

The Activities of the Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Turda (THHB)

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Abstract. The Institute of Military History of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence decided in 2000 to try to find the marked or unmarked graves of Hungarian soldiers killed in World War II. Joining this initiative, József Pataky founded the Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Turda (THHB). Among other things, the aim of establishing the Committee was to discover the identity of the Hungarian soldiers that died in action in the fall of 1944 in Torda (in Romanian: Turda; in the followings, we will use the traditionally Hungarian name of the town: Torda) and its surroundings, find the location where they were buried, and erect a worthy monument to their memory. A Hungarian Soldier Graveyard was created within the Central Hungarian Cemetery of Torda, which has since become a place of pilgrimage. In addition, more than fifty sites of Hungarian soldiers' graves were discovered and in most of the cases properly marked since that time. In 2012, József Pataky was awarded the Hungarian Gold Cross by the Ministry of Defence for his untiring work to discover the places of burial and identify Hungarian soldiers that died in WWII, and for worthily keeping their memories alive.

Keywords: Torda, Hungarian, THHB, József Pataky, Battle of Torda, World War II, heroes, soldier, graveyard, cemetery, monument, forced labour, malenkij robot, MoD

‘Peace gives birth to abundance,
Abundance to arrogance,
Arrogance to contempt,
Contempt to war,
War to poverty,
Poverty to humility,
Humility to peace.’

(Inscription on the side of the Újtorda Reformed Church)

Respect and Remembrance

... is due to valiant József Pataky, the founding president of the Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Torda (in Hungarian: **Tordai Honvéd Hagyományőrző Bizottság**, or THHB), who passed away on 5th January, 2014. Until his death, he tirelessly and successfully worked on organizing the Torda Hungarians, tracing the graves of soldiers killed in action during the Battle of Torda and immortalizing the names of abducted civilians from Torda.

Preliminaries

During the Ceaușescu Era, authorities made every effort to consign the recent happenings to oblivion. The compelling need to immortalize the names of the heroes killed in action and their place of burial had therefore preceded the formal establishment of the Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Torda.

Several members of the Hungarian community in Torda have searched for the opportunity to present the real history of the Hungarian soldiers’ heroic perseverance and the historical events pursuing the battles. Since around 1986, Hungarians in Torda have been searching for the opportunities to record, in a worthy manner, the historical facts. Firstly, they began to gather and organize the data. After the fall of Ceaușescu’s regime, more prominent actions have taken place.

Foundation

The Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Torda was founded in September of 2000. They undertook the task of establishing a graveyard at the burial grounds of the soldiers killed in battle and taking care of it. Around the sites surrounding the battle, they search for previously unknown graves, catalogue them and, depending on the financial possibilities, set up a

monument commemorating the fallen soldiers. On All Souls' Day and on Heroes' Day, they praise the Hungarians' memory and strengthen their national identity and historical knowledge by remembering the heroes of the Hungarian army and the civilian casualties.

The Battle of Torda

Why was the Battle of Torda important? After Romania joined the allies during the final stage of World War II, the Hungarian and German troops halted the advance of the outnumbered Soviet–Romanian troops for nearly one month (between 12th of September and 8th of October, 1944) as they broke through the passes of the Southern Carpathian Mountains towards Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). They aimed at 'marching' through the valleys of the rivers Maros (Mureş) and Aranyos (Arieş) to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and then proceed onto the Great Plain. In the region of Debrecen, they wanted to surround the Hungarian and German defences, and with that 'momentum' to occupy Budapest in the fall.

Despite the outnumbered enemy, exploiting the local terrain, the Hungarian military leadership successfully stopped their advance at Torda, leaving around 2,500 casualties. (The enemy's loss was much heavier.)

The Activities of the Committee for the Preservation of Military Traditions from Torda

Since the foundation of THHB, its members and helpers have been collecting historical data, clarifying the sites and resting places of the Hungarian army's victims. They place a plaque commemorating the heroes' names. The memorial tablets are usually placed in churchyards or on walls of temples visited by Hungarians, as the state allowed few public properties on which to commemorate them.

After the establishment of the Hungarian Soldier Graveyard within the Central Hungarian Cemetery of Torda, having newly acquired data and knowledge, THHB places one or more tombstones or memorials every year with the support of the local population. The institutions of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence dealing with war graves aid the Committee's work by clarifying and supplementing the data, adding suggestions as well as providing financial support in many cases.

Malenkij Robot Memorial in Torda

To remind people of the tragic consequences of the war, a wooden headboard was placed at the entrance of the central cemetery of Torda in 1995 in memory of the deported Hungarian civilians died at unknown places. The generalizing inscription on the pedestal of the headboard said: 'In memory of the victims of World War II'.

As a survivor, Professor Elek Csetri, who was invited to the inauguration, recounted the fate of civilians deported for forced labour to the Soviet Union, referred to as 'malenkij robot'. It was the first time that many people heard of the previously obscured and denied tragedies. The families of the deportees who remained at home also had a miserable fate. Many of them left or emigrated from their dear homeland.

József Pataky, the officially declared Head of the Committee, continued collecting the names and researching the fates of the deported civilians from Torda.

On 4th October 2014, THHB set up and unveiled two granite columns containing the names of 216 Hungarian victims who died away from home (see Table 2). At the inauguration, Assistant Professor János Kristóf Murádin presented his research, the real history of the deportations. Participants faced the inhumane circumstances of the tragic events as they read the names of children, women, and the elderly who died abroad, at unknown places, buried in unmarked graves.

Achievements

– Several commemorative plaques and memorials have been set up for the soldiers who died a heroic death defending our country (see Table 1).

– We have expressed our grief and solidarity. We have not allowed forgetting the sacrifices of our heroes.

– We have returned the exemplary historical resistance to the memory of the Hungarians.

– We have included the respectful remembrance in the Hungarian community's events at the anniversaries.

– We have strengthened the historical coherence of the Hungarian community and provided an example at our gatherings to the next generation.

Further Plans

- Transfer of newly acquired data to the Ministry of Defence’s Military Heritage and War Grave Care Department. Refinement of data based on the Ministry of Defence’s repositories.
- Apprise the Transylvanian Hungarian population’s historical knowledge through articles in local newspapers.
- Exploration and public distribution of local memoirs.
- Organization of local people to initiate joint activities. Quality reunions following inaugurations.
- The financial support and participation of the motherland’s Ministry of Defence strengthens the national consciousness.
- The population of Hungary can gain an example of acting in collaboration (through the effectiveness of individual, community donations, and the support of the Ministry of Defence).

Guidance

We wish that the following epitaph provides guidance for all of us:

“They were fathers and soldiers,
Wielding a pen or a hoe,
They were all heroes.
Those who glance at their memory,
Salute!”

Table 1. *Memorial sites established by THHB*

Site	Where to find	Dead	Remarks
Alsó-felsőszentmihály (Mihai Viteazu)	Unitarian churchyard	7	Local militiamen were killed.
Alsójára (Iara)	Hungarian Cemetery	19	Concrete frame, covered. Inauguration in 2003.
Aranyosegerbegy (Vișoara)	Reformed churchyard	–	Names on a commemorative plaque on the outer wall of the church. Inauguration in 2005.
Aranyosegerbegy (Vișoara)	Reformed Cemetery	60	Mass grave. Inauguration in 1994. Overbuilt by the Orthodox (?)

Site	Where to find	Dead	Remarks
Aranyosgerend (Luncani)	Reformed Cemetery	35	Concrete frame. Inauguration in 2005. Black marble commemorative plaque on the inner wall of the church. Inauguration in 2007.
Aranyosgyéres (Câmpia Turzii)	Reformed churchyard	17	Scattered graves. Inauguration in 2005. Marble plaque. Inauguration in 2011.
Aranyoslonka (Lunca)	Outskirts of the village	11	Needs explanation!?
Bágyon (Bădeni)	Unitarian churchyard	23	Mass grave.
Berkes (Borzești)	Orthodox churchyard	160	Mass grave. A Hungarian inscription was removed several times. Buried Soviet, Romanian, German, and Hungarian soldiers.
Bonchida (Bonțida)	Reformed Cemetery	109	Separate graves. Inauguration in 2008.
Dés (Dej)	Public Urban Cemetery	82	Sepulchral mound can be seen. Inauguration in 2011.
Detrehemtelep (Tritenii-Colonie)	Reformed Cemetery	60	Separate graves. Inauguration in 2011. Plaque on the outer wall of the church. Inauguration in 2005.
Gerendkeresztúr (Grindeni)	Cemetery of Virághegy	26	2013.
Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia)	Roman Catholic Cemetery	65	Graves of war prisoners, uncared
Hadrév (Hădăreni)		20	Inauguration in 2014.
Harasztos (Călărași)	Reformed Cemetery	23	Mass grave – cared. Inauguration in 2000.
Kolozs (Cojocna)		38	
Kolozsbos (Boju)	Garden of Unitarian rectory	17	Combined tombstones, cared. Inauguration in 2006.

Site	Where to find	Dead	Remarks
Kolozskara (Cara)		11	
Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) I.	'Házsongárd' Military Cemetery	251	Separate graves, cared, all of the names are known
Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) II.	New Jewish Cemetery	68	Two mass graves – the names are known
Komjátszeg (Comșești)	Unitarian churchyard	16	Not yet inaugurated
Középpeterd (Petreștii de Mijloc)	Orthodox Cemetery	11	Peeled mass grave
Kraszna (Crasna)	In the yard of the kindergarten	3	Black marble plaque. Inauguration in 2009.
Magyarfenes (Vlaha)	Reformed churchyard and cemetery	13	They are said to be more, we are researching
Magyarléta (Liteni)	Scattered graves	5	Research in progress
Magyarlóna (Luna de Sus)	Scattered graves	13	Research in progress
Magyarszovát (Suatu)	Unitarian churchyard	6	Cared. Inauguration in 2007.
Margitta (Marghita)	Reformed churchyard	81	Inauguration in 2009.
Mészkő (Cheia)	Outskirts of the village	27	Unitarian churchyard. Inauguration is delayed.
Mezőbő (Boian)	Orthodox Cemetery	37	Some punk headboards, uncared
Mezőőr (Iuriu de Câmpie)	Pasture land on the outskirts of the village	18	Planned a cross in a concrete pedestal
Miriszló (Mirăslău) I.	Reformed Cemetery	6	Cared
Miriszló (Mirăslău) II.	Mass grave along the main road	36	Numerical credibility must be clarified!
Miriszló (Mirăslău) III.	Forest	6	Forest between Miriszló and Órményes
Nagyenyed (Aiud)	Reformed Cemetery	234	War prisoners, common grave. Inauguration in 2007.
Nagyszalonta (Salonta)	Urban Cemetery	219	Soldier graveyard, cared

Site	Where to find	Dead	Remarks
Nyírmező (Mermezeu-Văleni)	Roman Catholic Cemetery	19	Separate graves – wooden headboard at Torockószentgyörgy with an epitaph. Inauguration in 2006.
Paptamási (Tămășeu)	Reformed Cemetery	6	Cared
Segesvár (Sighișoara)	Roman Catholic Cemetery	45	Hungarian soldiers returned from Soviet prison camp
Sinfalva (Cornești)	Near the river Hesdát	3	Commemorative plaque on the wall of the Unitarian church. Inauguration is delayed!
Szamosfalva (Someșeni)	Reformed Cemetery	8	5 heroes in the Reformed Cemetery, 3 in the schoolyard
Szászfenes (Florești)	Hungarian Cemetery	20	Concrete frame, cared
Székelyhidas (Podeni)	Greek Catholic churchyard	12	The graves are cared. Inauguration in 2013.
Székelykocsárd (Lunca Mureșului)	–	7	–
Szind (Săndulești)	Unitarian churchyard	43	7 separate graves in the churchyard. Inauguration in 2011.
Torda (Turda) I.	Central Hungarian Cemetery	216	Malenkij Robot Memorial at a decorative place. Wooden headboard – inauguration in 1995. Two granite columns containing the names – inauguration in 2014.
Torda (Turda) II.	Central Hungarian Cemetery	224	Separate graves. Iron fence, 13 white marble plaques with names on them. Cared. Inauguration in 2004.
Torda (Turda) III.	Reformed churchyard in Újtorda	–	Wooden headboard. Remains of 49 exhumed soldiers were buried again in the Soldier Graveyard within the Central Hungarian Cemetery.

Site	Where to find	Dead	Remarks
Tordaszentlászló (Săvădisla)	Millennium small forest	19	Black marble. Inauguration in 2008.
Tordatúr (Tureni)	Roman Catholic and Orthodox Cemetery	–	Soviet, Hungarian, German. Uncared.
Tordatúr (Tureni)	Unitarian churchyard	52	White marble plaques with names on them. Inauguration in 2007.
Torockószyentgyörgy (Colțești)	Roman Catholic Cemetery	9	Peeled graves. Inauguration in 2006.
Tövis (Teiuș)	Reformed Cemetery	11	War prisoners
Várfalva (Moldovenești)	Unitarian Cemetery	2	Peeled graves, cared. Inauguration in 2012.

Table 2. *The names of 216 Hungarian victims of ‘malenkij robot’ from Torda who died away from home:*

Name	Age	Name	Age
ÁBRAHÁM Géza	(46)	BERECKI Béla	(14)
ACHIM Árpád	(21)	BLÉNYESI Kálmán	(22)
ÁCS János	(43)	BODA Géza	(20)
ÁMIRÁS Márton Endre	(39)	BORBÉLY Géza	(21)
APÁCZAI Károly	(20)	BOTOS Ferenc	(24)
BABOS Viktor	(41)	BÖSZÖRMÉNYI Géza	(45)
BALÁZS János		BRANDEIS Olga	(21)
BALÁZS Mózes	(54)	BRANDOFFER Antal	(44)
BALOGH Béla	(40)	CSETRI Zoltán	(23)
BARÁTOSI Tibor	(17)	CSIPKÉS József	(46)
BARDOCZ Andor	(31)	CSUNDERLIK János	(49)
BARDOCZ Béla		DANKÓ János	(36)
BARÓTI Dezső	(42)	DÁVID József	(21)
BARTHA János	(17)	DEÁK István	(21)
BARTHA Károly	(42)	DEMETER Mihály	(34)
BARTHA Lajos		DÉNES Ferenc	(24)
BARTUS Károly	(42)	DONÁTH Ernő	(32)
BEDER Árpád	(17)	DURUGY József	(33)
BEDŐ András	(49)	ERDEI Sándor	(39)
BEDŐ Antal	(45)	FEDURÁGAI Károly	(18)
BEDŐ Ferenc	(50)	FEHÉR Gábor	(42)
BENKŐ József		FERENCZI József	(34)
BENKŐ Károly	(39)	FINTA Lajos	(49)

Name	Age	Name	Age
FINTA Miklós	(56)	KISS Ferenc	(34)
FODOR Árpád	(27)	KISS Sándorné	(72)
FODOR Egon	(17)	KONCZ András	(48)
FODOR Ferenc (Frici)	(54)	KONCZ László	(14)
FODOR István	(32)	KONCZ László	(17)
FODOR István	(49)	KORPÁDI Gyula	(42)
FODOR Jancsi		KÓSA Károly	(38)
FODOR József	(17)	KOSZTA Józsefné	(58)
FODOR Márton		KOSZTA Mihály	(15)
FRICZ Ferenc	(41)	KOSZTA Miklós	(14)
FÜSY Gyula	(44)	KOVÁCS Albert	(33)
FÜZÉR Ferenc	(30)	KOVÁCS Dénes	(38)
GALAMBOSI János	(49)	KOVÁCS József	(17)
GALAMBOSI József	(41)	KOVÁCS József	(42)
GÁSPÁR András	(35)	KOVÁCSICS Lajos	(51)
GEGESI Árpád	(37)	KŐMÍVES János	(46)
GERGELY Róbert	(17)	KÖNTÖS József	(52)
GÖNCZI Árpád	(49)	KRÓNER Béla	(49)
GÖNCZI Béla	(46)	KUBIK Lajos	(41)
GÖNCZI Lajos	(50)	LÁSZLÓ Lajos	(16)
GRIM Lajos		LÉHMAN Mátyás	(39)
HALMÁGYI Pistika	(19)	LICKAI Lajos	(25)
HALMÁGYI Tamás	(47)	LOSONCZI Dezső	(51)
HARTL Lajos	(22)	LŐRINCZ Árpád	(25)
HÁVRANEK Elemér	(45)	LŐRINCZ József	(21)
HOLLUNZER Lajos	(42)	LŐRINCZY György	(38)
HORVÁTH Gyula	(24)	MAGYAROSI Sándor	(60)
IRSAI Ferenc	(35)	MAGYAROSY Zoltán	(49)
ISSZA Zoltán	(36)	MAJOR Sándor	(20)
JAKAB Samuné	(55)	MAKKAI Miklós	(61)
KACSÓ György	(41)	MÁTYÁS Albert	(41)
KANYARÓ Sándor	(20)	MEDGYESI Béla	(27)
KÁPTALAN N. József	(22)	MILOTAI Lajos	(62)
KÉKEDI Árpád	(17)	MILOTAI Sándor	(40)
KÉKEDI Árpád	(42)	MOLDOVÁN György	(10)
KELEMEN Károly		MONITORISZ Ferenc	(37)
KEMÉNY Tibor	(42)	MONOKI Béla (Adalbert)	(34)
KERESZTES Endre		MÓRICZ Miklós	(42)
KISS Ernő	(42)	MÓRICZ Miklós	(51)

Name	Age	Name	Age
NAGY Mátyás	(43)	SIMONFY Zoltán	(17)
NAGY Pál	(28)	SIPOS Gábor	
NAGY Sándor	(23)	SZABADOS József	
NEMES László	(29)	SZABÓ Ambrus	(49)
NÉMETI József	(22)	SZABÓ Árpád	(47)
NÉMETI Sándor		SZABÓ Ferenc	(34)
NÓTÁS Károly	(26)	SZABÓ Ferenc	(25-30)
ORBÁN József	(19)	SZABÓ István	(32)
PÁSKULY István	(29)	SZABÓ József	(17)
PÁSKULY Márton	(49)	SZABÓ Tamás	(17)
PATAKI András	(18)	SZABÓ Tamás	(18)
PÉNTEK Balázs		SZAKA Béla	(33)
PETHŐ Samu	(17)	SZAKOLCZI Dezső	(14)
PETŐ Lajos	(14)	SZÁSZ Zsiga	(37)
PETRI Béla		SZÉKELY Béla	(40)
PETRI József	(23)	SZÉKELY Béla	(47)
PIFFER Antal	(17)	SZÉKELY Bella	
PORZSOLT János		SZÉKELY Gyula	(20)
PÖFER Antal (Dódi)	(17)	SZÉKELY Gyula	(50)
RÁCZ Béla	(17)	ifj. SZÉKELY Gyula	(17)
RAVAI Árpád		SZÉKELY Lajos	(44)
RAVAI Elek	(45)	SZÉLL Sándor	(19)
RAVAI Elemér	(18)	SZILÁGYI Dezső	(33)
RAVAI Lajos	(58)	SZILÁGYI Ferenc	
RAVAI Miklós	(54)	SZILÁGYI Gyula	(22)
RÉZI Mihály	(39)	SZILÁGYI István	
ROZENBERG János	(42)	SZILÁGYI Sándor	(38)
ROZSOS János	(51)	SZŐCS Árpád	(31)
SALAMON József	(18)	TASNÁDI Márton	(41)
SÁNDOR Béla	(42)	TOMPA Lajos	(43)
SÁNDOR János	(47)	TOMPA Sándor	(44)
SÁNDOR János	(58)	TORDAI József	
SÁNDOR Miklós	(50)	TÓTH László	(41)
SÁNTA József	(44)	TÓTH Pál	(57)
SAS Árpi	(18)	TÖKÉS Béla	(44)
SCRABÁK Attila	(19)	TÖRÖK Olga	(17)
SCRABÁK János	(46)	TÖRÖK Róza	(4)
SILÓ Károly	(28)	TURONY József	(35)
SIMON András	(52)	ÜVEGES János	(18)

Name	Age	Name	Age
VENCEL János	(35)	VESZPRÉMI Lajos	
VERESS Árpád	(18)	VINCZE Sándor	(20)
VERESS Zsigmond	(80)	WEKERLE Károly	(42)
VERESS Zsigmondné	(64)	WELMAN Károly	
VESZPRÉMI Árpád	(39)	ZALÁNYI Antal	(40)
VESZPRÉMI Ferenc	(42)	ZILAH Samu	(49)
VESZPRÉMI József	(36)	ZÜRICH László	



1. Soldier Graveyard in Torda
on 4th Oct. 2014



2. 70th anniversary – Battle of Torda



3. Malenkij Robot Memorial in
Torda on 4th Oct. 2014



4. Malenkij Robot Memorial – Inauguration
on 4th Oct. 2014

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