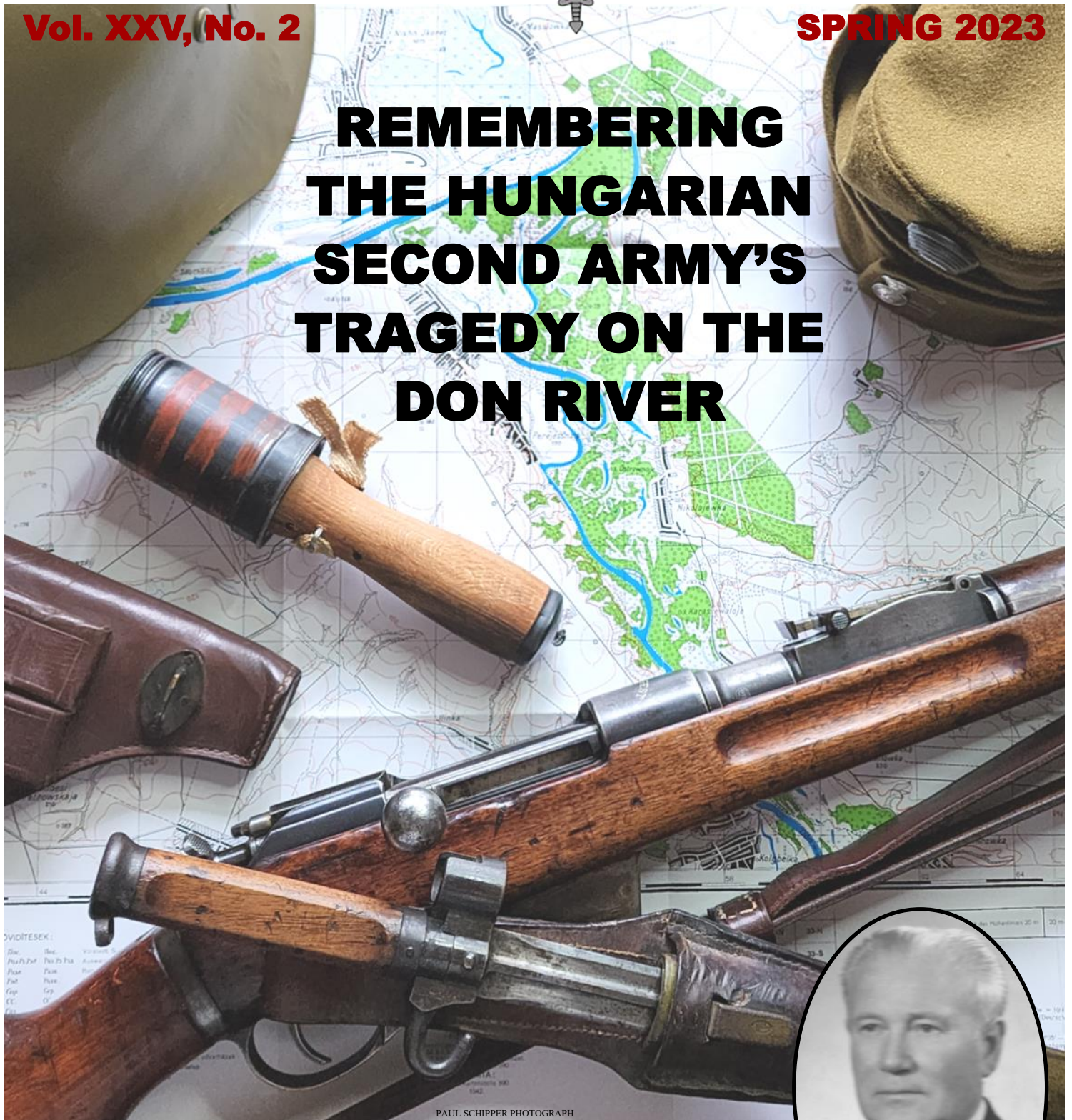
MAGYAR FRONT



Vol. XXV, No. 2

SPRING 2023

REMEMBERING THE HUNGARIAN SECOND ARMY'S TRAGEDY ON THE DON RIVER



PAUL SCHIPPER PHOTOGRAPH



...AND ONE HUNGARIAN SOLDIER'S
REMARKABLE PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD
OF MILITARY SERVICE FROM 1928 TO 1956



MAGYAR FRONT VOLUME XXV, ISSUE 2 SPRING 2023

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

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

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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

Continuing with our recognition project, I'm pleased to feature IHMHPS member Paul Schipper Jr. and Heather Schipper in this issue as our most recent Badge of Honour recipients.

I'm often asked why I don't exert more effort in recruiting new members - of course we always welcome them, however, the goal of the IHMHPS isn't necessarily to boast a burgeoning membership. My hope has always been that our members actively participate in historical preservation, and even if only observers, they will endeavour to share their knowledge and insight in order to interest and inspire others.

Re-enacting may not be an option for everyone, but for those enthusiasts who participate in this international hobby, it can bring great joy and satisfaction while raising awareness of the need for historical preservation of all kinds. I have always been well-aware that spouses of such aficionados are usually overlooked, yet often contribute a great deal to the hobby or field of interest - in fact they sometimes are the key providers of the great strength it sometimes takes to carry on the dedication to what can be very difficult and consuming work. Our dedicated couple are already known to many, and I hope that our recognition of their exemplary efforts will help in the promotion of this most worthy field of endeavour.

Krisztián Gróber is another IHMHPS member who is widely known, and has shared a fascinating tableau with us in this issue. His YouTube channel (Decker's Militaria) is an informative and entertaining wealth of Hungarian military history - keep your eyes on it for new videos. This poignant and mysterious story of a dedicated career soldier (on pages 4 to 7) is not yet finished. Many former Hungarian military personnel who were wrongfully imprisoned or stripped of their rank were rehabilitated after the regime change of 1989. It seems that the subject of Krisztián's article, however, never received that honour. It may be possible to right that wrong, but further research will be necessary - we'll keep you posted.

P.Cz.

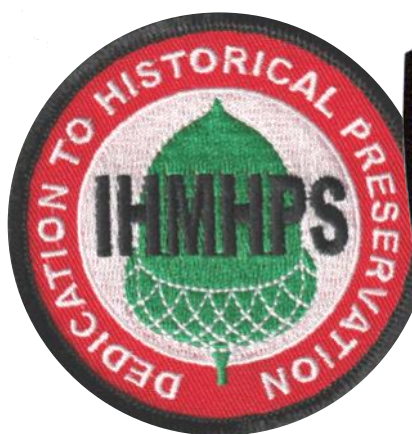
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Recognition Project patch
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Paul Schipper Jr.



Heather Schipper

Dedicated Couple Receive Badges of Honour

One of the main goals of the IHMHPS is to attract members who actively take part in the preservation of Austro-Hungarian and Hungarian military history, and Paul Schipper Jr. personifies that objective. He retired from the US Army as a Lt. Colonel after thirty-two years of service and has been an IHMHPS member since 2020. He has earned two university degrees, and being a life-long learner, he currently studies Hungarian - attending the University of Pécs Summer language course and through ongoing private lessons.

Another passion of his, is re-enacting and collecting (he has collected Austro-Hungarian and Hungarian militaria for over twenty years). Fellow enthusiasts sing the praises of his well-known company Schipperfabrik – his manufacturing concern devoted to producing high quality reproduction uniforms and equipment. He closed the business in 2015 but continues indulging in his passion for history and travel, however, he still produces a selection of Hungarian camouflage items.

Paul's wife Heather journeys right along-side him – not only managing all aspects of their business, but also actively taking part in their re-enacting endeavours. Together they attend anywhere from two to five major historical events each year. Both Paul and Heather have gone above and beyond the call of duty in raising awareness of our history and culture through their exemplary dedication, skill, and support. All IHMHPS members can be proud that our Badges of Honour are worn by such an inspirational couple.



SZOLGÁLATI IDŐM EMLÉKE



honvéd, 1928



örvezető 1930



tizedes 1931



szakaszvezető 1933



örmester 1941



lörzsörmester 1942



főlörzsörmester 1943



akadémikus 1947



alhadnagy 1948



főhadnagy 1949



százados 1950



örnagy 1951



alezredes 1954



kart. áll. 1957

The original tableau as found. The card matte is hand-painted - on top *Szolgálati Időm Emléke* (A Memento of My Time in Service) appears on the red and tri-colour ribbons behind the coat-of-arms of the Hungarian People's Republic, along with decorations featuring military motifs.

A Memento of Service

by Dr. Krisztián Gröber

I recently bought a framed tableau – a series of photographs of a military man’s uniformed portraits spanning almost three decades, from 1928 to 1957. This rare and remarkable panoply immediately attracted me, and I felt that I had to investigate the matter more deeply in order to document such a lengthy career. The frame contained fifteen photos (one was hidden under the matte), and I was thrilled beyond words when I discovered a fragment of a name on the back of one of them.

The first picture is of a young soldier of Regent Horthy’s army, taken in 1928. He is a *honvéd* (private), has no rank stars yet, and wears an Infantry Rangefinder’s Proficiency badge and a rifleman’s lanyard. The second is dated 1930 - he has been promoted to *örvezető* (senior private) with one pair of stars on his collar insignia. One year later, in 1931, he is pictured as a *tizedes* (corporal). By 1933 he is a *szakaszvezető* (senior corporal), and he proudly wears his NCO’s/OR’s Long Service Cross, Third Class.

After a break of eight years, we see him again in 1941, now with the rank of *örmester* (sergeant). He wears his long service cross as well the Reclamation of Transylvania Commemorative Medal. Also, he wears the new M1939 uniform tunic with stand-and-fall collar. Less than a year later he was promoted again – now to *törzsörmester* (sergeant first class).

Promotions happen more frequently during wartime, and by 1943 he wears the rank of *főtörzsörmester* (senior sergeant). This photo was probably taken from an identity card. Unfortunately, I could not make out the text on the stamp (on the lower left corner). When I removed the picture from the matte, I discovered that he is wearing the triangular insignia of the career (professional) NCO on his upper left arm.

Following World War II, he attended the military academy according to his 1947 photograph. He is wearing the new tunic of the “democratic army” with M1947 buttons (bearing the Kossuth-style Hungarian coat of arms). After graduating, he returned to military service as a *hadnagy* (lieutenant) in 1948. His tunic is the M1945 type, and the rank stars, which are now on the shoulder-boards are six-pointed, which were used from 1945 to 1949. In the 1949 picture, he has reached the rank of *főhadnagy* (first lieutenant). He wears an M1949 tunic which still uses the M1947 buttons.

The subject of this tableau moved up the ranks quickly in this new era of Hungarian history. The following year he is a *százados* (captain), decorated with the Merit Medal of the Hungarian People’s Republic. He is wearing the M1949 tunic with new pattern M1949 buttons. The next picture was taken in 1951, and he is now an *örnagy* (major). The stars on his shoulder-boards have been changed to the Soviet-type five-pointed variety. The 1954 picture shows a new rank and new military fashion. The tunic is the M1951 model with angular shoulder-boards - the two stripes and two stars indicating his new rank of *alezredes* (lieutenant colonel). He has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, which was

only issued from 1953-1954.

The next picture (the one hidden behind the matte) is of a man in uniform without insignia. We don’t know when it was taken, presumably no more than a few years after the previous one. Because it has the same buttons as the last one, it must be pre-1957, when buttons with a new insignia were instituted. I assume that he must have retired after this photo was taken, otherwise I don’t know why he would be wearing a uniform without decorations and rank.

The last picture is dated 1957 - the caption underneath was “in reserve,” but I think it was taken much later than 1957, not only because he looks much older, but the photographic paper and technology is different from the earlier examples. Although this was the image marked 1957 in the tableau, I think the one without rank insignia might have been in its place originally.

The fragment of a name on the back of one of the photos was “övägő Sán.” I thought it was most likely Kővägő Sándor. I tried to see if I could find anything about a military man by that name in the databases available on the internet and I managed to discover a few things – some mentions of a Lieutenant Colonel Sándor Kővägő.

Sándor Kővägő was born in Farnos in 1912, one of seven children of a peasant family. He started out as a butcher’s apprentice after elementary school, then went to Budapest when he was seventeen years old. He couldn’t find a job, so he enlisted in the army. In 1943, he graduated from the Non-Commissioned Officer School in Jutas. In 1948, he graduated from the Kossuth Academy, then served in the army in various commanding officer’s positions. From 1953 he was the commander of the Defence Ministry’s Guard Battalion and commander of the Bem Garrison.

In the first days of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution the garrison was attacked by insurgents demanding weapons - they succeeded in getting arms because Kővägő did not give the order to attack. He negotiated with them in Széna Square to stop fighting and to lay down their weapons. He was also part of the cease fire agreement in which the military agreed to cooperate with the representatives of the Széna Square rebels.

After the revolution, he joined the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party). His behaviour during the revolution led to his expulsion from the party in December 1956 and he was arrested and prosecuted in 1957. He was accused of failing to give the order to shoot at the revolutionaries, of cooperating with them, and of taking part in the activities of the revolutionary committees. He died in 1986.

“Interesting!” I thought to myself. But I wasn’t convinced, so I dug deeper. Then I found another photograph of Sándor Kővägő - as lieutenant colonel in 1956. From then on there was no doubt. It may seem like just a collection of a few yellowed military photos, but this little tableau is a wonderful treasure trove and microcosm of Hungarian military history. Sándor Kővägő - his importance is clear to me now, and he is most certainly worthy of remembrance.



The photographs of Sándor Kővágó removed from behind their matte, revealing even more details about his service.

GRÖBER COLLECTION



Honvéd (private), 1928



Órvezető (senior private), 1930



Tizedes (corporal), 1931



Szakaszvezető (senior corporal), 1933



Őrmester (sergeant), 1941



Törzsőrmester (sergeant 1st class), 1942



Facing page:

The reasons for Kővágó's uniform being stripped of its insignia (in the bottom middle photo), and why it was hidden behind the matte, is currently still a mystery. His arrest following the revolution may account for it, and the last photo presents

Mr. Kővágó, civilian, looking as dignified as when he was in uniform.

This article is perhaps only the beginning of the modern documentation and understanding of one Hungarian soldier's journey that will surely be followed up.

Keep an eye on the Decker's Militaria YouTube page and the *Magyar Front*.



Főtörzsőrmester (senior sergeant), 1943



Akadémikus (academy cadet), 1947



Alhadnagy (lieutenant), 1948



Főhadnagy (1st lieutenant), 1949



Százados (captain), 1950



Őrnagy (major), 1951



Alezredes (lieutenant colonel), 1954





Members of the Military Bicyclists' Re-enacting Association (Honvéd Kerékpáros és Hagymányörző Egyesület) gather before the events.

PAUL SCHIPPER PHOTOGRAPH

Remembering the Hungarian Second Army's Tragedy on the Don River

by Paul Schipper Jr.

After six months of fighting and severe shortages of all classes of supply, the Royal Hungarian Second Army (Magyar Királyi 2. Honvéd hadsereg) had been set-up for failure. Units lacked vital supplies of ammunition, anti-tank weapons, and mines, and soldiers went without bare essentials such as food and warm winter clothing. While the Germans and Italians retreated, the Hungarian Second Army was ordered to stand and fight an impossible holding action.

The complexities, issues, and history of the Hungarian Second Army are well beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to understand that this was the largest military defeat in Hungarian history. The Hungarian Second Army was on the front for less than a year, but of the initial 250,000 soldiers and laborers who were sent to fight, over 100,000 were dead, 35,000 were wounded, and another 70,000 were captured and taken as prisoners of war. Only 40,000 would survive to return to Hungary.

For most of the time since the Second World War ended, commemorations of many aspects of that conflict were not allowed in Hungary. During the socialist years this was even a taboo topic of discussion, however, things started to change

after the 1982 airing of the television documentary *Krónika: A második magyar hadsereg a Donnál (A Chronicle of the Hungarian Second Army on the Don River)*.

The tragedy that unfolded on the Don River is now remembered annually in Hungary on the 12th of January, the day in 1943 when the Soviet counter-offensive began which led to the collapse of the Hungarian Second Army. Eighty years later, on January 12th, 2023 this event was marked and commemorated by many groups and government officials across Hungary.

I was fortunate to be invited to attend one of these commemorations by the Honvéd Kerékpáros és Hagymányörző Egyesület (Military Bicyclists' Re-enacting Association). The event was organized by the Centenárium Hadtörténelmi Egyesület (Centenary Military History Association). The event was very different from how such things are organized in the USA - I was quite impressed. The organizers coordinated with the Ministry of Defence and presented a complex series of events which spanned three days. They were centred out of the Kaposvár Campus of MATE (Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences). Billeting for

the participants was in the school dormitories, which were vacant at the time, and food (traditional Hungarian cuisine) was served in the university dining hall. Unlike events in the States, there was no direct cost to the participants - the hosts had collected donations to cover all the costs.

The weather from January 19th to the 21st was perfect for an eastern front commemoration. It was unseasonably cold for southern Hungary and unusually heavy snow fell from Thursday to Saturday morning. The result left a thoroughly wet, muddy, and snow-covered "battlefield." It could not have been planned better.

We arrived at MATE after a somewhat difficult drive from Budapest and settled in on Thursday evening. We were briefed on operational plans and the troops gathered through the night. On Friday morning there was a formation of all participants. Three groups: on foot, on bicycle and on horseback all set out on their own routes to various monuments in the area where ceremonies were held and wreaths were laid. Local citizens and politicians came out to greet the re-enactors and join in the commemorations. The re-enactors in Kaposvár portrayed many arms of the Hungarian military. Infantry, cavalry, and bicyclist troops were well represented, while other individuals brought a motorcycle, cannon and even a field kitchen.

We had a very early start on Saturday morning. After a hearty breakfast we went to the "battlefield" where the exhibition battle was to be held. The plan was to demonstrate how small units conducted local breakouts from the Soviet encirclement. The group was also joined by about twenty

Soviet re-enactors. Bleachers and tents were brought in for the crowd and the special guest - the Minister of Defence came to watch the exhibition. In true military fashion the details of the action were rehearsed many times until the timing and actions became second nature. In Hungary, however, laws concerning firearms necessitate some creativity regarding weapons. Most of the troops at the event in Kaposvár did not have blank-firing weapons, so in order to make the public battle as authentic as possible, it was necessary to creatively position the soldiers with blank-firing guns most effectively.

At around 1100, the Minister of Defence, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky arrived with his staff. He conducted a review of the troops who promptly marched off to their starting positions. The battle went down as planned and included impressive pyrotechnics. We were soaked from the drizzle and mud and formed up to march back to the barracks to drop off our equipment and eat a much needed warm lunch. During lunch I was introduced to Defence Minister Szalay-Bobrovniczky and gave a short interview for the MoD website. It was all a truly fantastic experience.

It is always interesting to see how re-enactments differ around the world - I have traveled to events throughout the USA, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. While the focus and organization can be very different, they have the commonality of very dedicated enthusiasts who go to great lengths and expense to gather and collect authentic kit and perfect their impressions in order to educate and entertain their audiences.

PAUL SCHIPPER PHOTOGRAPH



Attila Iglér briefs his border troops of the Sopron Military Re-Enacting Association (Soproni Honvéd Hagományörző Egyesület) prior to setting out for remembrance ceremonies.

TISZTELGÉS A TENGEREN TÚLRÓL

Szöveg: honvedelem.hu | Fotó: Szakál Szabárd | 2023. január 26. 9:12

Különleges módon, hadijátékkal tisztelegtek a doni áttörés magyar hőseinek emléke előtt Kaposváron. Paul Schipper nyugállományú alezredes Wisconsinból érkezett Magyarországra, hogy a Centenárium Hagyományőrző Honvéd Gyalogdandár hazai képviselőivel együtt, itt, Magyarországon emlékezzen a magyar honvédekre.

Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok hadseregének egykori tisztje saját elmondása szerint nagy érdeklődéssel tanulmányozta Magyarországot, valamint hazánk hadtörténelmét, és nem utolsósorban ő maga is gyűjtője a magyar katonai relikviáknak. Hagyományőrzőként sok hazai bajtársával ápol jó barátságot.

Amikor hírért vette a doni áttörés nyolcvanadik évfordulójára tervezett megemlékezéseknek – amelyek részét képezte a január 22-én, vasárnap, Kaposváron előadott hadijáték is, amit Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf honvédelmi miniszter is megtekintett –, úgy döntött, hogy vállalja a nagy utat és Magyarországra jön, hogy közösen fejet hajtva fejezhesse ki tiszteletét.

„Azt gondolom, hogy fontos megemlékeznünk azokról, akik elestek és azokról is, akik túléltek. Sokuknak nagyon nehéz sors jutott később. Fontosnak tartom, hogy emlékezzünk rájuk” – mondta, hozzátéve, hogy örömmel látta azt az összefogást, aminek keretében a Honvédelmi Minisztérium is támogatta a hagyományőrzők tevékenységét.



www.honvedelem.hu

Facing page: (from Hungarian Defence Forces Online)

GREETINGS FROM ACROSS THE SEA

Re-enactors from the Centenary Military History Association in Kaposvár paid tribute to the Hungarian war heroes of the Don River breakthrough.

Retired Lt. Col. Paul Schipper came to Hungary from Wisconsin to join them - he's a former officer of the United States Army and has studied the military history of our country with great interest. He is collector of Hungarian militaria and maintains friendships with many local enthusiasts. When he heard about the commemorations planned for the 80th anniversary of the Don River breakthrough to be held on Sunday, January 22nd in Kaposvár, he decided to make the long journey to Hungary, to show his respect along with his fellow re-enactors and special guest Minister of National Defence Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky.

"I think it's important to remember those who fell and those who survived - many of them also had a very difficult fate following the war." he said, adding that he was "pleased to see the cooperation and support from Ministry of National Defence."

- *National Defence News - honvedelem.hu*

Right:
Re-enactor Gergely Kállay.

Below:
Military bicyclists ready with full equipment.



PAUL SCHIPPER PHOTOGRAPHS





Courtesy of Fortepan 24240

CZINK
COLLECTION

CZINK
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Plaster Souvenir Products of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association

Moulded plaster of Paris products (known as chalkware in North America) were very popular from the 1920s to the 1950s, and several items were produced for members of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association.

The largest, and perhaps most ubiquitous is the Frontline Fighters' badge which was meant to hang on the outside of the veteran's home. Measuring an impressive 40.5 cm x 60.5cm, these reinforced, cast insignia were 4.5cm thick and came with an integral heavy wire loop on the reverse for hanging. Each example is unique, as the veteran's name and rank were embossed at the top of the shield. Sometimes, rather than the owner's rank, the term for veteran (*tűzharcos*) is encountered below their name.

Standard text on either side of the Emperor Charles' Troops' Cross are the dates "1914 - 1918" and below that is *Becsülettel Harcolt!* (He Fought With Honour!); and a small scroll over the sword's handle reads: *Pro Patria*.

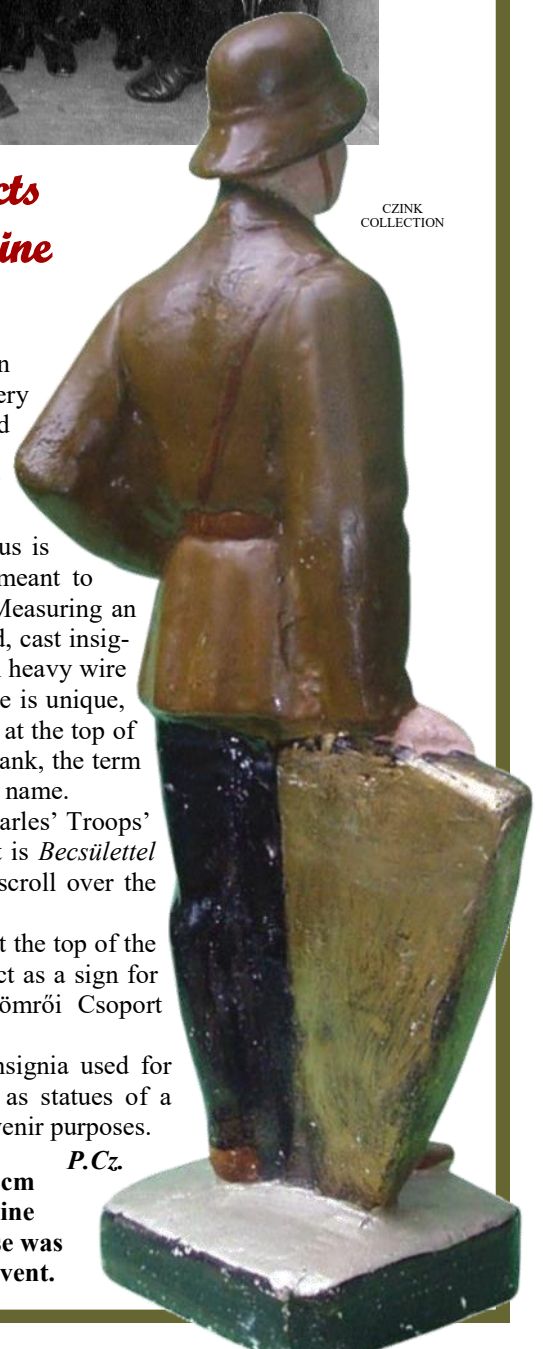
An interesting example can be seen in the photo at the top of the page. This group of veterans chose to use this product as a sign for their chapter - rather than a veteran's name, Gyömrői Csoport (Gyömrő Chapter) appears at the top of the shield.

Among other products were smaller association insignia used for the commemoration of reclaimed territories, as well as statues of a uniformed veteran which could serve a variety of souvenir purposes.

P.Cz.

Left and right: Front and back of a 36.5cm plaster statue of a member of the Frontline Fighters' Association. The date on the base was added to commemorate a now unknown event.

LORRAINE WEIDEMAN PHOTOGRAPHS





This Frontline Fighters' Association shield measures over 60cm in height. It was intended to be hung on the outside of the veteran's dwelling.

The text at the top could be customized with the veteran's name and rank - in this case, for Mihály Garbacz, Honvéd (Private).

CZINK COLLECTION

LORRAINE WEIDEMAN PHOTOGRAPH



CZINK
COLLECTION

This plaster shield, shown actual size, commemorates the reclamation of Upper Hungary (Felvidék) and Transcarpathia (Kárpátalja), 1938 - 1939. Holes are provided in the top corners for a hanging cord.

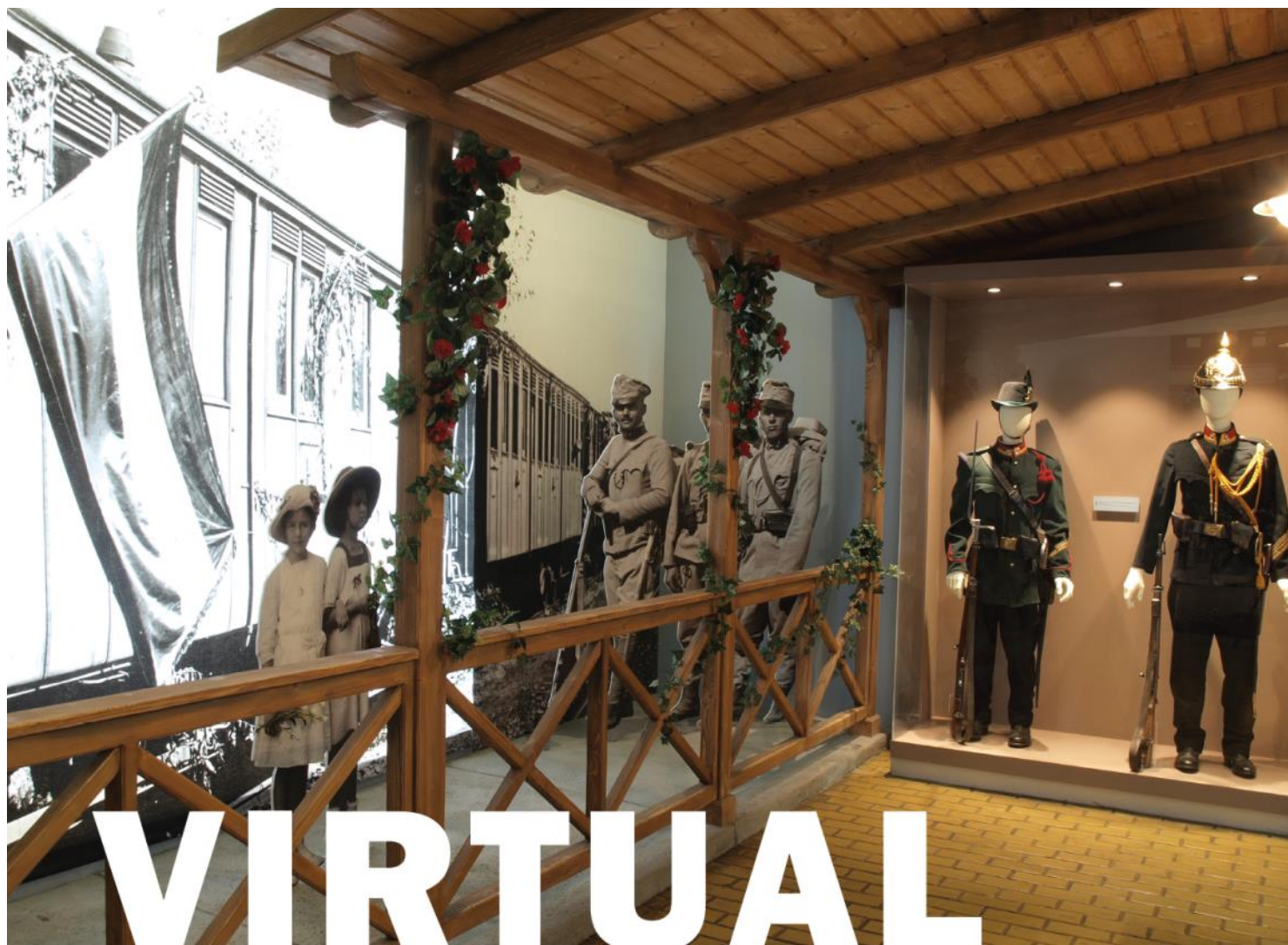
LORRAINE WEIDEMAN
PHOTOGRAPH



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LORRAINE WEIDEMAN
PHOTOGRAPH

Another shield, shown actual size,
commemorates the reclamation of Upper
Hungary (Felvidék), Transylvania (Erdély),
and Southern Hungary (Délvidék), 1938 - 1941.
Holes are also provided on top for hanging .



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