

Hungarian volunteers of the Finnish-Soviet winter war of 1939-1940

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With the support of various Hungarian public institutions including National Széchényi Library, the Military Museum of Finland and the Hungarian Cultural and Scientific Centre in Helsinki have opened

a joint temporary exhibition in [Helsinki](#) [1], on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the closure of the Finnish-Soviet winter war of 1939-1940.

During the Finnish-Soviet winter war of 1939-1940, in the “battle of David and Goliath”, the entire world turned to Finland with sympathy. However, only a few countries provided so much help like Hungary that sent a battalion of volunteers, military equipment and humanitarian aid for the Finnish Red Cross. Due to the winter war, the image of Finns has considerably changed among Hungarian people. From then on, they have been considered as a northern “brother nation”, providing a wonderful military performance. As a first unit of the battalion, approximately 350 Hungarian volunteers arrived in Finland, in order to take arms and protect the attacked brother nation. Although Finnish military leadership would not send them to actual fight, the unit, consisting of selected and well-trained soldiers, was highly appreciated.

Photographs, diaries, keepsakes, interviews, documentaries and archival documents present the Hungarian volunteers of the Finnish-Soviet winter war of 1939-1940. The exhibition lays special emphasis on presenting personal memories and stories of Hungarians who were willing to protect a faraway, unknown country and of Finns who have kept the good memory of the onetime dashing Hungarian lads and the help provided by the Hungarian people. Visitors of the exhibition will get to know why Teleki Government found it useful to help Finland, who the volunteers were, what was their motivation and how they managed to reach Finland across wartime Europe, what kind of experience they had had in the remote northern country, what kind of memories they had kept through half a century and how they have been referred to by the inhabitants of Lapua, venue of the international training camp.

The exhibition also shows interviews and a documentary made by Osmo A. Wilkuna following the change in political regime, “everyday stories”, collected in Lapua by Ferenc Vilisics and Niina Ala-Fossi, and photographs taken of Lapua-based witnesses and locations. Political and social background of sending a battalion of volunteers to Finland was explored by Gábor Richly, with the help of period Finnish and Hungarian archival documents. A good deal of these documents is also presented at the exhibition.

Sponsors and supporters of the exhibition include the National Cultural Fund of Hungary, Photo Museum Pyhälahti, the Finnish Wartime Photograph Archive (SA-kuva), Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, National Széchényi Library, the National Archives of Hungary and Budapest-based Military History Institute and Museum. Special thanks for cooperation to Gabriella Frank and Juha Tynkkynen. Curators of the exhibition are Riitta Blomgren, Lauri Haavisto and Gábor Richly.
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[1] <http://www.sotamuseo.fi>

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